

Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act

Report to Congress May 2021

United States Department of Justice
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)

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I. Purpose

Pursuant to the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-12 (Blue Alert Act or Act), the United States Department of Justice (DOJ or Department) provides this annual report to Congress.

II. Background

The Blue Alert Act was enacted to “establish a national Blue Alert communications network within the Department of Justice to issue Blue Alerts through the initiation, facilitation, and promotion of Blue Alert plans, in coordination with States, units of local government, law enforcement agencies, and other appropriate entities.” (34 U.S.C. § 50502).¹ Named for two fallen New York City Police Department (NYPD) officers who were ambushed, the Act is intended to facilitate rapid dissemination of information to law enforcement agencies, the media, and the public that will aid in (1) apprehending violent criminals who have killed or seriously injured a law enforcement officer in the line of duty; (2) finding an officer when he or she is missing in connection with his or her official duties; or (3) sharing notice of an imminent and credible threat that an individual intends to cause the serious injury or death of a law enforcement officer.

Officer safety and wellness remains a top priority for the Department. The Department is committed to implementing the Blue Alert Act to protect the lives of the men and women who bravely serve in law enforcement. The nature of police work is uniquely dangerous, and the Department continues its strong support of federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement as they advance public safety.

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office), because of its extensive previous work on officer safety and wellness issues, was tasked by the Department with overseeing implementation of the Blue Alert Act and creating the National Blue Alert Network.

III. Coordinator Duties/Activities

The Blue Alert Act requires an annual report to Congress on the activities of the National Blue Alert Coordinator and the effectiveness and status of Blue Alert plans that are in effect or being developed. The COPS Office has dedicated significant time and effort to implement the Blue Alert Act and reports the following activities:

¹ While the legislation does not specifically mention Tribes, in its implementation of the Act the COPS Office is working with Tribal law enforcement as well.

Designation of National Coordinator and Deputy National Coordinator

The Blue Alert Act requires the Attorney General to assign an existing officer of the Department to act as the national coordinator of the Blue Alert communications network—to serve as the nationwide point of contact for the development of a network and regional coordination of Blue Alerts through the network (34 U.S.C. § 50503(a)).

As noted in previous Reports to Congress, the Attorney General designated the Director of the COPS Office as the National Blue Alert Coordinator (Coordinator). For this reporting period, the COPS Office Director was Philip E. Keith; the Deputy Blue Alert National Coordinator (Deputy Coordinator) was COPS Office staff member Vince Davenport. The COPS Office Blue Alert team continued to meet regularly to discuss implementation strategies, timelines, and deliverables. Select members of the team have been trained to provide technical assistance to states and local and tribal law enforcement agencies seeking to establish Blue Alert plans or enhance an existing Blue Alert plan.

Establishment of Advisory Group and quarterly meetings

Pursuant to the Blue Alert Act, the Coordinator is required to establish an Advisory Group to assist states, local governments, and other involved entities with initiating, facilitating, and promoting Blue Alert plans (34 U.S.C. § 50503(b)(5)). The Act requires the group to have geographically diverse representation and include the following representatives:

- A law enforcement organization representing rank-and-file officers
- Other law enforcement agencies and public safety communications
- Broadcasters, first responders, dispatchers, and radio station personnel
- Other individuals and organizations the Coordinator determines are necessary for the success of the network

As previously reported, the Coordinator established an Advisory Group that satisfies each of the statutory requirements. Today, there are fourteen members representing the following organizations:

- Fraternal Order of Police (FOP)
- National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO)
- Blue Alert Foundation, Inc.
- International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)
- National Sheriffs' Association (NSA)
- National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF)
- Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO)
- National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives

- National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)
- Concerns of Police Survivors
- Georgia Bureau of Investigation
- Indian Country Intelligence Network (ICIN)

In addition, during the reporting period a tribal law enforcement representative joined the Advisory Group.

The Advisory Group meets on a regular basis. To date, Advisory Group members have provided valuable individual feedback to the COPS Office on our guidance and recommendations to states and local governments in developing or enhancing their Blue Alert plans. The COPS Office will add additional Advisory Group members or amend the frequency of meetings, as appropriate, consistent with the discretion granted to the Coordinator by the Blue Alert Act.

Development of voluntary guidelines and protocols

The Blue Alert Act requires the Coordinator to establish voluntary guidelines for states and local governments to use in developing Blue Alert plans. The guidelines must include a list of resources necessary to establish Blue Alert plans; criteria and guidelines for issuing Blue Alerts; guidelines to protect privacy and civil liberties; and guidelines aligned with the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database operated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and any other relevant crime information repository (34 U.S.C. § 50503(b)(2)).

The Department has developed voluntary guidelines that address two complementary components of the Blue Alert Act: public alerts and law enforcement sensitive (LES) alerts. Public alerts directed at media outlets and affected communities provide suspect or missing officer information that is appropriate for public dissemination. LES alerts directed at affected law enforcement agencies provide sensitive information that is accessible only to law enforcement personnel. Public and LES alerts are often sent concurrently.

Unlike public Blue Alerts, LES Blue Alerts are limited to situations where an investigating agency needs to share information with other state or law enforcement agencies but has elected not to make suspect information publicly known. LES alerts are used when the investigating agency believes that making suspect information known publicly could jeopardize the criminal investigation or when the investigating agency believes that public alerting is not prudent given the facts known at the time. LES alerts are also used when there is a known credible threat to law enforcement in a particular jurisdiction and the investigating agency wishes to alert other law enforcement personnel in the affected jurisdictions or geographical area without making the threat known publicly.

To meet its statutory mandate to establish voluntary guidelines, the COPS Office has issued Blue Alert Guidelines (https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/blue-alert/blue_alert_guidelines.pdf) to provide general information on when a law enforcement agency should issue Blue Alerts consistent with the statutory

criteria as set forth in the Blue Alert Act. Blue Alerts may be issued when one of the following sets of threshold criteria are met: (1) death or serious injury of a law enforcement officer in the line of duty; (2) law enforcement officer missing in connection with official duties; or (3) threat to cause death or serious injury to a law enforcement officer.

To supplement the Blue Alert Guidelines, the COPS Office has also developed Effective Blue Alert Plans: Guidance and Recommendations to help states and local agencies through the Blue Alert plan development process; enhance and standardize existing state and local Blue Alert plans; and promote nationwide compatibility of Blue Alert plans. This comprehensive guidance identifies and addresses eight key elements to consider in developing new or updating existing Blue Alert plans: (1) activation criteria for alerts; (2) requesting alerts; (3) writing effective alerts; (4) geographic scope of alerts; (5) interstate and intrastate coordination of alerts; (6) duration of alerts; (7) officer privacy protection; and (8) suspect apprehension efforts.

