

# CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER SAFETY

A survival guide for Code Enforcement Officers

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# **CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER SAFETY**

This training is dedicated to the men and women that have paid the ultimate price for upholding the public health, safety and general welfare standards that protect people, property values and the environment.

One injured code enforcement officer is too many.

# **This Training is a Guide**

- To provide code enforcement officers with knowledge, information and resources to reduce acts of aggression towards them.
- It is designed to help them defend themselves against physical attacks.
- It is intended to help justify the need to place a high priority on properly funding appropriate safety resources and developing officer safety programs.

# **DISCLAIMER**

Code enforcement work involves inherent risks and dangers. It may involve requiring citizens to change their lifestyles, impact their businesses, force them to alter their property, or give up their cherished possessions. It may be perceived as creating economic hardships, threatening livelihoods or causing the loss of real property.

# Nature of the problem

Today, citizens seem more inclined to attempt to bully code enforcement officers than other government agents. The reasons for this are personal to the outraged citizen. One thing is clear though: when a citizen acts like a bully, they are under the impression that code enforcement officers can be intimidated and that tactic can get the relief they seek. There is little that we can do to stop their fantasy when this belief only exists as wishful thinking. When it is based on facts and reality, it indicates there may be an institutional or agency-wide problem in need of remedy.

# Introduction

When citizens act aggressively towards a code enforcement officer, words alone may not offer any protection. Sometimes either retreating or using personal protective equipment is required to prevent injury from the attack. There may not be an option to retreat, which has been clearly documented by the battering and murders committed against code enforcement officers and other government regulators over the past 15 plus years.

# You Have a Protected Right to be Safe

- You are exposed to several workplace hazards. Your human resource or risk management departments are trained and able to evaluate the predictable physical job hazards that you are exposed to. If you have not had an occupational risk and hazard safety assessment performed yet, request it now.

- This training helps equip you with the knowledge and mindset to minimize these hazards by adding a beneficial degree of control to these three variables:
  - 1) Your mindset.
  - 2) Your work practices.
  - 3) The emotions of those who might wrongfully seek to harm you.

# ***Threats against a code enforcement officer***

- It is likely that every seasoned code enforcement officer has been threatened in either a subtle or overt manner.
- Under the law, any person who merely threatens to injure any public officer in an effort to cause that officer to do, or refrain from doing any official duty, may be punished by a fine of up to \$10,000, or by imprisonment up to one year, or both. Repeated offenses carry greater penalties.

# **Assault and Battery on a Code Enforcement Officer**

- In 2003, the penalty for committing a battery against a code enforcement officer (and certain other kinds of public servants) was enhanced to a more serious crime. An assault now rises from a misdemeanor to a felony when it is committed against a person known to be a code enforcement officer in the performance of official duties and results in an injury.

**Violence may not far behind when**  
**people feel their lives and**  
**property are threatened**

- Code enforcement involves the proper application of regulations that benefit the public. All code enforcement officers know the benefit of appropriate code enforcement actions outweighs any benefit that the individual code violator may receive from maintaining a public nuisance.

# **Motivation and propensity for criminal behavior**

- Violating a prescribed code is a crime. Therefore, an assault against a code enforcement officer is a crime. This training discusses human motivation and how to minimize citizen acts of aggression by using best practices. We must also recognize and give due credit to a code enforcement client's frame of reference as it relates to the propensity for criminal behavior

# **Theories in Criminology: Why People Commit Crime**

- In criminology, examining why people commit crime is very important in the ongoing debate of how crime should be handled and prevented.
- Criminologists are tasked with the job of seeking the best solutions in hopes of ultimately reducing types and levels of crime.
- Here is a broad overview of some key theories:

# Rational Choice Theory:

- People generally act in their self-interest and make decisions to commit crime after weighing the potential risks (including getting caught and punished) against the rewards.

