



Homeland Security

FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING CENTERS

Training Research



THE FLETC GRADUATE MEMORIAL

Line of Duty Deaths

A Resource for Research-Based Training

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Background:

SINCE 1970, OVER ONE MILLION of America’s finest men and women have trained at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) and have gone on to perform their responsibilities as law enforcement officers and agents across our nation. Unfortunately, too many of these men and women have paid the ultimate price in service to their country.

To honor the memory of graduates who have died in the line of duty, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center has established the FLETC Graduates Memorial at the Glynco campus. Each loss is a tragic event and should serve to facilitate a “lessons learned” mind-set that will supplement future training activities at the FLETC.

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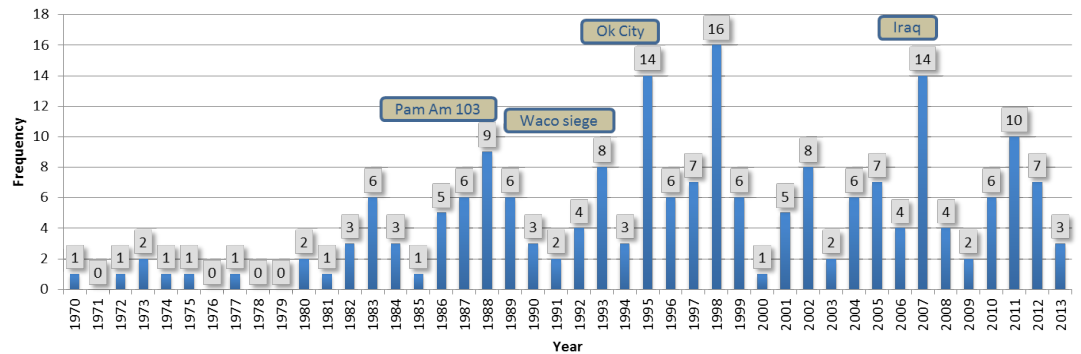
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FLETC Graduate Deaths by Year



Police agencies have different roles by the nature of their missions and their geographic locations. Acknowledging these differences, some of the risks to federal officers and agents may differ from those of the state and local Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) community. Several organizations have acted as stewards for the details of fallen LEOs such as the Officer Down Memorial Page (ODMP), the National Law Enforcement Officer Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) Report. A review and analysis of these incidents may be used to shape law enforcement training by providing an awareness of specific situations and factors that increase the likelihood of a lethal encounter. This report is intended to provide a clearer understanding of the situations and risks encountered by federal officers and agents in the field.

Trends in Line of Duty Deaths:

From 1970 to 2013 there have been a total of 199 graduates killed in the line of duty, which averages approximately 5 per year (see chart above). These numbers reflect peaks and valleys over this time period as well as an upward trend. Indeed, there were only 7 deaths in the first 10 years of FLETC (1970-79) versus 73 deaths during

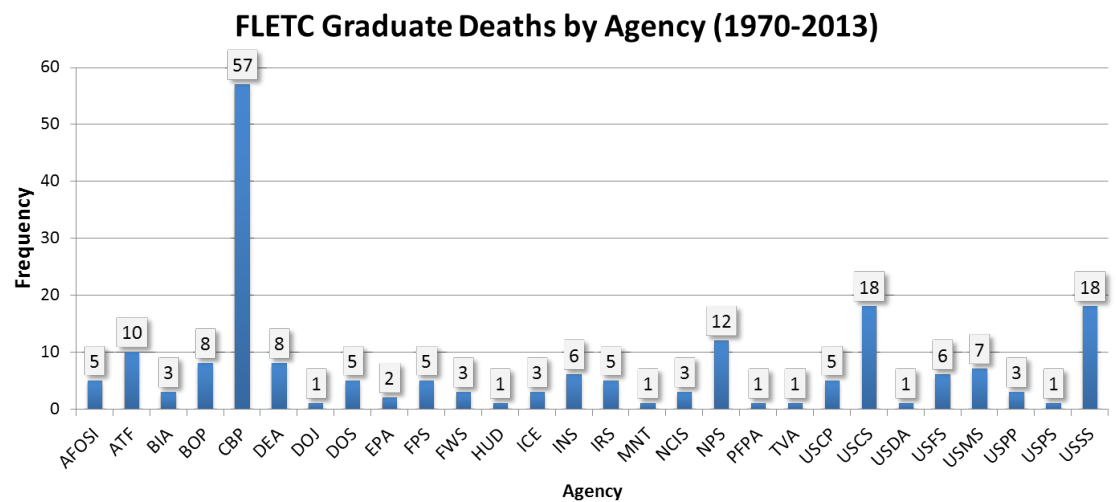
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the most recent 10 year period (2002-13).

