



**Chief's Update
January 16, 2013**

Dear Tempe Police Employees,

For this week's update, I would like to focus on not only our commitment as public safety professionals to keep the community we are sworn to protect safe, but our commitment to our families to make it home safe after every shift. Living up to both our professional and personal commitments requires a daily acknowledgement and acceptance of the responsibilities we share collectively to exercise sound judgment and solid decision making.

Quite simply, what I am writing about is having – and maintaining - the right “mental mindset” to keep you, your co-workers, and the public safe. Typically, we acknowledge our “mental mindset” when we train for and engage in lethal force encounters; however we must remain vigilant in keeping our “mental mindset” strong when we – regardless of assignment, title or rank - engage in the most routine of tasks such as driving to and from work, planning for a special event, ordering and stocking supplies, or drafting an operations plan for what appears to be a routine search warrant at a location which has been “stabilized.”

As we all know, any situation can turn in an instant from mundane to life-threatening. Every day, Tempe Police employees come into contact with dozens, sometimes hundreds of members of our community. Oftentimes the contacts we make begin negatively, but end positively; other times, the contacts we are obligated to make begin and end negatively; and unfortunately, some of the contacts we are forced to contend with end tragically – either for the suspect, the officer, or both.

The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund recently released the statistics: last year, 127 law enforcement officers across our nation lost their lives in the line of duty. Just as tragic, 127 families have been changed forever.

Last week, Phoenix Police Officers shot a suspect who appeared impaired, evaded a traffic stop, and was attempting to ram officers with his vehicle. In another incident in the West Valley, teenagers in a sport utility vehicle shot at police officers multiple times with a handgun, and then attempted to ram the officers with the vehicle.

Similarly, during the early morning hours on January 8th, 29 year veteran MCSO deputy Ruben Garcia was shot multiple times during a DV related welfare check/traffic stop. Luckily, Deputy Garcia survived and though he remains in critical condition, he is stable and is responding well to treatment.

Just two days prior - on Sunday, January 6 - Phoenix Police Officer Chris Bennett was shot multiple times when he stopped a man on a bicycle in a neighborhood that had experienced a rash of burglaries. Thankfully he is doing well after surgery and it appears he will make a strong recovery. Ofc. Bennett said his training and his bullet proof vest saved his life.

And let's not forget Tempe Police Officer Wesley Scott Tipton who on July 14, 2000 was involved in a lethal force encounter in which he was shot 7 times during a DV call at Southern and Mill and because of his mental mindset, training, warrior spirit – and some would argue some divine intervention – was able to stop the suspect from not only killing him, but harming anyone else.

Taken from an online excerpt detailing Ofc. Tipton's experience, he said, "Without realizing it or knowing how I did it, I found myself turned over on my back, gun out of my holster, sighting the suspect in as he was walking back to his car. The suspect still had a black handgun in his right hand. Then, it was as if a switch had been turned on in my brain, and I went on autopilot. I could hear the words of my firearms trainer in my head: "Sight alignment, squeeze the trigger, don't jerk it. Recover the trigger... align your sights..." I fired six times and counted every one of the shots...The suspect went down."

It can't be said enough how important it is to wear your vest, to practice and train consistently, and to be prepared for that volatile situation that could occur at any moment. Consistent practice enhances your ability to remain calm, make decisions and survive. Our Training and Firearms unit is recognized as among the best in the nation, and our instructors are to be commended for their hard work and dedication to keeping us ready – physically, mentally and tactically. They are doing their part; please take the time to do yours.

Train, prepare, and maintain a sharp mental mindset.

Tom Ryff
Chief of Police