The COPS Office has worked closely with partners at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) to establish the most effective way to deliver targeted alerts within the existing alerting infrastructure. We will also continue to work with law enforcement stakeholders and Advisory Group members to increase the effectiveness of our guidance.

Information repositories and delivery of technical assistance

Since October 2016, the COPS Office has maintained a dedicated webpage on our website at <https://cops.usdoj.gov/bluealert> to promote Blue Alerts and provide educational materials. This National Blue Alert Network webpage serves as a center for resources including the following:

- Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act of 2015
- Blue Alert map indicating those states and territories with Blue Alert plans
- Blue Alert Guidelines
- National Blue Alert Network factsheet
- Blue Alert Legislation Compendium
- State Blue Alert Officials Directory (public contact information)
- Information on how to access our secure controlled-access information-sharing platform and who is eligible to use it

Since January 2017, the COPS Office has provided a secure web-based data repository maintained on the FBI Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal (LEEP) that provides controlled access to states, local governments, law enforcement agencies, and other qualified stakeholders as determined by the Coordinator. Individuals with existing LEEP or LEO.gov accounts can access the National Blue Alert

Network Special Interest Group (SIG) on this platform directly at <https://www.cjis.gov/>. The National Blue Alert SIG provides curated information that may not be appropriate for public dissemination to include, but not limited to, the following:

- State Blue Alert Officials Directory (24-Hour emergency contact information)
- National Blue Alert Network PowerPoint Presentation
- *Effective Blue Alert Plans: Guidance and Recommendations*
- Sample Blue Alert Policies

The COPS Office will continue to enhance the National Blue Alert Network webpage and SIG with updated and new information on a regular basis.

Notably, the Blue Alert Act prohibits the Coordinator from lobbying any state officer regarding the funding or implementation of a Blue Alert plan (34 U.S.C. § 50503(e)(2)). The COPS Office does offer free informational resources and technical assistance to any state or local agency wishing to establish or modify its Blue Alert plans. Upon request by the state or local agency, trained COPS Office Blue Alert Team members will review Blue Alert plans and provide feedback to ensure compliance with the voluntary guidelines and protocols.

Engagement with stakeholders

The COPS Office maintains active partnerships with various stakeholders representing law enforcement and emergency communications in order to administer and expand the National Blue Alert Network. Stakeholder organizations play a key role in ensuring that the COPS Office is aware of relevant issues affecting officer safety and alerting technologies. The COPS Office will continue to work with stakeholders individually and collectively to develop and enhance our national Blue Alert strategy. We will also identify additional stakeholders as needed.

Cooperation with other federal agencies

The Act requires the Coordinator to cooperate with the FCC, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Transportation (DOT), and other DOJ offices as appropriate (34 U.S.C. § 50503(d)). As previously reported, the COPS Office has established a point of contact with each of the identified federal agencies and the FBI. We have since forged strong working relationships with several key federal partners, most notably the FCC and FEMA.

The FCC oversees the national Emergency Alert System (EAS) used to deliver important emergency information, such as AMBER alerts and weather information targeted to specific areas. The FCC plays a key role in alerting, as it establishes the technical standards, activation procedures, and testing protocols. The FCC has sole authority to create the fixed three-letter EAS event codes used to define alerts and their corresponding actions by broadcasters, cable system operators, wireless carriers, and other parties responsible for alerting the public. On December 14, 2017, the FCC voted unanimously to

approve the creation of a special three-letter EAS event code to be used by alerting authorities when issuing Blue Alerts: BLU. The new FCC rule constituted a major advancement in alerting capabilities and will benefit all 50 states and U.S. territories, including Tribal lands. The rule took effect in two phases. The use of the BLU event code for alerts issued via television and radio went into effect on January 18, 2019. The use of BLU for Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) became effective on November 29, 2019.

In tandem with the FCC's role in alerting, the DHS's FEMA is responsible for maintaining and operating the national Integrated Public Alerts and Warning System (IPAWS). In order to ensure that alerting capabilities keep up with current and emerging technologies, FEMA partners with various stakeholders from the public and private sectors representing broadcasting, mobile device manufacturers, and other interested industries.

States and many jurisdictions rely on IPAWS to utilize EAS and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) to alert the public. IPAWS allows alerting authorities to write their own emergency alerts using commercially available software applications approved by FEMA and compliant with common alerting protocols. Alerts are authenticated and delivered simultaneously through multiple communication pathways to quickly reach the public.

The COPS Office will continue its ongoing coordination efforts with FEMA to advance the integration of Blue Alert Plans into IPAWS. The COPS Office will also continue to seek consultation with, and ongoing advice from, our federal partners. We will also identify new federal partners as needed.

Promotion of the Blue Alert Act

Notably, the Blue Alert statute prohibits the Coordinator from conducting any official travel or hosting a conference for the sole purpose of implementing the Blue Alert Act (34 U.S.C. § 50503(e)(3)). These restrictions have not prevented the COPS Office from promoting the Blue Alert Act, and we have undertaken a number of measures to raise awareness of the Blue Alert Act.

Beginning in 2019, and continuing during this reporting period, the National Blue Alert Coordinator set forth a 'battle plan' to target states that had not yet adopted Blue Alert plans or systems. COPS Office staff partnered with U.S. Attorneys' Offices in the affected states to identify select groups of law enforcement stakeholders who could assist with information sharing regarding the benefits of Blue Alerts and the resources of the National Blue Alert Network. The results led to the creation of working coalitions of concerned stakeholders in the targeted states. Many of these coalitions have gone on to promote Blue Alert legislation and other actions leading to the adoption of Blue Alert plans or systems.

The Department has also promoted awareness of the Blue Alert Act at various national law enforcement conferences, including the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, and the National Sheriffs' Association. These conferences provide outreach to tens of thousands of law enforcement officers and agencies. The Department has also responded to multiple requests from various state law enforcement agencies for additional information, technical assistance, and resources, offering stakeholders a roadmap for establishing Blue Alert plans and examples of

existing Blue Alert legislation. The following seven states introduced Blue Alert legislation during this reporting period: Idaho, Iowa, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Arkansas introduced a Blue Alert bill at the 2021 legislative session

Coordination with United States Attorneys' Offices

In addition to this 'battle plan' coordination, the COPS Office continues to expand its partnerships with U.S. Attorneys' Offices throughout the nation to promote the National Blue Alert Network. COPS Office staff share information with Law Enforcement Coordinators (LECs) about issues affecting officer safety and Blue Alert related news. The Executive Office for United States Attorneys has been instrumental in facilitating coordination between The COPS Office and LECs.

