

OFF DUTY SURVIVAL

MAINTAINING MENTAL READINESS

- 1. Making the mental shift from on to off duty is vital. Recognize that there IS a mental shift that must take place when transitioning from on-duty to off-duty.
 - a. Department/Agency is NOT a “safe zone” and can be a target for attack.
 - b. Remain alert to the possibility of being followed.
 - c. Change into civilian attire for the drive home.
 - d. DON'T BE PREDICTABLE
 - e. Develop an off-duty “ritual” for transitioning to off-duty status in the same manner that you do for preparing to go on-duty.

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- 2. Cooper’s Color Codes
 - a. White: Unaware, unprepared, “tuned out”
 - b. Yellow: Relaxed, prepared, aware, good situational awareness
 - c. Orange: Interest/focus/threat identified. Ready to act. Wargaming possible reactions
 - d. Black: Panicked, frozen, in shock. Breakdown of mental and physical performance

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3. Off Duty Clothing & Equipment Considerations

- a. When considering off duty clothing, be mindful of the risks of wearing pro police clothing or any clothing that may identify you as a LEO and put you at risk of becoming a target.
- b. Off duty police officers/civilian supporters of LE have been targeted with verbal and physical attacks and/or had their property vandalized because of pro police memorabilia.
- c. Separate police work wallet from personal wallet.
- d. Carry an off-duty weapon similar to your on-duty weapon (muscle memory).
- e. Ensure you are proficient with and train regularly with your off-duty weapon.
- f. Spare ammo with adequate stopping power.
- g. Ensure that your off-duty clothing is effective in concealing your weapon and will NOT hinder access to weapon (Reaction time is VITAL).
- h. Restraining Devices?

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TRAINING SPECIFICALLY FOR OFF DUTY ENCOUNTERS & CARRY LOCATION

1. Diligent training and practice with your duty weapon have developed muscle memory which allows you to draw your weapon instinctively. Apply the same diligence to training specifically for off duty encounters.
2. **Ensure that you are well versed in drawing your firearm with the same ease and confidence that you do when on-duty.**
3. Practice proper technique for drawing from specific carry locations/holsters: ankle, belly, shoulder, thigh, and bra holsters.
4. Rehearse statements and behavior while NOT immediately recognizable as a cop.
5. Train to overcome off-duty limitations (no radio, no vest, no clearly marked police vehicle, etc.).
6. Train to behave properly when uniformed officers arrive (Loudly announce your agency name, overcome auditory exclusion) Respect their authority!
7. If possible, CLEARLY display your police ID/Badge.
8. Making the decision to get involved. Things to consider:
 - a. Legalities and Liability: Are you required to get involved?
 - b. What special liabilities are you susceptible to when acting in an off-duty capacity?
 - c. Emergency/Urgency/Importance: Is it an emergency? Is it urgent that I get involved? Is someone about to be seriously injured or killed?
 - d. Is this something that can be resolved without my involvement?

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DEVELOP A FAMILY PLAN:

Train your family how to behave during an off-duty encounter!

1. Select a code word/phrase that will alert your family to a brewing situation or possibility of an off-duty engagement.
2. Practice When/Then thinking: “When THIS HAPPENS (use of code word or phrase) THEN you do this.”
3. Ensure everyone knows and understands their role and plan of action.
4. Positioning Considerations: Have your spouse and/or children walk on your reaction side to keep your gun hand free from obstruction should you need to draw your firearm.
 - a. Be sure to teach your spouse and children never to grab your gun arm if a threat surfaces. You will need it to protect them.
 - b. Train your family members to understand that if you sweep them **aside** it is a signal to run and get help. If you sweep them **behind** you, it is a signal to crouch down and stay there until you tell them it is safe to run. Be sure they understand that they are to run *immediately* after you tell them to and resist the urge to stay close to you.

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5. Calling 911: Your family should know to CALL 911 as soon as they are able!
 - a. Teach them what to say. It is important that they explain that you are an armed off-duty officer in plain clothes engaged in a confrontation. They should describe what you are wearing, what the suspects are wearing and share any other immediately identifiable information that will help responding officers recognize you.

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- b. You want to be sure uniformed officers dispatched to the scene expect your presence and avoid making a deadly mistake.
- c. If they do not know the exact address of your location, practice using landmarks to assist dispatchers in locating you.
- d. **ENSURE THAT YOU NOT ONLY TEACH THEM, BUT THAT YOU ARE PRACTICING THESE ACTIONS! YOU ARE A TEAM AND THEREFORE MUST TRAIN TOGETHER FOR SURVIVAL!**

6. PREPARING FOR THE AFTERMATH OF AN OFF-DUTY ENCOUNTER

- a. Remember your family’s emotional/psychological needs and that the incident was possibly a traumatic experience for them!
- b. Watch for signs of issues – particularly with kids.
- c. TALK about what happened. Make it OKAY to discuss as needed and refrain from making it an “off limits” conversation. Your family will follow your lead!
- d. Watch for signs of anxiety, excessive worry, depression, difficulty sleeping, bedwetting, or any other change in child’s behavior.
- e. Seek the help of a professional therapist BEFORE a problem develops. Preventative therapy is an excellent way to build resiliency techniques for you and your family!

Notes: _____