# **Social Disorganization Theory:**

- A person's physical and social environments are primarily responsible for the behavioral choices that person makes. In particular, a neighborhood that has fraying social structures is more likely to have high crime rates. Such a neighborhood may have poor schools, vacant and vandalized buildings, high unemployment and a mix of commercial and residential property.

# Strain Theory:

- Most people have similar aspirations, but they don't all have the same opportunities or abilities. When people fail to achieve society's expectations through approved means such as hard work and delayed gratification, they may attempt to achieve success through crime.

# **Social Learning Theory:**

- People develop motivation to commit crime and the skills to commit crime through the people they associate with.

# **Social Control Theory:**

- Most people would commit crime if not for the controls that society places on individuals through institutions such as schools, workplaces, churches, and families.

# Labeling Theory:

- People in power decide what acts are crimes and the act of labeling someone a criminal is what makes him a criminal. Once a person is labeled a criminal, society takes away his opportunities which may ultimately lead to more criminal behavior.

# *Formula for Criminal Behavior*

- Regardless of the particular criminology theory or facts of the case, the following simple formula helps explain the basics in interacting with any citizen who may seek to commit a crime: Motive, plus Opportunity, absent Constraint, equals Crime (M+O-Con=Cri). This model applies to code violations as well as assaults, which are both crimes

# Political Nature of the Job

- A code enforcement officer's job consists of enforcing governmental rules against citizens who may complain about that enforcement (or lack of enforcement) to the decision-makers who created those rules. Those same decision-makers also have the power to suspend, discipline, terminate or otherwise limit the actions of the enforcing officer.

# The Human Variable

- All code enforcement officers have encountered or will encounter, citizens who assert, “This is my property, I can do whatever I want with it”, or similar egocentric statements. Government regulators know this is not true and can confidently and convincingly refute this fallacy.

# Aggressive Citizens

- While the regulatory nature of code enforcement work seems like it should be a safe environment, the facts show otherwise. Although most code enforcement transactions do not escalate into violence, code enforcement officers have been stalked and killed in the line of duty.

- 1) Understand the factors causing the aggression.
- 2) Recognize the external signs and symptoms of an aggressive mindset and learn how to avoid fueling a hostile personality.
- 3) Learn to de-escalate the stress that is contributing to the aggression.
- 4) Know when to retreat from a dangerous setting.

# **Bullying**

- Most citizens understand the “public servant doctrine” and many are not shy to remind code enforcement officers of the relationship with assertions such as, “I pay your salary,” “I am politically connected,” “I’ll have your job,” and so on. In code enforcement work, the bully seeks relief from governmental requirements, regardless of the motivation or appropriateness of that action.

# Emotional Versus Rational Thinking

- Human Emotions Have a Great Effect on Psychology and Neuroscience
- Balancing the Scale of Emotional Regulation

# **Human Emotions Have a Great Effect on Psychology and Neuroscience**

- If everybody only used their rational minds for decision-making, they would choose to comply with regulations
- Unfortunately, society does not consist of purely rational thinking beings. Human minds are complex and by nature, are primarily driven by feelings, thoughts and emotions.

1) Make the required corrections and reconcile one's emotions with reality (i.e. 'give-in').

2) Try to rationally convince the code enforcement officer to relax the requirements.

3) Attempt to force the code enforcement officer to reduce or eliminate the requirements.

- Choice number one is clearly the desired outcome, as corrections are made and tension is relieved. Luckily, this is the most frequent outcome.

- Choice number two results in the violator making excuses and attempts to justify and persuade. This “negotiation” style of response may be more prevalent in some cultures to the point of being an expected and socially acceptable norm where it would be perceived as rude to not attempt to negotiate.
- A little bit of give and take, within the parameters of the law, can go a long way to relieve tension that can frustrate the problem and lead to compromised officer safety.

- Choice number three begins as a forceful opposition. Combined with an assertive and aggressive personality, that force may take the form of an instant assault or battery.

