



SECRETS OF
**LAW ENFORCEMENT
LEADERSHIP**

Top police leaders share best practices for the job
and setting their people up for success

POLICE 1 ›

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FOR GOVERNMENT



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Priorities and perspectives for the next generation of leaders

Law enforcement providers can be a skeptical bunch. That’s understandable – they spend their days evaluating big claims from everyone from wayward drivers to politicians pledging support. As a result, they can be finely tuned to detecting platitudes and people telling them what they think they want to hear.

It’s hard enough, as a new leader, to walk into any environment, much less one that’s so wary by nature. There’s no one-size-fits-all playbook for gaining trust and making it work, but in this eBook, sponsored by [T-Mobile](#), we share the priorities and perspectives of three next-generation law enforcement leaders who came to new organizations and found success. These articles are part of Police1’s “Leadership Beat” series and ongoing [Leadership Playbook](#) content.

Chief Kelly Bakken of Altoona, Wisconsin discusses how she flipped her department’s

slipping morale by helping individuals feel valued and involved. Chief Jeffrey Martinez of Sheridan, Colorado relates how he strengthened relationships and emphasized continuous pursuit of excellence. Finally Chief Jessica Robledo of Denton, Texas talks about the importance of “walking the walk” and developing the bright minds of tomorrow.

A fourth piece then examines setting your people up for success moving forward in that most essential of areas: communication. Police leadership experts Dale Stockton and Gordon Graham weigh in on the capabilities of 5G and how they can be realized even for small and stretched departments.

For T-Mobile, the newest aspect to that is [T-Priority](#), a dedicated network slice to ensure first responders’ voice and data transmissions can always get the highest priority, no matter the circumstances or demand. Read on to learn more.

– John Erich, eBook editor

About the editor:

John Erich is senior branded content project lead for Lexipol. He is a career writer and editor with a quarter century of experience covering public safety and emergency response.



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By John Erich



built for tomorrow's emergencies *ready today*

For first responders, heightened visibility saves lives. T-Priority from T-Mobile delivers the network power to give law enforcement the situational awareness they need. With the nation's first network slice for public safety, T-Priority ensures first responders maintain the ultimate priority for their data-intensive communications.

From HD drone footage to real-time body camera feeds, T-Priority is ready for the latest emergency technology. Today.

Built for providing instant clarity for split-second decisions. T-Priority—America's best 5G network experience for first responders.



Discover more
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For qualifying organizations on eligible rate plans. WPS enrollment with USDHS required. Some T-Priority features only available in areas of Ultra Capacity 5G coverage with capable device and 5G Standalone settings; see T-Mobile.com/5Glayers. Coverage not available in some areas and may be impacted by emergencies; check your response area. T-Mobile, the T logo, and the magenta color are registered trademarks of Deutsche Telekom AG. © 2025 T-Mobile USA, Inc.



Law enforcement leadership lessons:

‘As a leader, my team’s failures are my failures, and my team’s successes are theirs’

A profile of Chief Kelly Bakken

Chief Kelly Bakken was sworn in as chief of the Altoona (Wisconsin) Police Department in March 2019. The agency has 16 full-time officers serving a population of approximately 9,600, with an annual call volume of just under 4,000 calls.

What was the incident or person in your career that put you on the path to becoming a chief?

It was a combination of things that happened at the right time in my life. But my husband, also in law enforcement, encouraged me and supported me to take the next step in my career. It meant leaving a position in a department I was familiar

with, good at and very comfortable in. I needed the extra encouragement to step outside my comfort zone, into a new department and role. He has supported me the entire way and has always been there when I needed someone to lean on, and for that I will always be grateful.

What do you (or did you) want to accomplish, improve or make better in your first 30 days as chief, six months as chief and year as chief?

Being hired from the outside into a department I was largely unfamiliar with, I didn’t have expectations of making any changes within the

30 days, but what I wanted to accomplish was learning about the staff, the department and the city. In my first 30 days, I took the time to converse with my staff – sworn and civilian – and met with other city departments, community stakeholders and regional partners. I knew I had a lot of work ahead to build relationships, but not just any relationships – relationships that were built with trust and transparency.

To be an effective leader, I understood I needed to get buy-in and commitment from my staff. During this time, I was able to identify poor morale, which was a direct result of the department's internal culture. There was a "them versus us" type of mentality within the department that was not healthy. I worked over the next six months to gain the trust and respect of my staff, ultimately changing the entire culture of the department within the first year.

The relationships I built with my staff were through trust and transparency. Within the first year, I made some staff changes, set reasonable expectations and held people accountable for their actions. I had conversations and listened with an open mind to staff and the community. I valued the feedback and information provided and showed staff they were valued. I empowered and trusted them to make daily decisions and lead projects, encouraged them to participate in community activities, supported them and guided them.

Throughout the first year, while working on morale within the department, I also identified several areas where equipment was not to standards; I worked with my staff to determine a replacement plan and encouraged and allowed them to do research and select products that would work best for them. I implemented a body camera program and transitioned some department-aged equipment with better equipment.

I also started to develop a new PTO program, a training program that was focused on teaching rather than evaluation. This training program was tailored to individual officers, allowing for flexibility and allowing the trainee to focus on learning. Our PTO program is based on community policing and collaborative problem-solving. Each new hire is

expected to complete a community project that is impactful for the community.

During this first year, there were many moving parts, but the most important thing I did was actively listen. Active listening allowed me to build relationships and empower my staff to embrace challenges and do the right thing. The culture is no longer an "us versus them" mentality but, instead, a cohesive team dedicated to public service.

