

AMBUSH ATTACKS: MITIGATION CONSIDERATIONS

Ambush attacks of law enforcement personnel are an ongoing threat and have increased 10% from 2022 to 2023.¹ Tragically, there were 115 ambush attacks on police officers resulting in 130 officers shot, 20 of them fatally in 2023.² Furthermore, the recent ambush attacks of a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Officer shot in the back on a motorcycle, and a Phoenix Arizona Police Officer shot multiple times while working an off duty detail are tragic reminders of this persistent danger.³⁻⁴

The history of ambushes and these recent attacks should serve as a catalyst for police leaders to develop agency-tailored plans and training programs to help mitigate these risks.

Considerations for the Chief of Police:

1. Discuss the risk of ambushes with those responsible for training officers or direct the agency's Safety and Wellness Committee to review this bulletin and develop an agency training program to prepare officers for this threat.
2. Evaluate the availability of enhanced protective equipment, such as ballistic door panels, auto glass or window panels, vehicle perimeter alert systems, and more. Review the Law Enforcement Bulletin, [Police Vehicles: Purchase Options and Deployment](#), for considerations when purchasing and utilizing police vehicles.
3. Determine the feasibility of procuring advanced personal protective equipment, including ballistic helmets, enhanced body armor systems, and lifesaving equipment such as tourniquets, bleeding control kits, and "go-bags" for officers containing medical equipment and additional pre-loaded ammunition magazines.
4. Determine gaps concerning such equipment and develop a short- and long-term budget request plan for the identified officer safety needs.
5. Develop an agency-specific Ambush Mitigation Policy. A sample template is available [here](#).
6. Designate appropriate agency personnel to research, evaluate consistently, and test, upon approval of the Chief of Police, new safety devices and systems.
7. Implement an agency-specific Foot Pursuit Policy. A sample template is available [here](#).
8. Ensure all officers are aware of Daniel's Law and the ability to have their personal information redacted from specific websites and databases. Some resource considerations:
 - [State of New Jersey – Daniel's Law](#)
 - [Safety Directors Bulletin – Daniel's Law: Requirements and Challenges](#)
 - [Daniel's Law Enacted](#)
 - [New Jersey Department of Community Affairs – Daniel's Law](#)

9. Evaluate areas that are or should be considered "Employee or Authorized Personnel Only" at the Municipal Building/Borough Hall or Police Department. Ensure that such areas are correctly posted and reviewed by the Municipal Attorney so that such prohibitions can be appropriately enforced.

Include specific ambush considerations, tactics, and mitigation strategies in the agency training program.

Some Considerations:

1. Include using the officer's specific equipment to survive an ambush during actual training scenarios. Utilizing body armor, ballistic helmets, tourniquets, self-care, and buddy-care during such training evolutions will likely better prepare officers for such critical incidents.
2. Encourage officers to avoid establishing routines, such as leaving their homes at the same time every day, traveling the same route, and parking at the same location all of the time.
3. Discuss appropriate tactical response procedures for a "hot call" and ensure officers understand that such a call for service could be an ambush. Always encourage proactive tactical strategies concerning parking and approach.
4. Have "post lookouts" become common amongst all officers. When officers are gathered as a group, even for meals or breaks, the designation of at least one officer as the primary "lookout" should be routine and consistent with essential contact and cover principles during any call for service.
5. Include in the agency training program role-play scenarios for when the officer is ambushed while in their vehicle, including evasive vehicle maneuvers when the attacker is on foot or in another vehicle. Some training considerations might include practical evolutions involving unholstering the duty firearm while seated and wearing a safety belt. Additional discussions and training evolutions concerning when to exit the vehicle while under fire or when to attempt to drive through the ambush and engage the suspect might be critical to officer survival.
6. Discuss basic driving principles such as keeping an appropriate distance from the vehicle in front when stopped in traffic so the officer can effectively utilize the police vehicle as a barricade and move from the immediate threat if appropriate.
7. Utilize the actual police radio, both portable and mobile radio systems, during training evolutions so officers become proficient in utilizing the systems during an ambush.
8. Remind officers of the dangers of regularly looking at their cell phones. Members of the public are often reminded of the need to stay off their cell phones when driving or walking for traffic safety purposes. These risks apply to police officers as well, but officers should be reminded of the threat of an ambush when viewing their phones.
9. Create a training program that explicitly teaches officers how to react and defend themselves in an ambush and how to identify potential threats. Basic policing tactics such as recognizing bulges and adjusting items that might be concealed firearms should be reinforced, as some officers might not have had any further training concerning these issues since the police academy.
10. Ensure the agency field Training Officer program incorporates the agency policy and training objectives concerning ambushes.

11. Ensure agency civilian employees know they are always strongly encouraged to report activity that may be deemed suspicious in the area of the Municipal Building/Borough Hall, Police Department, near their homes, or in general.
12. Officers should be familiar with the agency's policies regarding intelligence gathering and information sharing, including timely notifications regarding any officer safety threat to regional fusion centers and the use of agency "flag" files or other computer-aided dispatch alert systems. A sample policy template is available [here](#).
13. Reinforce officers to always radio in any "flag down" contacts and describe the person or vehicle.
14. Encourage officers to speak with their families on how to react during an ambush or other incident, as appropriate.
15. Encourage officers to secure their online profiles. This includes updating privacy settings, virus protection, using two-factor authorization when possible, and utilizing strong passwords on any device. Numerous applications and services exist where officers can have their personal information removed from the internet, and agencies may encourage this practice.

If you have any questions, please contact your Law Enforcement Risk Control Consultant.

Sources and Citations:

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