# **Balancing the Scale of Emotional Regulation**

- At its core, there is no denying that code enforcement is primarily about influencing human behavior. Most code enforcement cases are solved by compelling a citizen to either perform a required act or to cease performing a prohibited act.

- The variables at issue are:
  - 1) The code enforcement officer's persuasiveness.
  - 2) The citizen's willingness to follow directions.

# Motivations and Deterrents

- The Code Enforcement Psychological Challenge
- Psychological Deterrents: Specific Deterrents
- Psychological Deterrents: General Deterrents
- When deterrents fail

# The Code Enforcement Psychological Challenge

- A segment of society consists of people who are content with living in a manner that society will not allow. To impose or, in some cases, to force societal rules and standards on them creates friction. Sometimes, with the right approach, the person may be more willing to accept and adopt the rules and standards as his or her own. The fact is that not everybody will surrender to compliant behavior.

# Psychological Deterrents: Specific Deterrents

- The majority of code enforcement efforts to change behaviors are directed at situations two and three since clients in situation one do not typically need added deterrents to comply. The primary tactic method used is to create effective psychological deterrents.

# Psychological Deterrents: General Deterrents

- An ancillary goal of code enforcement actions is to have a broad remedial impact. This occurs when unrelated, rational thinking parties learn of an enforcement action and realize, “I don’t want that to happen to me.”

- Others in the community who may be more associated with a code case or who simply heard via gossip or read about the code case may learn:
  - 1) There are enforceable rules and standards.
  - 2) There are officers who actively enforce those rules.
  - 3) Breaking those rules can have costly consequences.

# When Deterrents Fail

- A percentage of the population will not respond to psychological deterrents as described above. Their internal drive to preserve the status quo overtakes any desire to conform their behaviors to societal expectations even when they are aware of the law and the consequences for its breach.

# Complexities and Other Causes of Irrational Thinking

- Incapacity
- Intoxication
- Insanity

# Incapacity

- Persons who cannot control irresistible impulses typically have reduced abilities to cope with the mounting pressure and the perceived impending loss. When this occurs, emotions more easily overcome rational thinking. This renders the person, at least temporarily, incapable making the rational choice of compliance, making a proper legal challenge to the order or seeking assistance.

# Intoxication

- Alcohol, drugs or addiction can create cognitive and/or behavioral problems. Intoxication interferes with brain function and the thinking process. Addiction compounds this problem by taking over a person's priorities, so that code compliance is not given sufficient value

# Insanity

- In yet another segment of society, citizens may not be able to resist the impulses that drive them to act aggressively towards a code enforcement officer. These impulses may not be driven by traditional criminology theories, but may be due to a disease of the mind or mental defect. Persons who cannot control irresistible impulses typically have reduced abilities to cope with the mounting pressure and the perceived impending loss.

# Code Enforcement Officer Vulnerability

- Code enforcement officers are ordinary citizens with lives, homes and families.
- Availability of information makes it relatively easy to plan an attack or commit other unlawful acts against a code officer or their family.

# Your Sixth Sense

- Your Sixth Sense Is Real
- Mindfulness is at the Core of Safe Practices
- Choosing to Take Chances
- Personal Defense Tools and Safety Training

# Your Sixth Sense Is Real

- We have all heard the expression, “trust your sixth sense.” This sixth sense is not an additional sense at all. It is actually your five senses at work at the subconscious level. It is your brain receiving that information, processing it and raising a red flag to alert your conscious mind.

# Mindfulness is at the Core of Safe Practices

- Our drive to be productive tends to crowd out our focus on practicing safe work practices. Not just on remembering to do them, but also on our ability to give due attention to our sixth sense. Practicing mindfulness and adopting this mindset is the key to succeeding in the recommendations of this training.

# Choosing to Take Chances

- Hopefully, code enforcement officers are in a rational state of mind when performing their inspections, but that state of mind may create an undue risk to officer safety.
- When the variables are unknown, such as not knowing what is around the corner or how another person may behave, our past experience is not enough to predict the outcome.