How are you creating an organizational culture that people want to be a part of, to join and to stay?

The first step in creating a culture that people want to be part of is understanding that organizational culture significantly impacts individual and team morale, ultimately affecting productivity and job satisfaction. Creating a culture that people want to be part of is a priority of mine; today more than ever, when hiring law enforcement officers is difficult, having every staff member advocate for the department and encourage others to join the team is essential.

I took the position of chief with the mindset that I would never expect respect because of my title as chief, but I would gain respect because of who I am. Gaining respect starts with emotional intelligence; having self-awareness, self-control, empathy, motivation and communication skills. Managing conflict and communicating with a positive attitude from the top was a vital piece of the equation. I maintain my sense of humor while working hard to accomplish the tasks. I don't allow negative behaviors and toxic attitudes to fester within my agency. I address the negative attitudes with empathy and care. I set expectations and follow through, holding staff accountable for their actions fairly and respectfully. I provide the support and resources necessary for staff to succeed.

I built a culture people want to be part of through communication, accountability and transparency. Communication was the foundation of the culture I built within my department; the most critical communication was active listening and providing



staff a seat at the table and a sense of value within the agency. We developed our core values, objectives and standards as a team. The team is all held to the same level of accountability. I lead with transparency; I share necessary information and keep my employees in the loop of department and city activities. I ask their opinions and value their feedback.

Setting standards and creating core values and objectives while being inclusive has allowed every team member to have a seat at the table to feel valued and involved. This sense of value and involvement has empowered the team to be their best. I have taken all the opportunities available to build and foster meaningful relationships, I largely have a department of employees who are confident, productive and happy to come to work.

I continue to support the culture I created through resources, opportunities for professional development and mentorship, and community engagement opportunities. I believe in the well-being of my team and continue to work toward ensuring each team member is valued.

What's your process for making major decisions?

Whenever making a major decision, I always take a step back and look at the big picture of how my decision will affect the department, the city and individuals. I ensure the decision fits within our values, goals and objectives.

Whenever possible, I solicit input from my staff on major decisions, especially those that don't need rushed decisions. When making a major product purchase, I implement a trial or test process and allow my staff to test different products. I then rely on their feedback and opinions regarding what product will work best for them. If it is a major purchase a team member is suggesting, I ask them to do the research and present the information. I listen, support them and give them feedback to allow them to succeed with their request.

When implementing a new policy or initiative that is a major change or might have a negative reaction, I take the time to explain why. On occasion, I have to spend some of my personal capital that I have built to get the buy-in I need from the natural leaders in my department. I then use those natural leaders to help sell the change to the rest of the staff.



LEADERSHIP LIGHTNING ROUND

What is a leadership book, podcast or seminar you've found invaluable?

"Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action" by Simon Sinek.

How do you organize your day and stay on schedule?

With a busy work schedule and personal schedule, I must prioritize and delegate to stay on schedule and ensure I check my calendar every morning.

If you knew the budget request would be approved, what's a big purchase you'd make for your department today?

Without hesitation, I would always invest in hiring more staff.

What is one way leaders can show they care about their people?

Active listening is the best way a leader can show they care about their people.

At the end of the workday, how do you recharge?

At the end of the workday, I recharge by working out; my team is only going to be healthy if I, too, am healthy.

This content originally appeared as part of Police1's Police Leader Playbook.



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Gaining respect starts with emotional intelligence; having self-awareness, self-control, empathy, motivation and communication skills.

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How do you show your personnel that you are leading with these value-based behaviors?

Value-based leadership starts with emotional intelligence and humility. Understanding your own emotions, being able to self-reflect and being selfless are all part of value-based leadership. I always try to do the right thing all the time.

I have taken the time necessary to get to know my staff and understand their strengths and weaknesses. I always make time to ask them about their time off, vacations, family, kids or whatever is important to them, and I genuinely listen to what they are saying and care about their well-being.

I admit I have strengths and weaknesses and that I'm not perfect. I never put my integrity into question. As a leader, I surround myself with people who may be smarter than me or may be better at one thing or another than I am. I am willing to step outside of my comfort zone and take on difficult challenges. It's always about what's best for the team, not what's best for myself.

As a leader, my team's failures are my failures, and my team's successes are theirs. As a leader and part of the overall team, I will always take responsibility for the failure of a project but let my staff take credit for the success of a project. I encourage them, support them and mentor them.

Points to take home

Embrace change and continuous learning: Get outside your comfort zone and be open to new opportunities.

Lead with values: Practice emotional intelligence and humility.

Develop trust and transparency: Strategies include active listening, valuing feedback, setting clear expectations and holding people accountable.

Culture counts: Build it on communication, accountability and transparency.



Law enforcement leadership lessons:

"The best leaders I have encountered, and those I strive to emulate, are the ones who made me feel like I mattered"

A profile of Chief Jeffrey A. Martinez

Sheridan, Colorado Chief Jeffrey A. Martinez discusses the value of standing for what's right, fostering trust and building a culture of respect and professionalism

Chief Jeffrey A. Martinez was sworn in as chief of the Sheridan (Colorado) Police Department on October 12, 2020, after most recently serving as commander of the Denver Homeland Security Bureau with the Denver Police Department. His entire career has been dedicated to connecting with the community he serves by reaching out and working with neighborhood groups, church leaders, business groups and city agencies. He is a graduate of the Police Executive Research

Forum (PERF) Senior Management Institute of Police, the Latino Leadership Institute at the University of Denver and the Leadership Denver program.