One conclusion from looking at these numbers would be that FLETC graduates are currently at greater risk, or are less prepared than those who graduated previously. Due to the increased number of federal officers and agents entering the workforce, this conclusion is incorrect. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the number of full-time federal law enforcement officers and agents who were authorized to make arrests and carry firearms in the United States has increased from 69,000 to 120,000 (74%) from 1993¹ to 2008². In comparison, the average number of deaths decreased during this same time period from 7.24 to 5.83 per 100,000 officer/agents. Reviewing these data suggests the risk of dying in the line of duty for federal officer/agents is not rising faster than the population of federal officer/agents.

Agencies:

The FLETC provides training to over 90 federal agencies. Of these agencies, officers/agents have fallen in the line of duty from 28 agencies. The agencies who faced the largest number of these tragedies were Customs and Border Protection (CBP, 57), United States Customs Service (USCS [legacy to CBP], 18) and the United States Secret Service (USSS, 18).



Categories of Line of Duty Deaths:

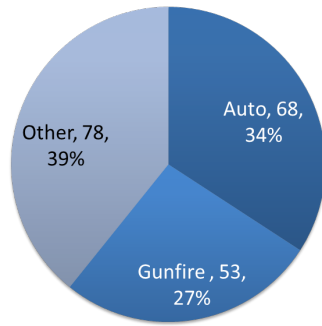
As a training organization, the FLETC and its Partner Organizations have the ability to adjust its training objectives based upon the evolving needs of its agencies and their missions. One way of detecting change in dangerous and lethal encounters is to collect data and identify areas of risk that can be mitigated through training. To accomplish this task, officer/agent deaths were broken down into categories that are meaningful to the training community. Summary data was collected from the

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ODMP and the NLEOMF using their three categories: Automobile, Gunfire and “Other”. Incident details of those on the FLETC wall were gathered primarily from the ODMP and were supplemented by agency memorial pages, the NLEOMF and internal documentation.

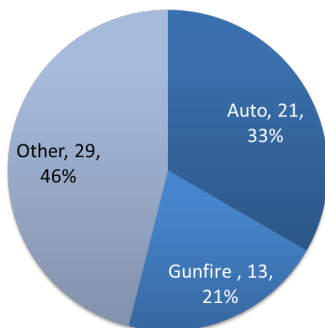
| Category | Definition |
|-------------------|--|
| Automobile | This category includes cases where an officer/agent was in a vehicle that crashed or the LEO was on foot and struck by a vehicle |
| Gunfire | This category includes any case where the LEO was shot by a firearm |
| Other | This category includes cases that do not fit the other two categories (i.e., heart attack, heat exhaustion, bombing etc.) |

FLETC Officer Deaths (1970-2013)

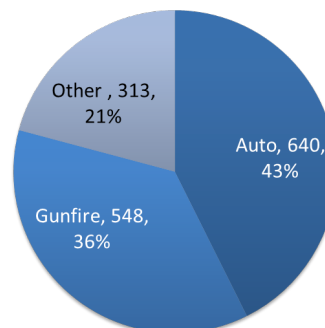


One thing that stands out when looking at these numbers is the high percentage (39%) of those in the “Other” category. When looking at the fatality statistics for all officer/agents across the country (NLEOMF³), FLETC graduates have a much larger number of officers/agents killed by “Other” causes (46% vs. 21% for the years 2004-2013). The natural question to ask is; what risks are attributed to these differences?

FLETC Officer Deaths (2004-2013)



NLEOMF Officer Deaths (2004-2013)



Why Does FLETC Have More “Other”?