IV. Blue Alerts Issued

There are eight known instances where Blue Alerts were issued during this reporting period.

Alabama:

February 4, 2020 – Kimberly, AL: The Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) issued a Blue Alert for a suspect who shot a Kimberly Police Department officer during a pursuit on I-65. The officer died from his injuries, and authorities apprehended the suspect within 24 hours of the Blue Alert activation.

Georgia:

September 6, 2020 - Whitfield County, GA: The Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) issued a Blue Alert after a suspect allegedly shot a Whitfield County deputy during a traffic stop on I-75. According to the GBI, the suspect fired numerous shots at a Whitfield County sheriff's deputy from inside his vehicle, striking the deputy in his ballistic vest. The deputy stopped the suspect for pulling a stolen utility trailer. Authorities captured the suspect after a nearly 72-hour manhunt. The deputy was not seriously injured.

Arizona:

September 17, 2020- Phoenix, AZ: Two Arizona Department of Public Safety troopers conducting surveillance on a warrant service were shot at by a suspect with an AK-47 in an ambush-style attack. The troopers were in an unmarked car, and the suspect and a driver approached them in another vehicle. As one of the troopers exited the vehicle to contact them, the suspect exited the passenger door and began shooting at the troopers. Authorities arrested one suspect at the scene, but the vehicle's driver escaped, and a Blue Alert was activated. The driver of the car remains at large. The troopers escaped injury.

North Carolina:

November 14, 2020- Durham County, NC: The Durham County Sheriff's Office and other agencies issued a Blue Alert for a specific vehicle after suspects fired shots into an off-duty deputy's car. The deputy's injuries were not considered life-threatening. Four days after the shooting, the Sheriff's Office announced the arrest and apprehension of one suspect. The second suspect was placed on Durham County's "most wanted" list and was apprehended two months after the shooting.

Mississippi:

June 12, 2020 – Simpson County, MS – The Mississippi Bureau of Investigation (MBI) issued a Blue Alert after a Simpson County Deputy was shot while transporting a subject from an involuntary psychiatric evaluation at a mental health facility. While being placed into a patrol car, the suspect attacked the deputy and was able to gain control of the deputy's service weapon. The suspect shot the deputy before fleeing on foot. The suspect was apprehended the following day, and the deputy died from his injuries.

Oklahoma:

June 29, 2020- Tulsa, OK: The Oklahoma Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (OLETS) issued a Blue Alert after a suspect shot two Tulsa Police officers during a traffic stop. During the stop, the suspect became uncooperative with the officers, and a struggle ensued. During the struggle, the suspect pulled a gun from under the seat and shot both officers multiple times. The suspect fled the scene in a getaway vehicle with an additional suspect. One officer died from his injuries, while the other officer suffered severe wounds. Authorities captured the suspects 7 hours after the Blue Alert was issued.

California:

August 4, 2020- Sacramento, CA: Sacramento Police responded to an armed and possibly suicidal subject call. The suspect left the scene in a vehicle before police arrived. A police sergeant arrived at the scene, checking on the safety of family members and neighbors. The suspect returned to the scene and fired a gun at the sergeant, striking his patrol vehicle several times. The California Highway Patrol issued a Blue Alert after the suspect fled in his car. The suspect was shot and killed almost a month later during a confrontation with Sacramento Police. No officers were injured in either incident.

Texas:

March 26, 2021- Coolidge, TX: A Texas Department of Public Safety trooper assisting a disabled vehicle near Coolidge, TX, was shot upon arrival. As the trooper was coming to a stop behind the vehicle, the suspect exited the driver's door of the disabled car and began firing on the trooper, striking him. A Blue Alert was issued, and authorities located the suspect within 24 hours deceased from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. The trooper died five days after the incident.

V. Effectiveness and Status of Blue Alert Plans

In addition to reporting on the activities of the Coordinator, the Blue Alert Act also requires the annual report to Congress to include the effectiveness and status of Blue Alert plans (34 U.S.C. § 50503(f)). The effectiveness of existing Blue Alert plans is difficult to gauge, partly because each state develops and administers its own plan individually. The COPS Office is not yet aware that any of the states with Blue Alert plans have conducted research into their effectiveness. The COPS Office has begun collecting data as it becomes available in order to evaluate the effectiveness of Blue Alert plans.

As previously reported, the COPS Office made direct outreach calls to each of the 56 states and territories. This includes 37 states that operate Blue Alert systems as well as those 19 states and territories that currently do not have Blue Alert systems.

Since implementation of the National Blue Alert Network, there have been numerous incidents where law enforcement officers were shot and killed, sparking a search for suspects. In response, the Blue Alert Team has contacted the affected state authorities to offer assistance, ensure that neighboring states or jurisdictions were promptly notified, and facilitate interstate coordination.

As previously reported, the COPS Office has also verified which states have Blue Alert plans and the extent to which the plans comport with the voluntary guidelines. We have secured copies of Blue Alert plans and related materials such as program overviews, activation plans, legislation, and brochures from states that currently have Blue Alert plans.

To facilitate analysis of existing Blue Alert plans, the COPS Office publishes a legislation compendium containing the specific public laws, statutes, or executive orders that authorized and created state Blue Alert systems. The following are highlights of the threshold activation criteria from those states. These highlights illustrate clear and significant differences between states that could limit or complicate coordination efforts when a suspect flees, or is thought to have fled, to another jurisdiction:

- 62 percent (23 states) of plans contain provisions for officers missing in the line of duty
- 16 percent (6 states) of states allow for activation in cases where an officer is threatened with a deadly weapon but not actually injured
- 70 percent (26 states) require sufficient descriptive information about a suspect to enlist the public's assistance
- 57 percent (21 states) require a suspect vehicle description or license tag for activation

The following table is a quick reference of threshold activation criteria for the featured states as of April 2020. The wide range of Blue Alert activation criteria among states highlights the need for uniform guidance and consistent protocols to enhance coordination and maximize interoperability from one state to another.

The COPS Office continues to examine and document the differences and commonalities between existing Blue Alert processes. Our legislative compendium includes policies, forms, brochures, and promotional material from Blue Alert states that will be useful to states and law enforcement agencies in developing or improving their own Blue Alert systems.

VI. Officers Shot in the Line of Duty

In 2019, the COPS office awarded a grant to the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) to monitor and track shootings of law enforcement officers in the United States and its territories—specifically, shootings in which on-duty officers are wounded or killed. The FOP uses media monitoring software and general research to analyze publicly available information. Based on this data, the Department, in partnership with the FOP, issue a Report on Officers Shot, which documents all known shooting incidents in a calendar year, in order to better understand the nature and frequency of incidents that could give rise to the issuance of a Blue Alert. The 2020 Report contains data on law enforcement officers shot in the line of duty, both fatally and non-fatally. These types of felonious attacks account for nearly all situations where a Blue Alert would be issued. Tracking data does not include assaults by means other than firearms, due to inconsistent availability of data.