The Sheridan Police Department is a small agency that directly connects to Southwest Denver. The agency has an authorized strength of 35 sworn officers and six civilian staff. Approximate annual calls for service total around 22,000.

What was the incident or person in your career that put you on the path to becoming chief?

Although leadership came naturally to me from a young age, I never imagined being able to transform that skill as a kid from a poor neighborhood into becoming a police chief. The steps that led me to this position began long before I became a police officer and were shaped by experiences both in and outside of work. However, the most compelling belief that I could become a chief came when I attended PERF's Senior Management in Policing (SMIP) program at Boston University.

SMIP helped sharpen my focus on becoming a chief of police, as the content resonated deeply with me. I met police leaders from across the nation who were very different from me, but despite our differences, we were all poised to lead. It made me realize that although my path was much different from others, leadership is defined by what we have done and what we will continue to do. It didn't matter that I was a high school father who grew up with friends involved in gangs, drugs and a lifestyle opposite to law enforcement. In fact, those experiences gave me a unique perspective, enabling me to lead others to do what is right, even when doing wrong might seem easy or tempting.

What do you (or did you) want to accomplish, improve or make better in your first 30 days as chief, six months as chief and year as chief?

In my first 30 days as chief, I focused on building positive relationships with the officers, as I was coming in from outside the department. I made time to meet with each officer individually to learn about them and give them the opportunity to share what they liked and disliked about our department. My next major goal, set for the six-month mark, was to strengthen relationships with the citizens, city council, mayor and city manager. I prioritized understanding their wants and needs while clearly communicating the expectations and goals of our department under my leadership.

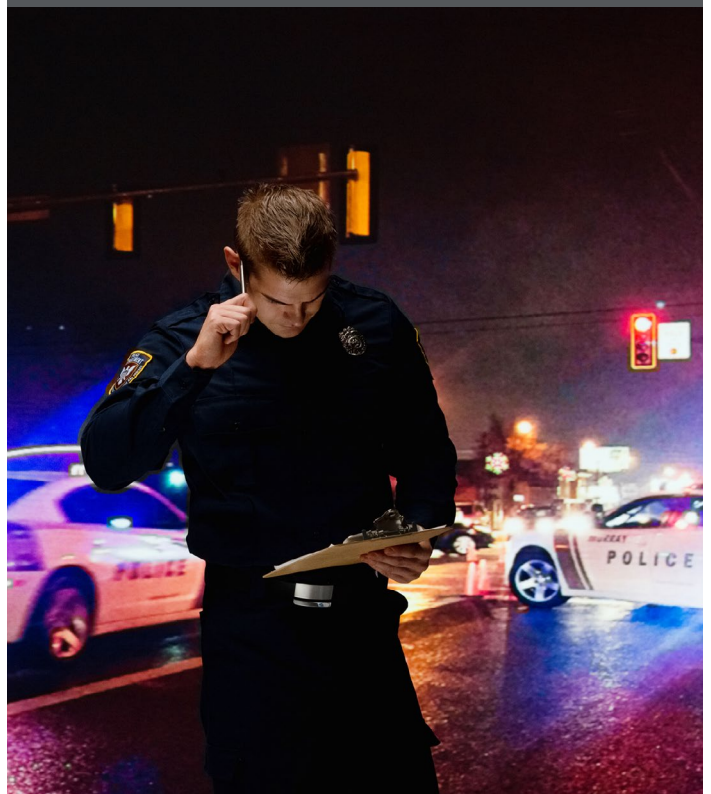
By the end of my first year, my goal was for the officers and external stakeholders to recognize a



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While I knew perfection was unattainable, I believed that by pursuing excellence, we could consistently improve.

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positive shift in the department that reflected well on law enforcement as a whole. We emphasized training to better prepare for the unexpected and focused on accountability, which had been lacking.

Each of these goals was tied to my promise to improve every aspect of our department with a commitment to being professional, respectful, efficient and accountable in everything we do as police officers.

How are you creating an organizational culture people want to be a part of?

Our police department has adopted the motto “Pursuing Excellence.” Before I took the job, several people told me I could have the agency moving in a positive direction within nine months to a year and then coast through the rest of my career. However, I quickly realized that coasting was never an option. I owed it to my officers, the department, the city and law enforcement across the nation to continually strive for improvement. While I knew perfection was unattainable, I believed that by pursuing excellence, we could consistently improve. At the same time, I emphasized the importance of treating everyone professionally, respectfully and equitably.

This focus on excellence has helped create a culture that people want to be a part of. It has

attracted great talent, but I readily admit it also pushed some away – those who were either unwilling or unable to meet the expectations we set. As a result, we lost several officers who were here when I arrived. However, it’s now clear that this department has become one that is both respected and thriving.

What’s your process for making major decisions?

Making tough decisions can be challenging, but I adhere to specific guidelines that help me stay focused on what matters most. For me, it starts with people – I ensure our actions do not unnecessarily harm others. I then assess whether the decision is necessary, ethical, attainable, affordable and defensible. Before deviating from these principles, I make sure to explore every possible alternative. If there is no other viable option, I accept the responsibility of delivering the news, no matter how difficult, and provide the necessary context or explanation for my decision.

I always remain open to revisiting an idea if someone presents a logical reason to reconsider. I also maintain a genuine open-door policy, encouraging respectful conversations on any topic of concern. In my experience, providing clear explanations through dialogue helps minimize the negativity and gossip that often accompany unpopular decisions.