# Personal Defense Tools and Safety Training

- The best approach to staying safe is to avoid potentially hazardous situations. Even though a code enforcement officer cannot stay home and avoid all encounters, he or she may still avoid hazardous situations in many circumstances.

- When the situation and suspected risk of harm is unavoidable, the code enforcement officer must heighten his or her awareness (**intangible tool**), remain on full alert (**intangible tool**) and be prepared to retreat or deploy the appropriate PPE (**tangible tool**) to defend against an attack.

# CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER SAFETY BEST PRACTICES (OSBP)

- It is important to remember that OSBP skills are perishable and require ongoing practice and updating so initially learning them is not enough.
- Have faith that OSBP will help keep you safe. Of course, there are no guarantees with human behavior.

- Code enforcement officers can lessen the chance of injury or worse by learning how to integrate the information in this training into their daily routine.
- By now, you may have noticed that this training repeats a few things over and over again. We have done this and will continue to do so, to a point, for a reason. The reason is that repetition leads to retention.

# **1. The number one way of staying safe is to decrease your vulnerability.**

- Always have your field equipment on and/or readily available for deployment.
- Improve your sixth sense (awareness) and notice/react to how you feel about the client contact.
- Make best safety practices your habit.

## **2. Slow down and become sensitized to and aware of the situation.**

- This is so important that it will be repeated over and over. Stay focused! Your mind is way too busy to think about what you will be doing next. The more actively you stay energized in the moment, the more successful you will be.

### **3. Think about what you should do rather than just doing it.**

- This does not mean to not follow your instincts. Instead, it means that where your instincts do not hint otherwise, remain mindful and attentive. Think about what you are seeing and doing. Choose your next step after processing information rather than simply acting out of habit.

## **4. Develop consistent, reliable officer safe work practices, and follow them**

- You are only as good as your habits. You will revert to your training or old/bad habits when you are under stress. If these habits are already in line with OSBP, your default position will be safer than otherwise. The reason we need to make a continued conscious effort to make improvement is that we need to overcome established, bad habits.

# **5. Do not deviate from your OSBP procedure**

- Duh

## **6. Execute additional OSBP procedures whenever the situation calls for it**

- Bring an additional code enforcement officer along, wear extra safety gear (per policy) or ask dispatch for a security check after a specific period of time. Include instructions to send in the troops if you do not answer or reply.

## **7. Avoid client driven distractions**

- You should always remain in command of the scene. Don't allow the client distract you from your business. Ask your clients to write down their questions while you perform your inspection and let them know you will allow ample time to answer them. This method not only keeps the distractions down, it keeps client's hands and minds occupied with something other than distracting or attacking you.

## **8. Go with your first instinct and listen to your “sixth” sense**

- Humans are highly evolved animals with instincts, which are programmed for survival, not solving code enforcement cases. Studies repeatedly show that a person’s first instinct is often right. Learn to interpret what your instincts are telling you and combine that with your current surroundings to decide what action(s) to take, if any.

- Your sixth sense is not truly a sense, like your sense of smell, at all. It is your brain interpreting information gathered by your five senses at the subconscious level. If you suddenly feel something is not right, that is your brain sending you a red flag. This routinely happens and is no mystery. Our five senses are continually monitoring more data than our conscious thinking minds can process.

## **9. Never use your personal vehicle for site inspections**

- You risk letting your customers know exactly what you drive if you drive your personal vehicle on inspections.
- Do not even take your personal car on a "drive by" inspection.
- Knowing your personal vehicle also could enable a disgruntled citizen to easily stalk you or anyone driving your vehicle.

# **10. Always park your vehicle facing the direction of exit or escape**

- The best tactic is never to park in driveways and avoid parking stalls if possible. If you must park in a marked stall, back into it whenever possible. Backing up to navigate out of a parking stall takes time and in a stressful situation, creates an increased likelihood of a collision.