The COPS Office acknowledges the significant contributions and leadership of the FOP's staff, including National President Patrick Yoes, Executive Director Jim Pasco, Senior Legislative Liaison Tim Richardson and Legislative Liaison Mark McDonald, to this Report.

Highlights of the 2020 Report include the following:

2020 summary data

- **312** law enforcement officers were shot in the line of duty during calendar year 2020 in **246** separate shooting incidents, including **54** incidents where multiple officers were shot.
- **47** law enforcement officers died from their injuries in 2020, and **268** officers survived. Of the 47 officers who died, **three** officers were shot during an incident that took place prior to 2020, but succumbed to their gunshot wounds in 2020.²
- City or municipal law enforcement officers accounted for over two-thirds (**69 percent**) of all shooting incidents in 2020.
- Disturbance calls (**67**) and traffic stops (**51**) accounted for nearly half (**48 percent**) of all shooting incidents and resulted in **145** officers shot.

²To avoid skewing the 2020 data, these three officers were only included in the data points regarding officers killed.

- **60** law enforcement officers were shot in **48** separate ambushes, and **12** died as a result of being ambushed.
- Another **158** officers were shot in **121** separate incidents where an offender acted without warning in a premeditated and calculated manner, taking an officer by surprise. **33** officers died in these types of situations.
- **20 percent** of officers ambushed died of their injuries, compared to **13 percent** of officers attacked by other means; making ambush-style attacks more lethal for victim officers than any other shooting circumstance.
- At least **51** officers were protected from gunshots by a protective ballistic vest.
- Shootings occurred in **43** states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Texas had the highest number of officers shot at **34**, followed by California at **24**.
- The month that saw the highest number of officers shot was July (**37**) and the day of the week with the highest number of officers shot was Tuesday (**53**).

VII. Summary of Activities and Projected Next Steps

Notable past developments/activities

The Department reported the following developments and activities in its previous reports to Congress:

- Developed a wide variety of Blue Alert informational resources, including:
 - National Blue Alert Network factsheet and PowerPoint presentation
 - Compendium of state Blue Alert legislation and policies
 - Directory of state Blue Alert officials
 - Guidance and recommendations on developing or enhancing Blue Alert plans
- Launched the National Blue Alert Network SIG on the FBI LEEP platform
- Conducted periodic Advisory Group meetings
- Coordinated with FCC to create a dedicated Blue Alert EAS event code
- Identified all 56 state and territorial IPAWS authorizing officials
- Coordinated with FEMA to integrate Blue Alert plans into IPAWS
- Visited the FEMA IPAWS lab and trained on alerting equipment and software, including conducting test Blue Alerts
- Trained selected COPS Office Blue Alert Team members to provide technical assistance to states and local agencies

- Performed immediate outreach to states after officers were killed to offer assistance and facilitate interstate coordination.
- Promoted awareness of the Blue Alert Act at various national law enforcement events, including the annual IACP conference and the National Officer Safety and Wellness Group forum
- New FCC rules authorizing the use of "BLU," the Blue Alert EAS event code went into effect on January 18, 2019. The same FCC rule authorized the issuance of Blue Alerts via Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) beginning on November 29, 2019. Together, these rules enable alerting authorities throughout the nation to quickly issue Blue Alerts using existing alerting software and systems.
- Members of the COPS Office Blue Alert team and colleagues from the FCC were awarded the Attorney General's Award for Outstanding Contributions to Community Partnerships for Public Safety for their outstanding leadership in implementing Blue Alert plans throughout the U.S.
- Members of the COPS Office Blue Alert team monitored media reports and other sources to identify possible Blue Alert situations. When practical, team members contacted the affected law enforcement agency to verify facts and offer assistance if needed.
- The COPS Office launched a targeted outreach plan to establish working coalitions in each state without Blue Alert laws and policies. The purpose of the outreach was to inform key stakeholders about the benefits of Blue Alerts and about the resources of the National Blue Alert Network. All efforts were coordinated with U.S. Attorneys' Offices in the affected states and districts.
- The National Blue Alert Coordinator represented the COPS Office at dozens of conferences and meetings around the country where he promoted the use of Blue Alerts and available resources.
- The Deputy National Blue Alert Coordinator traveled to Des Moines, Iowa, at the request of the Iowa Peace Officers Association to attend a meeting; while there, he was asked to provide information and answer questions from state officials who were considering the adoption of a statewide Blue Alert plan.
- The Deputy National Blue Alert Coordinator presented information about Blue Alerts at the annual training conference for DOJ Law Enforcement Coordinators (LEC) in Columbia, South Carolina. LECs play a key role in U.S. Attorneys' Offices through their support of state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies in their districts.
- The COPS Office published a report describing incidents where law enforcement officers were shot in the line of duty during calendar years 2018 and 2019. These reports were the first of their kind and provided meaningful insights into incidents that could give rise to the issuance of Blue Alerts.

Notable new developments/activities

The Department reports the following new developments and activities in the reporting period:

- Members of the COPS Office Blue Alert team monitored media reports and other sources to identify possible Blue Alert situations. When practical, team members contacted the affected law enforcement agency to verify facts and offer assistance if needed.
- In 2019, the COPS Office awarded a \$100,000 Community Policing Development grant to the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) for data collection activities to help identify and document incidents where on-duty law enforcement officers are shot in the line of duty. The FOP has a long history of research and involvement in the study of attacks on law enforcement. Throughout the reporting period, the FOP reported the status of its activities to the COPS Office and to the National Blue Alert Advisory Group. In May 2021, the FOP and COPS Office are publishing a report on incidents where law enforcement officers were shot in the line of duty during calendar year 2020.
- The COPS Office continued outreach efforts to establish working coalitions in states without Blue Alert laws and policies. The purpose of the outreach was to inform key stakeholders about the benefits of Blue Alerts and about the resources of the National Blue Network. All efforts were coordinated with U.S. Attorneys' Offices in the affected states and districts.
- The National Blue Alert Coordinator attended dozens of virtual conferences and meetings around the country and, where appropriate, promoted the use of Blue Alerts and resources offered by the COPS Office.
- The COPS Office created and framed certificates to present to states that have enacted statewide Blue Alert plans for the benefit of all law enforcement agencies within the state. The presentations of these Blue Alert Certificates have been placed on hold due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- The COPS Office conducted a nationwide outreach to solicit active, sworn law enforcement officers and deputies to serve a one-year detail as Law Enforcement Fellows to advance the National Blue Alert Network and assist with other COPS Office resources. Following a rigorous, competitive process, the COPS Office selected three fellows: a patrol officer from Pennsylvania, a detective from Colorado, and an undersheriff from Washington. The fellows begin their one-year details in April 2021.