How do you show your personnel that you are leading with these and other value-based behaviors?

I openly refer to my department as family because I want my officers to know I care for them just as I care for my own children. While my relationships with each officer are naturally different, my goal is always to be a positive influence in their lives. This commitment extends even to the difficult task of discipline. Just as a caring parent disciplines their children to guide them away from harmful paths, a chief must also take action to protect officers from undue harm or pressure.

The best leaders I have encountered, and those I strive to emulate, are the ones who made me

feel like I mattered. I believe that when others show they care for us, it inspires us to care for ourselves, even on our most challenging days. With this commitment to caring for others, we must be willing to risk our careers to stand up for what is right. I am fortunate to have become a chief near the end of my career, which has allowed me to stand firmly for what I believe in, even when it has been unpopular with certain groups or individuals.

If a decision is righteous, I must be willing to stand by it. My career isn't over yet, and I may still lose my job due to an incident beyond my control. However, I take comfort in knowing I will always be able to look in the mirror and know I never compromised my integrity or sold out my family.

Points to take home

Develop leaders from diverse backgrounds: Diverse experiences and perspectives benefit departments.

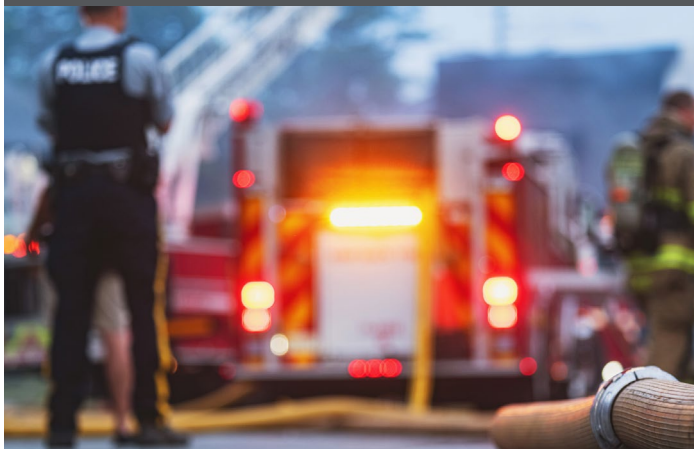
Build relationships: Not only with officers but with city officials and community members as well.

Pursue excellence: Build a culture of improvement, professionalism and respect.

Make ethical choices: Do what's right and be transparent about your decisions.



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I believe that when others show they care for us, it inspires us to care for ourselves.
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LEADERSHIP LIGHTNING ROUND

What is a leadership book, podcast or seminar you've found invaluable?

First and foremost, the Holy Bible, but to be less religious I will choose “The Servant: A Simple Story About the True Essence of Leadership” by James C. Hunter.

How do you organize your day and stay on schedule?

I use Microsoft Office Calendar to keep me organized and on schedule.

If you knew the budget request would be approved, what's a big purchase you'd make for your department today?

Take-home cars for every officer and investigator.

What is one way leaders can show they care about their people?

There is nothing more important than giving your people time to speak and truly listening to them.

At the end of the workday, how do you recharge?

Spending time with my wife, especially when we take the time to eat a meal together.

This content originally appeared as part of Police1's Police Leader Playbook.



Law enforcement leadership lessons:

‘YOU CANNOT PADDLE THE BOAT ALONE’

A profile of Chief Jessica Robledo

Denton, Texas Chief Jessica Robledo reveals how mentorship shaped her leadership and the secrets to building trust and inspiring her team

On October 8, 2024, Jessica Robledo was sworn in as chief of the Denton (Texas) Police Department. Robledo has more than 35 years of law enforcement experience and brings 16 years of executive and supervisory experience to the Denton Police Department.

She spent 30 years with the Austin Police Department before retiring as assistant chief of police and then spent four years as the chief of police in Pflugerville, Texas. Robledo is a graduate of the FBI National Academy, Police Executive Research Forum’s Senior Management Institute for Police, and the Leadership Development program at the Major Cities Chiefs Association’s Police Executive Leadership Institute.

The Denton Police Department serves 158,000 residents and responds to approximately 120,000

calls for service each year. The agency has an authorized strength of 220 officers and 113 professional staff.

What was the incident or person in your career that put you on the path to becoming chief?

During my 30-year career with the Austin Police Department, I was blessed to have several people in my corner who believed in me and encouraged me to apply for specialized assignments. Because of their words of support and critical advice, those individuals helped me grow into the person and leader I am today. Over the years, I have always remembered these mentors’ confidence in me and strived to do my best to represent them well. You cannot paddle the boat alone. I never forgot that my success has been dependent on a group of believers who lifted me up and guided me, as well as the good Lord who blessed me.



LEADERSHIP LIGHTNING ROUND

What is a leadership book, podcast or seminar you've found invaluable?

“Make Your Bed” by Admiral William H. McRaven contains excellent insight. For executive training, I highly recommend the Police Executive Leadership Institute (PELI) through the Major City Chiefs Association.

How do you organize your schedule and stay on schedule?

I prioritize projects and don't procrastinate. I consistently communicate and empower my team to share updates, so we are all on the same page.

If you knew the budget request would be approved, what's a big purchase you'd make for your department today?

A real-time intelligence center because leveraging technology is critical to any agency's success and builds on regional efforts that can help gather intelligence.

What is one way leaders can show they care about their people?

Be present and listen closely to your people to learn what fuels their passion and their why.

At the end of the workday, how do you recharge?

