



Protect and Serve

Talking Points

- Due to the hard work and dedication of the law enforcement profession, many communities throughout the Nation have witnessed a remarkable decline in the rate of crime. America in 2015 is a far safer place than America in 1985. In fact, violent crime in the United States is at the lowest number since 1978.
- No single factor has been more crucial to reducing crime levels than the partnership between law enforcement agencies and the communities we serve. We know that in order to be truly effective, police agencies cannot operate alone; we must have the active support and assistance of our communities.
- Unfortunately, the future of this vital and successful partnership is at risk because of a rising level of concern over issues surrounding police conduct and tactics and a misconception by the public about what we are up against and the daily challenges of our jobs.
- What many don't realize is that the majority of contact law enforcement has with citizens is non-violent and non-controversial. The recent incidents that have been the center of focus are not the norm.
- The average number of arrests per year is 12.5 million, which equates to about 34,000 per day. Of the millions of arrests made each year, fatal encounters with law enforcement occur at a rate of far below .005%. While any death or injury is of course extremely regrettable, these incidents are rare.
- According to a U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics survey, approximately 85% of persons who requested assistance from the police were satisfied with police's response. This is almost 10% higher than the national level of customer satisfaction which is 75.6% (American Consumer Satisfaction Index).
- At the same time we must remember that threats faced by police are real. Each year, there are more than 50,000 assaults on law enforcement officers which result in more than 14,000 officers being injured. This past year 126 officers were killed in the line of duty and violent ambush-style attacks on law enforcement officers increased.
- Police departments continue to take on more responsibilities, with less manpower and funding. We are not just responding to crime, violence, and disruption, but also to homeland security concerns, cybercrime, an exponential increase in non-criminal crisis calls, and more.
- Many of the individuals we respond to suffer from mental illness; are under the influence of drugs and alcohol; and have anger management issues. To help with these challenges, law enforcement agencies are now spending a great deal of resources collaborating with social service agencies in order to properly respond to these cases. Often times we are not just operating as law enforcement officers, but also assuming the responsibility of social workers.
- The more we are tasked with, the harder it is to build strong community-police relations.
- The challenges we face are real, and need to be addressed. But, it is essential that we all recognize that no one group or system owns the problem, and that no one group or system will provide the entire solution.
- Community residents and leaders, businesses, advocacy groups, media, politicians, and others must be willing participants and want to actively engage with their police department.
- We must all work together to try to diffuse the current climate. Yes, we all have the right to our opinions and freedom of speech, but not the right to violence.
- We, as law enforcement, remain focused on our jobs and continuing to safeguard those we were sworn to protect, and by in large do not respond to the public criticism we have received. It's time to stop criticizing and to take a positive step forward and to start looking for solutions.