Upcoming activities

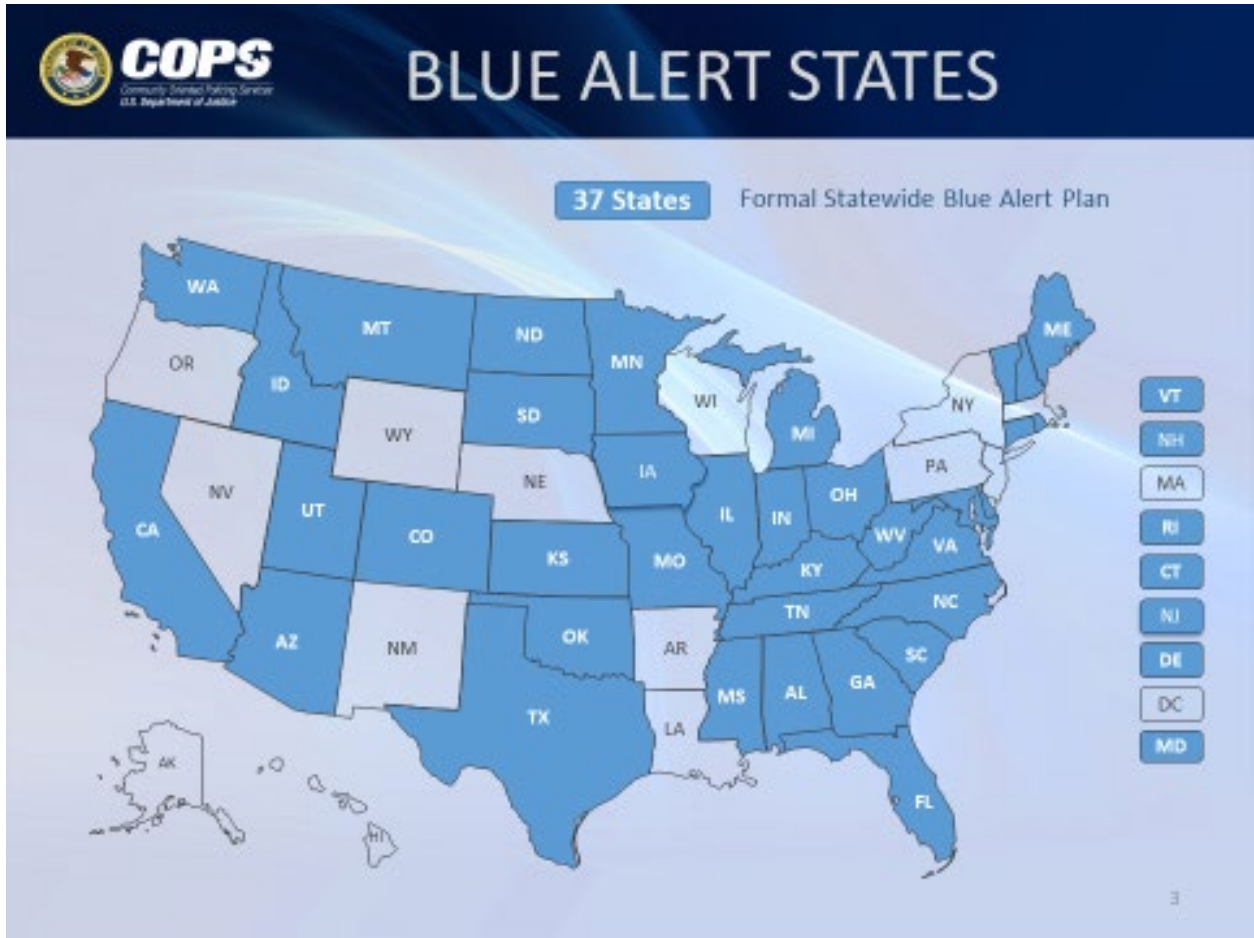
The Department plans to undertake the following activities in the coming year in furtherance of its Blue Alert Mission:

- Conduct additional outreach to states and territories to raise awareness about the availability of free educational resources and technical assistance.
- Continue to work with the FCC, FEMA, and other federal partners to ensure effective coordination of Blue Alert rules and infrastructure.
- Continue to work with law enforcement stakeholders and Advisory Group members to increase the effectiveness of Blue Alert guidance and recommendations.
- Continue to promote the Blue Alert Network to thousands of officers and agencies at upcoming law enforcement events.
- Identify fiscal needs for further implementation of the Blue Alert Act and make appropriate funding requests.
- Continue with COPS Office Blue Alert Team meetings.
- Incorporate the expertise of the COPS Office's new Law Enforcement Fellows to advance the National Blue Alert Network.
- Continue with periodic Blue Alert Act Advisory Group meetings.

VIII. Attachments

- State map of Blue Alert plans (April 2020)
- Blue Alert web page screen image
- DOJ Blue Alert Certificate sample
- Blue Alert Fact Sheet (May 2020)
- 2020 Report, Officers Shot in the Line of Duty

Map of State Blue Alert Plans (April 2020)



Blue Alert Webpage Screen Image

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE



COPS

Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

ABOUT
NEWS & EVENTS
GRANTS & FUNDING
RESOURCES
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
TRAINING
ACCOUNT ACCESS

Home >> National Blue Alert Network Printer Friendly



The National Blue Alert Network supports the integration of Blue Alert plans throughout the United States in order to rapidly disseminate information to law enforcement agencies, the media and the public to aid in the apprehension of violent criminals who pose an imminent threat to law enforcement and others.

Congress passed the **Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act of 2015** in order to *encourage, enhance, and integrate Blue Alert plans*.

The law is named after New York City Police Officers Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu who were killed in an ambush attack on December 20, 2014.

THE PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON 21ST CENTURY POLICING

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

NATIONAL Blue Alert NETWORK

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S COMMUNITY POLICING TOUR

RESOURCE CENTER

THE L. ANTHONY SUTIN CIVIC IMAGINATION AWARD

community policing
Dispatch

Supporting Safe Schools

BLUE ALERT STATE PLANS



STATES WITH BLUE ALERT PLANS

STATES CONSIDERING BLUE ALERT PLANS

Tweets by @COPSOoffice

COPS Office @COPSOoffice

Our first director, Joe Brann, joined us at our #IACP2016 booth; we discussed more than two decades of progress in #community policing.



Embed View on Twitter

For more information, contact us at BlueAlert@usdoj.gov or call the Response Center at 800-421-6770.