Spending time with my family and doing things that enrich my heart and soul, including daily devotionals every morning. I am an avid pickleball player.

This content originally appeared as part of Police1's Police Leader Playbook.

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As a leader, you must show your vulnerability and your heart for service.

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What do you (or did you) want to accomplish, improve or make better in your first 30 days as chief, six months as chief and year as chief?

When I joined the Denton Police Department as chief, it was critically important for the department to know my heart. Outsiders do not gain confidence easily, but I was determined to show my new police family who I am and what I stand for from the start. As a leader, you must show your vulnerability and your heart for service to establish trust, which takes longer than 30 days. Speak your truth, show your heart and do the right things for the right reasons.

Developing our current and future leaders has been a priority in my first six months. By teaching staff how to follow up, assess and pivot, the next generation can benefit from the fruits of our labor. Looking ahead, it is imperative that we continue building a collaborative culture, making deposits in the bank of trust with our community and implementing new technology to take us to greater heights.

How are you creating an organizational culture people want to be a part of?

I am present and believe in leading by example. When our academy recruits run, I run with them. This year, we welcomed our new officers with our first-ever Chief's Run. After graduation, our agency and community members joined the graduates for a run at a local park to show our collective support. We also hosted our first Family Night where we met with the recruits' families to provide them with resources and information, as well as a sense of comfort and support.

These camaraderie efforts build a mentality of trust with our cadets, empowering them to bring up concerns or ideas. From day one, we always explain the "why" and tell the truth behind the mission. Going along just to get along is not in the playbook. Preparing officers and professional staff for leadership roles can be tough and uncomfortable, but we must put in the work to continuously improve our agency and help people grow. Preparing the next generation to take over will be my biggest accomplishment.



What's your process for making major decisions?

People must understand the purpose and reason behind an initiative before they can get behind doing the work. We have embraced surveys for departmentwide feedback, and I always make sure to loop in the police association, executive staff and legal early on. Inviting all stakeholders to the table helps you catch pitfalls and gain historical feedback from those who grew up in the organization.

If the final product is someone else's idea, even better – this shows that you are listening and don't think you're the smartest person in the room. Know your audience, your workforce and what's been tried before. Listen to this input and don't force things that have already been attempted in the past; just because it worked somewhere else doesn't mean it will work at every agency.

Lastly, always measure your work product so you can assess its effectiveness. This also shows you are fiscally responsible and serving as a good steward of the community's tax dollars.

How do you show your personnel that you are leading with these and other value-based behaviors?

I tell the truth, communicate and am present. Always strive to commend the work of your team. If we miss the mark, be ready to take the hit. Standing up for your team requires admitting failure or shortcomings. Do so professionally and be armed with data and the humility to listen to feedback from even the most inexperienced of critics. Never throw your personnel under the bus.

Remember the human and always put your people first. When we hear of a difficult event or tragic loss of life in our profession, I try to send department reminders reiterating that they are not alone, and they matter. We are revamping our peer support team, updating our mental health resources and sharing that information with all professional and sworn staff. We cannot do this job alone and need to take care of the entire workforce.