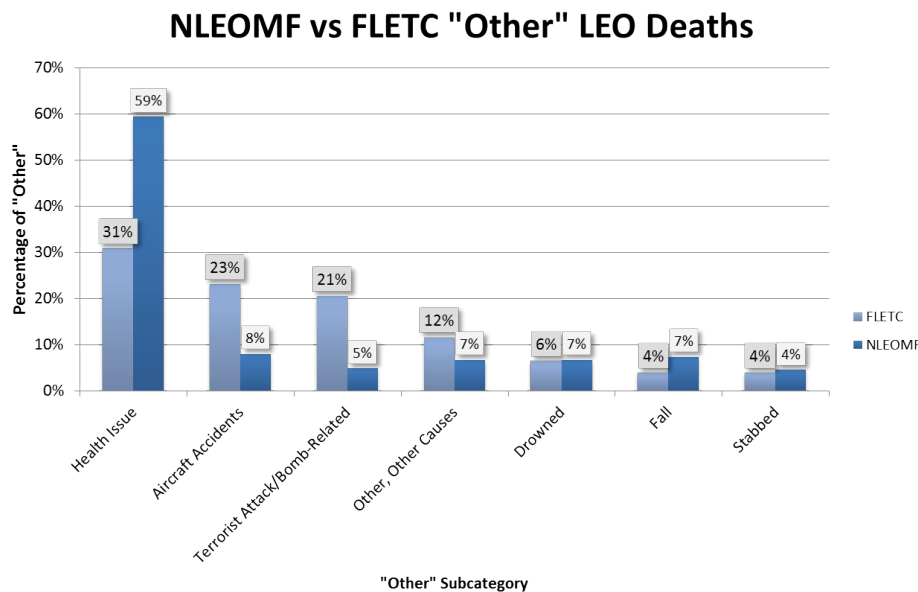
To address this issue, the “Other” FLETC data was coded into comparable sub-categories to those used by the NLEOMF (See below). Due to the much smaller number for FLETC, all cases (1970-

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2013) were plotted against more recent NLEOMF data (2004-2013). The largest differences in these data are that far more FLETC officer/agents were killed in aircraft crashes (23% vs 8%) and terrorist/bomb related incidents (21% vs. 5%).

Regarding the aircraft crashes, this is likely attributed to the increased use of small aircraft in the role of the federal government (management of federal land, border protection). The bomb related incidents included: the 7 officer/agents in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building (Oklahoma City), 7 officer/agents killed by a bomb/IED while serving in Iraq and 2 officer/agents in the terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103.

The aim of conducting this review was to determine if there were risks that are unique to federal officer/agents that could be addressed through training. Reducing these specific risks (airplane crashes and bombings) is not generally within the scope of the training offered by the FLETC.



While there may not be a risk that is unique to the federal LEO and training, there are risks in the “Other” category that may be training relevant to the LEO community. The largest risk is “Health Issues.” There were 24 FLETC graduates in this category. This includes heart attacks (18), the contraction of illnesses (3), and those that could not be coded in these categories (3 “collapsed,” “jogging,” “heat stroke”). Within this health issue category, 10 of the 24 fatalities occurred as part of an exercise or training program.

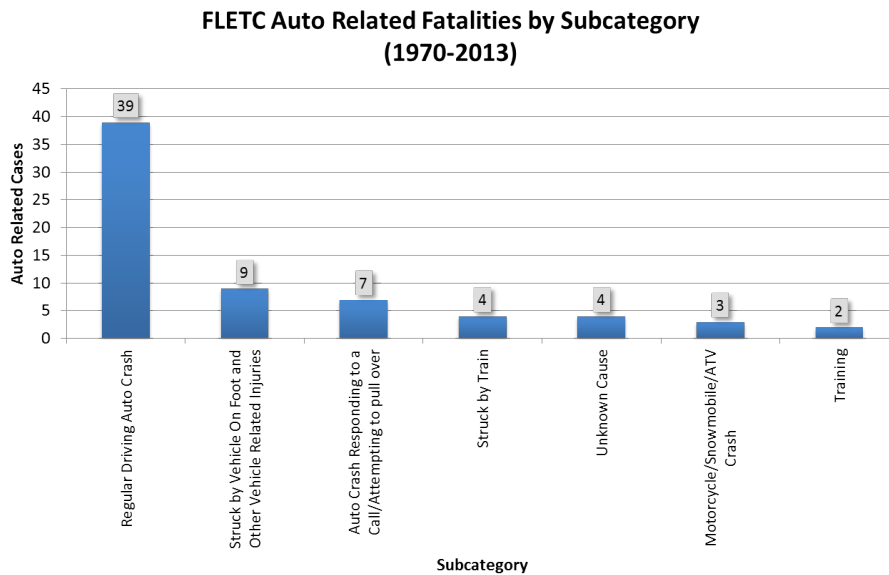
What Are the Greatest Automobile Risks?

The automotive crashes were coded into a variety of subcategories (See below). Each of these cases had varying levels of detail, comparisons and conclusions should be made with caution. While the

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greatest perceived risk would intuitively be those “Responding to an Emergency Call,” the greatest risk to FLETC graduates was actually “Regular Driving Auto Crashes.”