ABOUT

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NEWS & EVENTS

- Press Releases
- Speeches & Statements
- Photo Gallery
- Forums
- "Community Policing in Action" Photo Contest

GRANTS & FUNDING

- Funding Opportunities
- 2016 Awards
- COPS Hiring Program (CHP)
- Community Policing Development (CPD) Program
- Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation (CTAS)
- Anti-Heroin Task Force (AHTF) Program
- COPS Anti-Methamphetamine Program (CAMP)
- For Grantees
- Program Documents
- Compliance & Reporting
- Grantee Success Stories

RESOURCES

- Publications
- National Blue Alert Network
- Resource Center
- E-newsletter: Community Policing Dispatch
- Podcast Series: The Beat
- Community Policing Topics

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

TRAINING

ACCOUNT ACCESS



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DOJ Blue Alert Certificate Sample



United States Department of Justice

BE IT HEREBY KNOWN THAT

the Vermont State Police

Having demonstrated the highest commitment to protecting the lives of law enforcement officers has established a Blue Alert plan for the protection of all law enforcement officers throughout the State of Vermont and is hereby recognized for its support of the

NATIONAL BLUE ALERT NETWORK

 **COPS**
CONTINUOUS OFFICER TRAINING SERVICES
U.S. Department of Justice

National Blue Alert Coordinator

Deputy National Blue Alert Coordinator

 **NATIONAL
Blue Alert
NETWORK**



Fact Sheet

www.cops.usdoj.gov



National Blue Alert Network

History

In 2015, Congress passed the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act, named in honor of two New York City police officers killed in an ambush attack on December 20, 2014. The Act establishes a voluntary nationwide system to give police an early warning of threats against police officers and to aid in the apprehension of suspects who have killed or seriously injured an officer. In 2016, the COPS Office was asked to implement the Blue Alert Act and establish a National Blue Alert Network.

Blue Alerts

Blue Alerts provide for rapid dissemination of information to law enforcement agencies, media, and the public about violent offenders who have killed, seriously injured, or pose an imminent and credible threat to law enforcement. Blue Alerts can be transmitted via wireless devices and through the Emergency Alert System (EAS). The National Blue Alert Network works to encourage, enhance, and integrate Blue Alert plans throughout the United States.

Blue Alert Activation Criteria

Blue Alerts may be issued in any of the following circumstances, provided there is actionable information known about a suspect (e.g., name, physical description, or vehicle description):

- When a law enforcement officer is killed or seriously injured in the line of duty
- When an officer is missing in connection with official duties
- When there is an imminent and credible threat to kill or seriously injure a law enforcement officer



Blue Alert Resources

The COPS Office provides resources and technical assistance to states, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders seeking to establish or enhance an existing Blue Alert plan. The National Blue Alert Network also maintains a secure data repository, for law enforcement only, containing many Blue Alert resources collected from around the nation, including examples of legislation, policies, forms, and a directory of state Blue Alert officials.

For more information, visit the COPS Office website at www.cops.usdoj.gov/bluealert, email the COPS Office at BlueAlert@usdoj.gov, or call the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.

Other Resources

Federal Emergency Management Agency Integrated Public Alerting and Warning System (IPAWS)

<https://www.fema.gov/integrated-public-alert-warning-system>

Federal Communications Commission Emergency Alert System (EAS)

<https://www.fcc.gov/general/emergency-alert-system-eas>



Law Enforcement Officers Shot in the Line of Duty

2020 Year-End Summary



COPS
Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice



**NATIONAL FRATERNAL
ORDER OF POLICE**

May 2021



COPS
Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice



**NATIONAL FRATERNAL
ORDER OF POLICE**

This report is compiled from publicly available information using media monitoring software and general research. It contains data on law enforcement officers shot in the line of duty, both fatally and non-fatally, for the express purpose of better understanding the nature and frequency of incidents that could give rise to the issuance of a Blue Alert. Care should be taken when comparing these results to those of other entities that collect similar data. The opinions contained herein are those of the author(s) or contributor(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice. The COPS Office acknowledges the contributions of the National Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) staff, including National President Patrick Yoes, Executive Director Jim Pasco, Senior Legislative Liaison Tim Richardson and Legislative Liaison Mark McDonald, to this report.

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NATIONAL BLUE ALERT NETWORK

In 2015, Congress passed the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act, named in honor of two New York City police officers killed in an ambush attack on December 20, 2014. The Act directs the Department of Justice to establish a voluntary nationwide system to promote the use of early warnings of threats against law enforcement officers and to aid in the apprehension of suspects who have killed or seriously injured an officer. In 2016, the COPS Office was given the honor of implementing the Act and established the National Blue Alert Network.

The National Blue Alert Network seeks to encourage, enhance, and integrate Blue Alert plans throughout the United States. Blue Alerts provide for rapid dissemination of information to law enforcement agencies, media, and the public to aid in the apprehension of offenders who have killed, seriously injured, or pose an imminent and credible threat to law enforcement. Blue Alerts can be transmitted via wireless devices and through the Emergency Alert System (EAS) in the same manner as AMBER Alerts.

TRACKING OFFICER SHOOTINGS

This report was compiled by the **Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** in partnership with the **National Fraternal Order of Police** using media monitoring software and general research to analyze publicly available information. It contains data on law enforcement officers shot in the line of duty, both fatally and non-fatally, for the express purpose of better understanding the nature and frequency of incidents that could give rise to the issuance of a Blue Alert.

2020 SUMMARY DATA

- **312** law enforcement officers were shot in the line of duty during calendar year 2020 in **246** separate shooting incidents, including **54** incidents where multiple officers were shot.
- **47** law enforcement officers died from their injuries in 2020, and **268** officers survived. Of the 47 officers who died, **three** officers were shot during an incident that took place prior to 2020; however, they succumbed to their gunshot wounds in 2020.¹
- City or municipal law enforcement officers accounted for over two-thirds (**69 percent**) of all shooting incidents in 2020.
- Disturbance calls (**67**) and traffic stops (**51**) accounted for nearly half (**48 percent**) of all shooting incidents and resulted in **145** officers shot.
- **60** law enforcement officers were shot in **48** separate ambushes and **12** died as a result of being ambushed.
- Another **158** officers were shot in **121** separate incidents where an offender acted without warning in a premeditated and calculated manner, taking an officer by surprise. **33** officers died in these types of situation.
- **20 percent** of officers ambushed died of their injuries, compared to **13 percent** of officers attacked by other means; making ambush-style attacks more lethal for victim officers than any other shooting circumstance.
- At least **51** officers were protected from gunshots that struck a protective ballistic vest.
- Shootings occurred in **43** states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Texas had the highest number of officers shot at **34**, followed by California at **24**.
- The month with the largest number of officers shot was July, with **37** and the day of the week with the largest number was Tuesday, with **53**.