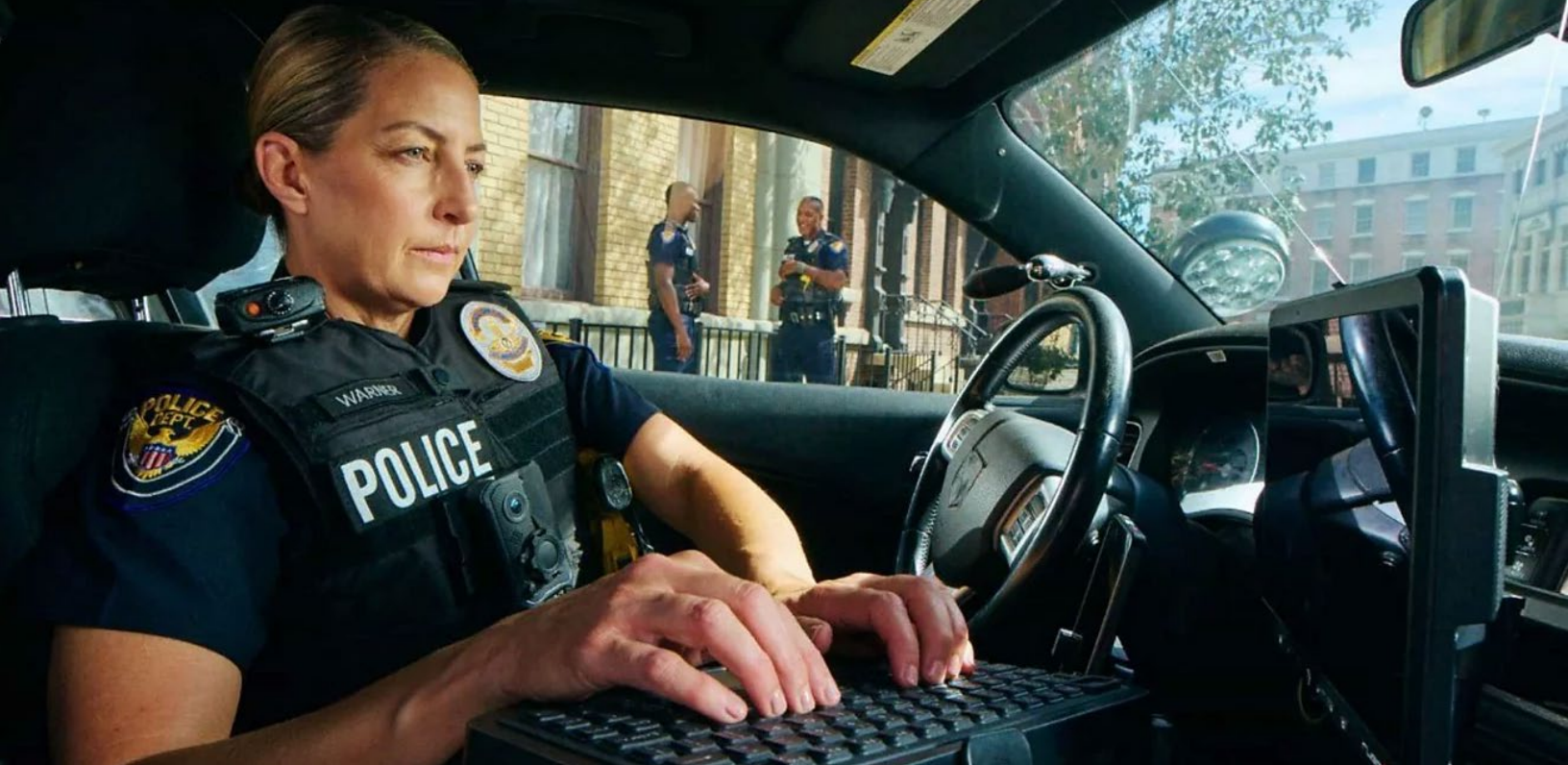
Points to take home

Practice mentorship, value teamwork: Success can depend on a supportive network.

Show vulnerability: Leaders must show their vulnerability and “heart for service” to establish trust.

Development and collaboration: Prepare the leaders of tomorrow by building a collaborative culture.

Lead by example: Be present, speak truthfully, stand up for the team and listen to feedback.



HOW LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERS CAN SET THEIR DEPARTMENTS UP FOR SUCCESS WITH 5G

Emerging technologies will support expanded communications capabilities

By John Erich, Police1 Staff

Leaders in every industry are challenged with leaving their organizations in better shape than they found them. They must provide tools and resources to support their teams' performance today while fostering future growth.

Preparing for the future includes providing employees with clear processes and systems.

And for law enforcement, those processes apply to a multitude of critical areas, from weaponry and vehicles to forensic tools and evidence processing.

An increasingly important area of focus for law enforcement officials is emergency communications, which are changing in significant ways. Positioning your agency to leverage these advances isn't complicated and can come with substantial payoffs to life, safety, and efficiency. But change doesn't always come easy to the shorthanded, overworked, demanding world of law enforcement.

"In terms of embracing new technology and doing things in different ways, it can be difficult for public safety," said Dale Stockton, a three-decade law enforcement veteran who writes and consults on first responder technology and communications issues. "Law enforcement is a 24/7 operation. Every new shift literally picks up the reins from the preceding shift. They go out in the field, and then, when they get to the end of their shift, another one comes on, and the process repeats. So you have this 24/7 cycle where all they're trying to do is keep that continuity going."

A grinding environment like that can make it tough to innovate. Scrambling to meet daily



demands may not leave space for the deliberate consideration and implementation of big changes and new methods. It may just be easier for many departments to stick with what works, even if it's imperfect.

“It’s easy to get locked into ‘This is the way we’ve always done it,’” said California leadership and risk-management expert Gordon Graham, also an attorney, 33-year veteran of law enforcement, and cofounder of Lexipol, which develops policy for law enforcement organizations and is the parent company of Police1. “There are lots of reasons why the status quo persists, but leadership requires a mindset of continuous improvement. Our public, personnel, and profession deserve better than minimum standards. Anything we can establish a metric for, we have to be constantly looking for the next best way.”

The Next Step in Communications

When it comes to sharing information and data, the next best way isn’t a mystery. The future of communications lies in 5G — the fifth-generation cellular network technology currently bringing greater bandwidth, faster downloads, and lower latency to users across the U.S. 5G technology is already enabling cutting-edge advances for those in emergency services, including advanced communications among people and devices — think live streaming video from drones and bodycams, automated alerts for gunshot and

wildfire detection, augmented-reality (AR) and virtual-reality (VR) training, and more.

Capitalizing on 5G is a two-part challenge. The first part is the hardware: radios, phones, and other devices capable of harnessing the practical benefits of 5G. Plenty of companies offer innovative tools designed to take advantage of the medium’s bandwidth and data capabilities, and more are actualized every day.

The second — and for some more challenging — part of the equation is finding the right network. Not everyone who wants to embrace 5G’s advances has the coverage and capacity to adopt and implement them.

For the 98% of Americans covered by its network, [T-Mobile](#) provides a powerful option for obtaining that coverage and capacity. The [largest and fastest](#) 5G network of the major carriers also has the lowest latency and numerous features that benefit first responders.

Those features start with speed: In the right conditions, 5G can deliver speeds of up to 20 gbps — nearly 200 times faster than 4G. The T-Mobile 5G network is built on dedicated frequencies for superior performance. It has consistently received top scores in speed tests compiled by Ookla, a popular web service that analyzes internet access performance metrics.



In its report for the [second half of 2024](#), Ookla found T-Mobile offers:

- **The fastest mobile network**, with a speed score of 222.63 compared to 113.2 for Verizon and 111.07 for AT&T.
- **The fastest 5G network** (242.76 vs. 185.26 for Verizon, 132.68 for AT&T).
- **The best 5G consistency** (75.3% vs. 74.2% for Verizon, 65.4% for AT&T).
- **The best 5G availability** (89.4% vs. 86.2% for AT&T, 49.3% for Verizon).