Some common threads included single vehicle crashes, rollover crashes, striking animals and inclement conditions. Based on the data available it was not possible to determine which of these crashes could be considered preventable by training. The main takeaway from a review of these crashes is that due to exposure, improving performance on “regular driving” may be equally critical to emergency response training.



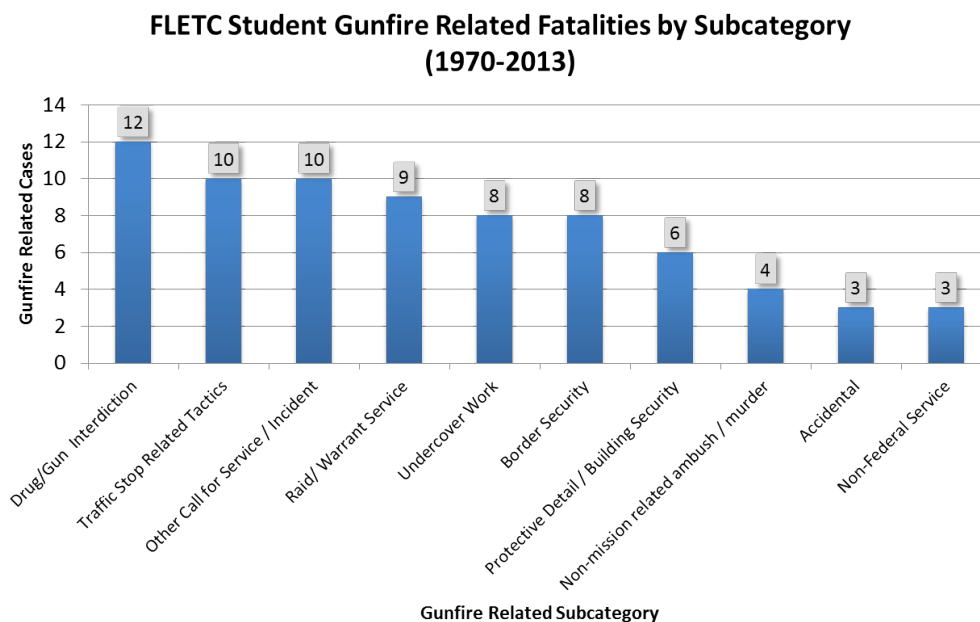
What Are the Greatest Gunfire Risks?

Most of the cases in the “other” and automobile related categories clearly fit into a single subcategory. For instance someone either had a heart attack or was in an aircraft crash, but not both. However, for the gunfire related deaths these cases often fit into multiple subcategories (i.e., undercover work and also doing drug/gun interdiction). To represent these data these cases were coded with a primary and secondary subcategory. As such, the frequencies reported below are the total of the primary and secondary coding and hence the total frequency (73) is higher than the number of gunfire related fatalities (53).

The subcategories with the highest number of cases were “drug/gun interdiction” (12), “traffic stops” (10) and “other call for service/incident” (10). Another trend to note is that for this category there is a more even spread among a variety of law enforcement roles. Most of these roles are areas in which related skills are provided in LEO Training. In order to gain a better understanding of these risks, it is recommended that organizations review their cases in this category for lessons

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learned, as well as review similar cases that have occurred outside of their organization.



Conclusions:

The goal of the effort was to learn more about the risks to graduates of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center and to help identify those risks that may be reduced through training. There were several key findings from this review:

There were more fatalities from “Other” causes than for the larger LEO community. However these differences were in terms of areas that fell outside of basic LEO training (airplane crashes and bombings).

The three highest risks that could potentially be addressed in training are:

- ▶ “Regular” automotive crashes (non-emergency response)
- ▶ Training related to Drug/Gun Interdiction
- ▶ Health issues (primarily heart attacks)

The conclusions that can be drawn from these incidents are limited by the details available on each fatality. By obtaining more detailed information on these cases, the FLETC Memorial data can be even more valuable to the future training efforts of federal LEOs. The FLETC will be reaching out to the Partner Organizations to explore methods to supplement the data used to write this report.

FLETC plans on reviewing this information, as well as other data sources to consider how FLETC training programs may be enhanced. Similarly, it is recommended that all law enforcement training

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organizations review the most relevant cases of fallen officers and agents when designing or updating their training.

¹ Reaves, B (1994). Federal Law Enforcement Officers, 1993: Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ-151166

² Reaves, B (2012). Federal Law Enforcement Officers, 2008: Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ 238250

³ NLEOMF (Retrieved 8/9/2014) Causes of Law Enforcement Deaths Over the Past Decade (2004-2013)
<http://www.nleomf.org/facts/officer-fatalities-data/causes.html>

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