¹ To avoid skewing data for 2020, the three officers were only included in the data points regarding officers killed. These incidents are marked in the data by an asterisk (*).

2020 - LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS SHOT IN THE LINE OF DUTY

2020 INCIDENT DATA

There were **246** incidents in 2020 where law enforcement officers were shot in the line of duty, a **9.8 percent** increase over the total number of incidents in 2019. The number of officers shot increased by **14.3 percent** over 2019. The number of officers who died as a result of being shot increased by **6.8 percent** from 2019.

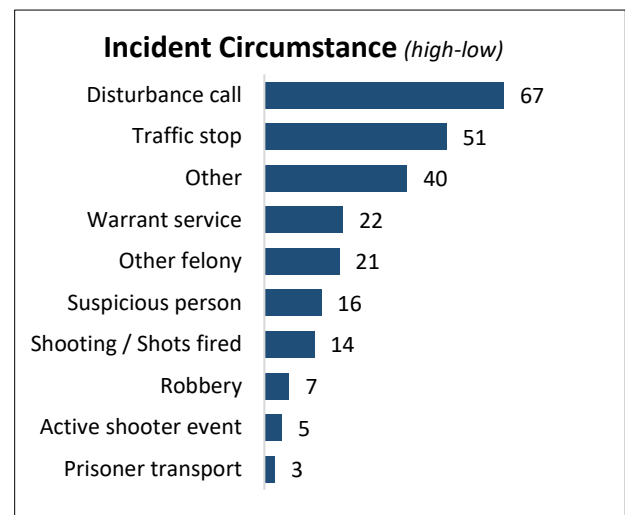
	2020 Totals	2019 Totals	% Change
Total number of shooting incidents	246	224	+ 9.8%
Total number of officers shot	312	273	+ 14.3%
Number of officers shot and survived	268	229	+ 17%
Number of officers shot and killed	47***	44	+ 6.8%

NOTE: Each asterisk (*) represents one officer who was shot prior to 2020 but succumbed to a gunshot wound in 2020.

INCIDENT DATA BY CIRCUMSTANCE

Disturbance calls and traffic stops together accounted for nearly half (**48 percent**) of all shooting incidents. The third most common circumstance involved the serving of warrants, typically performed by tactical teams.

Circumstance at Time of Incident				
<i>Each asterisk (*) represents one officer who was shot prior to 2020 but succumbed to a gunshot wound in 2020.</i>				
Circumstance	Shooting incidents	Officers shot	Number survived	Number killed
Active shooter	5	8	7	1
Disturbance call	67	89	76	14*
Prisoner transport	3	5	4	1
Robbery	7	8	8	0
Shooting / Shots fired	14	15	14	2*
Other felony	21	27	22	5
Suspicious person	16	22	18	4
Traffic stop	51	56	47	10*
Warrant service	22	28	25	3
Other	40	54	47	7
	246	312	268	47***



NATURE OF ATTACKS

Every felonious attack on law enforcement officers, especially by gunfire, is disturbing regardless of the circumstances. Officers are always susceptible to life-threatening attacks and therefore must always be vigilant and maintain the highest level of situational awareness. In most cases, officers are able to quickly assess situations, recognize threats, and take adequate defensive actions. Tragically, not every threat can be seen or mitigated. Perhaps most troubling and worrisome are ambush-style and other calculated attacks on law enforcement.

Premeditated ambush-style attacks are particularly disturbing and pernicious. These types of attacks are carried out with an element of surprise and intended to deprive officers of the ability to defend against the attack. Premeditated attacks contribute to a worrisome desensitization to evil acts that were once largely considered taboo except by the most depraved. In 2020, **49 percent** of shooting incidents involved a discernable element of premeditation, which is a 7 percent (**42 percent**) increase over 2019.

2020 - LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS SHOT IN THE LINE OF DUTY

AMBUSH-STYLE ATTACKS

There were **48** ambush-style incidents where officers were shot without any warning or opportunity to defend themselves, including several pre-planned assassinations. In many cases, officers were shot before they could exit their vehicles after an initial traffic stop or upon arrival at the scene of an incident. In all, **60** law enforcement officers were shot in ambush-style attacks, of whom **12** died. Of the total number of officers who were ambushed, **20 percent** died of their injuries, compared to **18 percent** of officers shot under other circumstances, making ambush-style attacks more lethal for victim officers.

Examples of ambush-style attacks include the following:

- A trooper stopped to assist a motorist whose vehicle had become stuck on a swale. While the trooper and the motorist were waiting for a tow truck driver, the man became upset with the cost of having the vehicle towed. The motorist calmly walked back to the trooper's vehicle and, without warning, drew a handgun and fatally shot the trooper in the head.
- Detectives were sitting in a vehicle after conducting an investigation when another vehicle drove up and the suspect fired at the detectives, striking one of them.
- Two deputies were sitting in their patrol vehicle when the suspect approached them from behind, walked along the passenger side of the vehicle and shot the deputies multiple times.

CALCULATED ATTACKS

In addition to ambush-style attacks, there were **121** incidents where offenders acted in a calculated and premeditated manner to shoot officers in the performance of their duties. These attacks differ only slightly from the more brazen ambush-style attacks in that officers may have had some reason to anticipate a threat. In all, **158** officers were shot in calculated attacks, of whom **33** died.

Examples of calculated attacks include the following:

- When officers attempted to pull over a vehicle with no plates, the vehicle sped off and the officers gave chase. During the pursuit, the suspects inside the vehicle began shooting at the officers. One officer was wounded.
- Officers were investigating a burglar alarm that was triggered and began checking the home for signs of entry. When one of the officers knocked on the door to check on the residents, shots were fired from inside the home and the officer sustained a gunshot wound to his bicep.
- Officers were trying to serve a warrant against a suspect wanted for attempted murder. Upon arrival at the location, the wanted suspect opened fire, striking one of the officers.