Another important aspect for emergency personnel is priority access. During major incidents, when responders and citizens are all vying for critical bandwidth, first responders can't risk having their essential transmissions dropped or delayed. They still have the familiar Wireless Priority System (WPS) — a federal program that authorizes cellular communications service providers like T-Mobile to prioritize calls over wireless networks — but today T-Mobile offers a more advanced solution: [T-Priority](#), a 5G network “slice” dedicated to helping first responders connect to the network — and stay connected — no matter how congested it becomes.

An Expanding Emergency Lane

Built on a 5G Standalone core without the

need for 4G infrastructure, T-Priority can offer a performance baseline up to twice the baseline typically experienced by WPS users. It provides automatic prioritization, with no manual activation required, and can accommodate 40% more 5G users than other national networks. T-Mobile's network also attains 2.5 times the speeds for communicating data and offers lower latency while serving more devices compared to other networks.

“All the emerging 5G applications are going to be more bandwidth-intensive. If they require speed and less latency, then it's important there be capacity,” said Stockton, a past commissioner for the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training. “This new T-Priority network slice essentially gives you that emergency lane on the freeway. And, even more important, it can dynamically expand the size of that emergency lane in the event the network begins to get congested.”

Earlier technologies like 4G and Wi-Fi can't do that. Imagine an accident, terror attack, or mass shooting at a major community event. In addition to emergency personnel, thousands of attendees will be reaching for their phones to gather information, contact their loved ones, and find ways home. There will be an intense level of demand vying for a finite amount of bandwidth.

All the major carriers have prioritization mechanisms, Stockton notes, but such



communications may be relegated to 4G infrastructure. T-Priority, however, keeps it all on 5G, available, reliable and fast. Additional solutions offered by [T-Mobile](#) to benefit first responders include:

- [Ultra Capacity 5G](#), which encompasses both high-band (millimeter wave) frequencies — which have the bandwidth to carry large amounts of data in developed urban areas but aren't great at penetrating buildings — and midband frequencies, which balance speed and range to achieve broader coverage that's less impacted by physical structures.
- A [partnership with Starlink](#) that will ultimately allow direct-to-cell satellite calls for its few remaining dead zones. Around half a million square miles of land in the U.S. aren't currently covered by cell towers. Starlink will initially support texting, with voice and data coming soon.

The Future Is Closer Than You Think

Communications isn't the only area law enforcement officials need to futureproof to set their frontline folks up for success, but it's one of the most important. As disasters, both natural and manmade, become more frequent and complex, our communications and data needs in support of responding to them grow. Leaders must act

today to develop and pass along robust, capable systems to those who come after them. "For too many people, the future is Friday, and the distant future is next Friday," said Graham. "We need to be looking 40, 50 years into the future. Where are we going to be as a country?"

With grants, finances need not be an impediment, and [T-Mobile](#) offers a range of benefits for public safety users. Making broad use of growing 5G capabilities can bring new efficiencies to today's shorthanded workforces — and with insufficient funding and personnel, law enforcement agencies must make their current teams as effective as possible.

"There are many ways to do that, but simply empowering them with technology is one of the best," Stockton said. "There are grants available to help get hardware, and what I've found time and time again is that when you put that foundational mobile technology out there, now you can build additional capabilities onto it. You can turn those devices into all these different tools that you need, either with apps or connections.

"Leveraging technology may not be the answer to everything, but it certainly opens up opportunities we didn't have before."

For more information, visit [T-Mobile](#).



Advanced security protects essential communications

By John Erich



“When you know those communications are available anytime and anywhere they’re needed, you’re guaranteeing the experience.”

Everyone needs security in their voice and data communications, but it’s especially important for first responders, and law enforcement in particular. [T-Mobile’s](#) new [T-Priority](#) dedicated network slice reflects the heightened attention to security that characterizes the carrier’s services for public safety.

The slicing innovation is a solution to potential problems of demand. 5G has dramatically expanded capacity, but in major emergencies, the communication needs of thousands of victims can still bog down system performance as they turn to their mobile devices to seek more information, contact loved ones and stream what they’re seeing. T-Priority ensures responders’ vital voice and data communications get prioritized first, and built-in safeguards ensure they’re both protected and available for those who need them and safely shielded from interception and intrusion.

Key aspects to T-Priority’s security include:

5G Standalone core and network slicing – The full independence of T-Mobile’s standalone 5G core – which keeps all 5G traffic fully segregated – facilitates network slicing, or the creation of discrete segments for specific users and purposes. These isolated environments can have



dedicated protections for different types of traffic, preventing a problem in one area from spreading to others.

Slicing thus helps reduce the risk of unauthorized access, shields against congestion and helps support security measures appropriate to the communications being sent.

“Slicing has really been perfected through the 5G Standalone core,” said Ildelfonso de la Cruz Morales, a U.K.-based market analyst and expert in critical communications technology who has worked with T-Mobile. “That guarantees a floor throughput even in saturated situations. T-Priority users will have more weight when it comes to accessing network resources, and at the same time they get a dynamic floor of resources when needed.”

Enhanced authentication and authorization – Devices and the network both verify each other’s identities, guarding against intrusions, spoofing and phishing. Encrypted identifiers protect sensitive data.

Elevated privacy protection – Subscription concealment protects subscriber details during transmission, and countermeasures defend against “stingray” tools that mimic cell towers to intercept communications.