# **11. Do not walk in front of a violator. Let them lead the way**

- Some may say having a violator lead puts the officer in a position of disadvantage. However, you actually have a better view from behind them, in most cases, and can easily escape if you see or sense it is time to retreat. When walking into, out of, or around a property, do not walk in front of a violator.

## 12. Know the lay of the land

- Use Google Earth or your agency's Geographical Information System (GIS) to view what is in the backyard before visiting. It helps orient you, which is useful if you need to escape. It also makes you aware of other conditions that may deserve attention.

## **13. Always think safety**

- Everybody already has the best resource to avoid harm: a brain. Officer safety skills are perishable and require thought and practice. You must keep these practices and skills in mind, continuously practice and use them in order to stay proficient. Nobody can do it for you, and no technology will serve as a substitute.

# **14. Make mind and body exercise part of your daily routine**

- Try to relax. Tension and stress are your enemies. A regular physical exercise regimen is proven to reduce stress and tension. Train your mind to relax.

## **15. Always survey the scene**

- EMS personnel are trained to always survey the scene before making their approach to render aid. Code enforcement officers should always do the same thing. Do a drive-by of the subject property, unless the element of surprise is necessary for your investigation. Identify the approach and escape routes, existing hazards, layout of the front yard and porch area. Look for cover options and whether or not there are people present.

# **16. Do as much preparation as you can BEFORE you approach the door**

- Prepare your notice(s) before approaching and initiating contact when violations are clearly visible from your vehicle to keep your concentration on your surroundings instead of your clipboard.

# **17. Take your documentation photos before initiating contact whenever possible**

- We all know that taking photos of violations from the public right-of-way is not a violation of a person's right to privacy, no matter how strongly the resident may protest. This again helps keep your eyes on your surroundings instead of just the small area seen through the camera lens.

## **18. Always plan your approach**

- Should I use the sidewalk or driveway to approach? Do I leave the gate open or do I close it behind me? Are there trip hazards in my approach path? What are my cover options? Am I easily visible from windows and doors as I approach? Can I minimize my exposure to windows and where should I stand after knocking on the door?

## 19. Vehicle Safety

- Some code enforcement professionals like to park right in front of the residence so they can use their vehicle for identification purposes and to make a hasty exit from the area if needed. It is preferred to park at least one house away (but not in front of the reporting party's house). Some law enforcement professionals recommend parking at least two doors down. Some would say this puts you too far away from the safety of your vehicles.

## **20. Always plan your escape route**

- Can you outrun your attacker? What hurdles will you need to jump to make your escape? How many doors will you need to pass through? Will you be able to see where you are going? Can you easily locate your vehicle key, unlock, enter and drive away before getting caught? Of course, the answer to this depends on many factors.

## **21. Create a deterrent against attacks**

- Even though many attackers act out of emotion, they still have some level of rational-minded thinking capacity. Giving constant reminders that you have a cavalry supporting you can enhance your chance of a safe encounter. If you are issued and carry a police radio, keep it on and tuned to a high-traffic police channel.

## 22. Avoid the risk

- If you can observe the violation without entering the property or structure, do so. Consider viewing interior violations from an open door. Base your notice from photos taken by police or fire staff. Ask the violator for and carefully record an admission of a violation. Make sure to ask for sufficient detail that clearly communicates a violation.

## 23. Partner up

- It is normally not prudent to send two persons to accomplish a task that can be accomplished by one. The exception is when circumstances indicate that a second person is needed for officer safety.

## 24. Maintain your safety zone

- People naturally seek to maintain personal zones that are at least eighteen inches. Do not let citizens breach this space. Attackers may begin their approach by gradually getting closer as a way to “test the waters” and to see how or if you react.

## 25. Maintain a barrier

- Much of our work has us in close proximity to citizens. An aggressor can eliminate your personal space in an instant and strike you. Creating any type of barrier can help protect you from a blow.

