

**On the Front Lines: Addressing
Stress, Trauma & Suicide Prevention
in Community Responders**

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Alabama Activity Center
Montgomery, Alabama

**Stress Management, Risk
Reduction and Suicide
Prevention in Emergency
Response Personnel**

**Suicide Amongst
Law Enforcement**

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Cpl. Jess Thornton



- State Trooper for 11 years
- Personal experiences with law enforcement stressors
- Exposure to scenes

**Information / Stats on
Suicide in Law Enforcement**

- One of the highest risk professions for suicide
 - According to Nationwide Statistics, there were 51 deaths by suicide of LEOs in the last six months of 2015

**Information / Stats on
Suicide in Law Enforcement**

- Exposure to violence, suicide, job related stressors, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, domestic abuse, access to weapons (firearms)
 - LEO suicide occurs 1.5 times more frequently compared to the general population

Information / Stats on Suicide in Law Enforcement

- More officers die from suicide than killed in the line of duty every year
- The Badge of Life has completed 3 previous full year studies yielding the following results:
 - 141 in 2008
 - 143 in 2009
 - 126 in 2012

A Day in the Life of Law Enforcement

- Shift work (odd hours)
- Balancing home life
- Exposed to constant negativity and confrontation
- Dangers of the job
- Negative Media Attention
- Now we are targeted because of our profession

Warning: Graphic Photos

- The following becomes the norm...
- You go to these type scenes and then go home to your family and normal life
- People don't understand why you are "cynical" or the "way you are"

Stats

- Age most susceptible to suicide in LE (Early 40's)
- Most use firearms to commit the act (90 plus percent)
- Been on the force for years
- PTSD is attributed to some cases

Why Police Officers Commit Suicide

- Relationship Conflict
- Death of a child or spouse
- Loss of a child or spouse through divorce
- Terminal illness
- PTSD / PTSI
- Secondary PTSD / PTSI

Why Police Officers Commit Suicide

- Responsibility for other's death
- Feeling alone
- Sexual accusations
- Indictment
- Conviction of a crime / locked-up

Some Officer's Route to Suicide

- "Idealistic"
- Frequently exposed to danger, murder, rape, etc.
- Keeps emotions to self
- Starts drinking
- Becomes "cynical"
- Doesn't trust administration

Some Officer's Route to Suicide

- Tries to maintain "macho" image
- Drinking increases, pressure mounts, job performance begins to drop
- Problems with relationships
- SUICIDE

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- Conviction of a crime / locked-up or fear of being locked up

Is Help Available?

- Many times LE personnel have to reach out and ask for help
- Many agencies / departments do not know how to handle officers in need
- Personnel may be apprehensive about inquiring (macho image)