External core communications – Making the most of 5G requires interfacing with third-party systems and apps. Secure APIs help protect those interactions against unauthorized access and cyberthreats.

“You have to think about methods to protect the security of the application range you offer to law enforcement,” de la Cruz noted. “This community will not only be affected by natural threats but also by targeted threats due to the nature of being police. So there has to be an even higher protection level when it comes to applications, as well as good partnerships with device manufacturers.”

Encryption and integrity protection – Encryption protects both signaling and wireless data traffic.

Secure wireless updates – SIM cards are set up and activated wirelessly, with no manual configuration required. Wireless updates are restricted to secure networks.

The greatest security feature, de la Cruz notes, is simply knowing your network will be there when you need it, with responders’ access prioritized.

“That protects the reliability of your system,” he said. “When you know those communications are available, you won’t need different protocols for different areas – it will be consistent for everyone.”



SATELLITE SUPPORT FILLS IN THE GAPS

While T-Mobile's 5G network covers an estimated 99% of the people in America, a few remaining dead zones still exist. For the urgent communications needs of responders in those areas, T-Mobile's new partnership with Starlink will provide a solution.

The T-Mobile Starlink satellite messaging service integrates direct-to-cell satellite technology from SpaceX into its communications framework. In areas without cell coverage, responders' essential texting will route directly through Starlink instead. That will be limited to text to start but will eventually include voice and data too.

"The partnership with Starlink is big news," said de la Cruz. "Now we have not only a really good terrestrial connection, we've also enhanced it with nonterrestrial, direct satellite-to-phone connectivity."

The integration supports wireless emergency alerting and allows messages up to 360 characters as well as device-based geofencing. T-Mobile and SpaceX tested it under an emergency waiver from the FCC during Hurricane Helene in 2024, where it played a big role in rescue and recovery efforts. They also used it in Southern California during the major blazes of January 2025, allowing residents to send text messages.

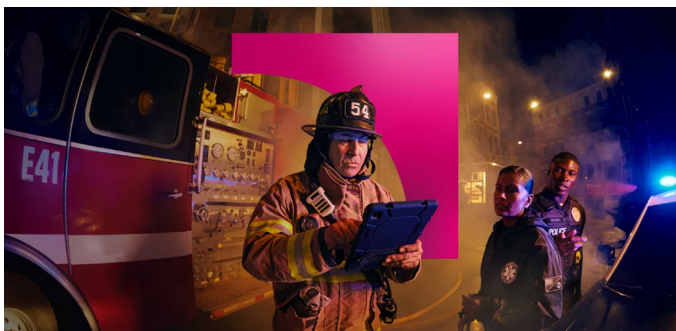
To find more resources, please visit

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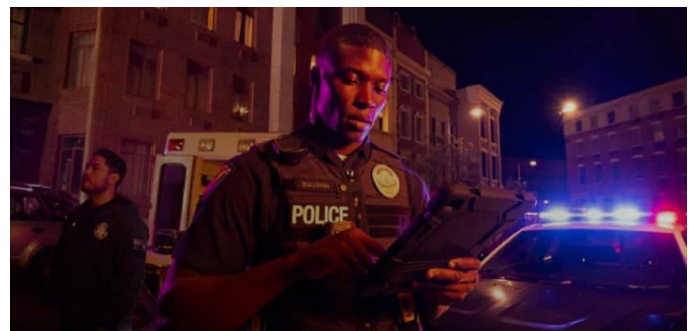
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ABOUT T-MOBILE

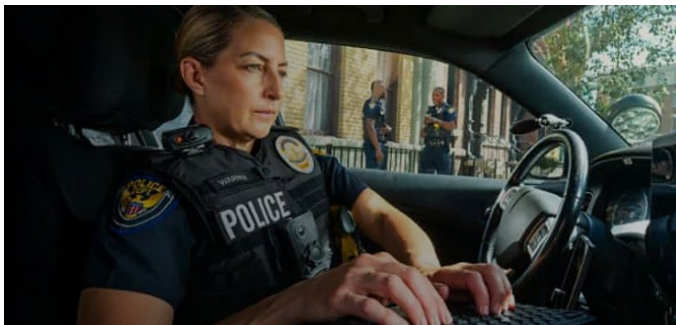
With the nation's first network slice for public safety, T-Priority from T-Mobile delivers America's best 5G network experience for first responders, even in times of congestion. From HD drone footage to real-time body camera feeds, T-Priority is ready for data-intensive emergency technology. All backed by our dedicated Emergency Response Team. And it's ready today.



T-PRIORITY



T-PRIORITY FAQs



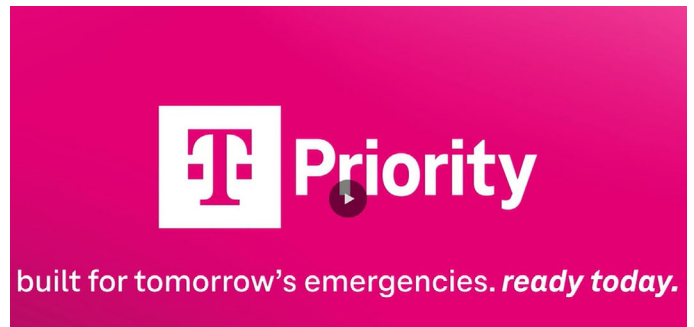
PRIORITY ACCESS AND PREEMPTION



T-MOBILE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM



MISSION-CRITICAL PUSH TO TALK



T-PRIORITY VIDEO OVERVIEW