## **26. Stay healthy and strong**

- Be regularly active in physical sports and engage in strength training programs. There is an endless list of physical activities that are not only fun, but also offer the benefit of building a stronger body that can better resist injuries and improve your odds of successfully overcoming an attack.

## 27. No neckwear

- No neckties, badge holders or cross-shoulder bags. Do not present yourself with a noose already in place. It can be used to choke you, restrain you or prevent your escape.

## **28. Minimize your vulnerability**

- Calculating aggressors thrive on knowing about you. They may solicit personal information through casual conversation or watch and listen for clues. Asking seemingly benign questions about your family or what kind of car you drive all feed them important information allowing them to devise schemes to harm or eliminate you.
- Be civil and focus on official business

## **29. Place title to your property in your corporate name**

- How many times have you found a citizen by looking at property indexes by name? Real property records are public records and are usually indexed by name. You may lawfully incorporate or create a trust while remaining the sole shareholder or beneficiary without creating any risk of loss of ownership of assets held by the corporation or trust. You may then legally transfer property into its name instead of yours.

## 30. Avoid being “tailed”

- There are multiple ways an attacker can learn your home address. One known tactic is to watch you exit your office at the end of the workday and follow you home. Plan your commute to include a stretch of road where you have a long unobstructed view behind you to possibly detect if you are being tailed. Altering your routine by not following a predictable pattern may also throw off any potential followers.

# 31. Maintain DMV Confidentiality

- One dishonest way an attacker can learn your home address is by watching you enter your personal vehicle, getting your license plate number and filling out the DMV form #INF 70 (Request for Record Information). This form will return your registered address to the requestor.

- Here, California Vehicle Code § 1808.4(a)(19) can help. It states that active or retired city enforcement officers engaged in the enforcement of the Vehicle Code or municipal parking ordinances qualifies for confidential home addressing in vehicle registration records. Recently enacted legislation in California also extends the DMV “block” to those code enforcement officers who enforce illegal dumping laws.

## **32. Manage the citizen's emotional base**

- Since aggressive acts towards code enforcement officers are typically reactive, you have a role in generating that reaction. Communication is an interactive process.
- When the relationship between the two parties is adversarial or is perceived as threatening to one party, the message can trigger a negative, emotional response.

# 33. Practice reflective listening

- Begin with stating your understanding of the emotion, followed by a summary of the message.
- First, reflect the emotion. Then, state your understanding.

The advantage to you stating that you understand both the message and the emotion behind it, it tells the citizen that:

- 1) He or she does not need to repeat the message.
- 2) You are actually listening attentively.
- 3) You understand the message.
- 4) You care about the person's situation.

## **34. Communicate your location and route**

- Make sure somebody knows where you generally will be during your day. Use the technique(s) that is most appropriate for your specific situation. Keep your electronic calendar up to date.

## **35. Always have your cell phone on and ready**

- Have your police dispatch phone number programmed in your phone. If your phone has an emergency button, have it programmed to your PD dispatch. If not, set your phone up so it takes the minimal number of steps to call for help. Dialing 911 is also a viable option. Do not try to call your coworkers or the office in an emergency.

## **36. Carry self-defense tools**

- An obviously well-equipped and well-trained officer is a deterrent to an attack and is also better prepared to fend off a potential attack. Prudence and the law both dictate that public employees need to be provided with available safety gear and training for hazards that are reasonably expected to be encountered.

## **37. Step away from the door**

- Do not stand directly in front of the door to the residence after knocking or ringing the bell. Step off to the side along the doorjamb where there is more protection from a possible gunshot through the door or step back a few steps and off to the side.
- The most important reason to keep a fair distance between you and the individual is to give you time to react if the contact turns physical.

## 38. Clear the house

- We encounter houses without knowing exactly who or what we will find.
- An occupied structure presents an additional potential hazard or other barrier to perform a safe and accurate inspection.
- It is not unprofessional or unreasonable to ask them to all step outside-weather permitting.

## **39. Check for other known illegal activity before visiting**

- Police departments maintain databases of calls, activity and reports by address
- Check with them whenever you have a suspicion based on circumstances. If you have an uneasy feeling or something does not look right, check with your police.

## **40. Stop, look and listen**

- Stop, look and listen close enough for your sixth sense to come into being.
- Practice mindfulness.
- Take five to ten minutes each day to practice mindfulness exercises to keep your perceptive skills sharp.

# 41. Interview neighbors

- There is a reason that background investigators interview neighbors. Neighbors often know about a person's character, reputation, habits and lifestyle. They may have knowledge of a variety of other case-important details.

## **42. Learn self-defense skills**

- Being ready, willing and able to defend one's self may mean the difference between life and death. The best method is to join your police department's training and skills maintenance program.
- If you enjoy the practice or if you cannot participate in your police department's training, consider taking a class or joining some outside activity that teaches or practices self-defense or martial arts.

## 43. Role play for practice

- Officer safety skills, verbal and physical, are perishable skills so you need to practice to stay sharp. One of the best ways to do this is to work with a partner who assumes the role of the citizen.
- Switch roles and see what verbal skills your partner might employ to defuse the situation he or she comes back with

# 44. Always carry the ten essentials. \*

1. Respiratory protective gear-particulate mask, respirator etc.
2. Blood-borne pathogen kit-gloves, face/eye protection and hand sanitizer
3. Sterilized water for general use
4. Potable water
5. Basic first aid kit
6. ANSI approved eye protection
7. ANSI approved head protection
8. Tyvek suit or other overalls
9. Rugged leather gloves
10. Change of clothing/footwear

● \*

## 45. Come back another day

- Use the principle of thinking created by one of the co-founders of Lexipol, Gordon Graham, known as The WIN Principle: What is Important Now. Ask yourself and decide WHAT action, if any, is absolutely IMPORTANT to take NOW.

## **46. Anticipate and plan for an animal attack**

- You will definitely encounter animals during your inspections. For the record, ALL animals are unpredictable and that should be kept in mind whenever one is present.
- However, for the purposes of this document, let's focus on dogs as they are most commonly found during inspections and present the most direct hazard to code enforcement officers in the line of duty.

- All dogs are unpredictable and it is difficult, even for a seasoned animal control officer, to accurately predict whether a dog that is acting aggressively intends to bite or is just feigning. If you always assume it will bite, you will be better prepared if it attempts to do so.
- Do not hesitate to ask the owner to secure the dog until you are finished with your site inspection.

## **47. Know that you are always being watched**

- Residential video surveillance systems are common these days. While most systems are intended for security against wrongdoers, property owners may pass around images of your visit if you appear to be in the wrong. You should not have a problem if you always act responsibly and as if you are being recorded.

# 48. Recruit a partner to evaluate you

- Have your partner(s) read these best practices and analyze each other's practices. Shadow each other on a case from opening through the end of your first inspection. Observe each other's safety practices during the inspection.

- Be thankful if they report back any or all of the following:
  - You were vulnerable.
  - You let your guard down.
  - You need more practice or improvement.
- Remember that officer safety best practices can be counter-intuitive for some of us. We are trusting; we rely on our past successes and are programmed to operate efficiently.

“Too many times the decisions on matters concerning the safety of code officers are made by people with no ‘real world’ training or experience”

-anonymous

**BE SAFE EVERY DAY**

Her children wrote in her obituary

“She was our comfort, our dance partner, our biggest fan, our April-Fools Day Prankster, our actual bone-marrow-donating life-saver, our Super-Mom, our sweet ‘Zelma,’ and the hardest worker we ever knew,”



Jill Robinson  
Code Enforcement Officer  
West Valley City, Utah  
Murdered August 9, 2018 in  
the line of duty