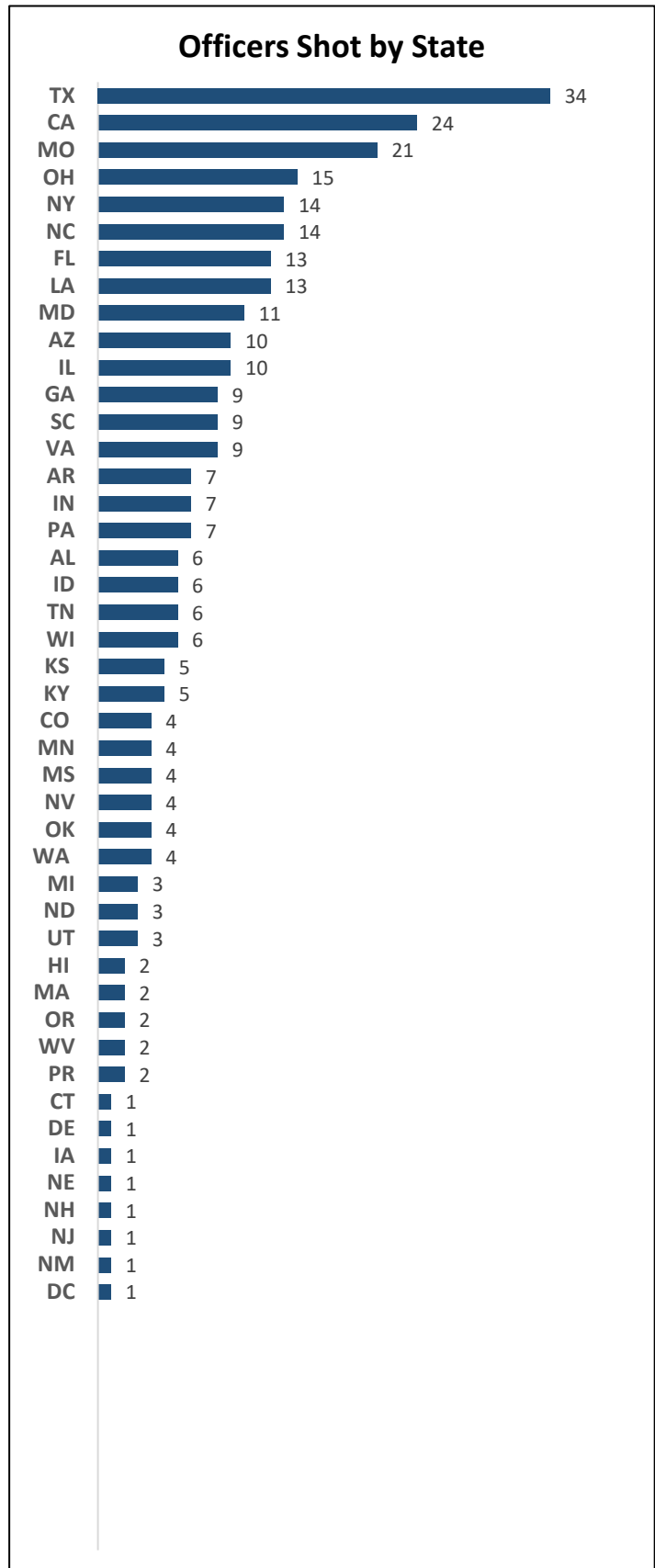
BULLET-RESISTANT VESTS

At least **51** officers were protected from gunshots that struck a protective ballistic vest. The actual number may be higher, but this element is not consistently apparent from news reporting.

2020 - LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS SHOT IN THE LINE OF DUTY

INCIDENT DATA BY STATE

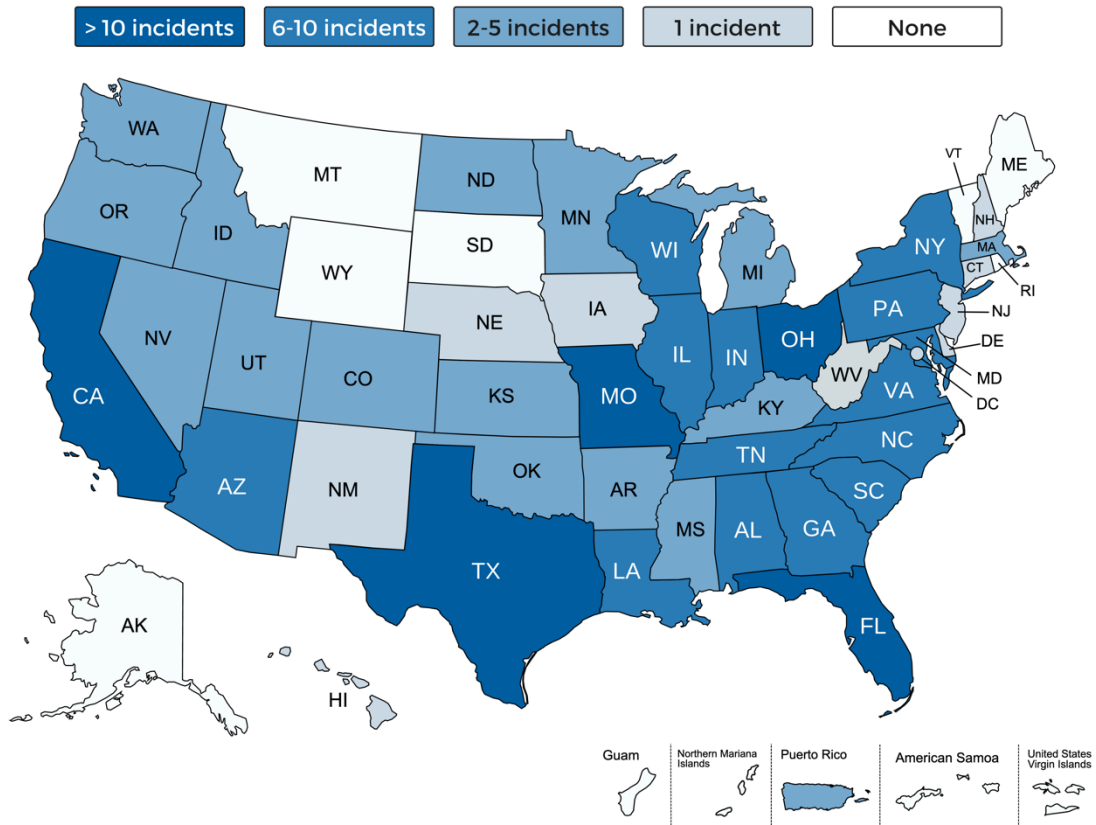
State	Shooting incidents	Officers shot	Number survived	Number killed
<i>Each asterisk (*) represents one officer who was shot prior to 2020 but succumbed to a gunshot wound in 2020.</i>				
AL	6	6	4	2
AZ	6	10	8	2
AR	5	7	4	3
CA	16	24	23	2*
CO	3	4	4	0
CT	1	1	1	0
DE	1	1	1	0
DC	1	1	1	0
FL	13	13	11	2
GA	8	9	9	0
HI	1	2	0	2
ID	5	6	6	0
IL	7	10	10	0
IN	6	7	6	1
IA	1	1	1	0
KS	5	5	4	1
KY	4	5	5	0
LA	10	13	11	2
MD	7	11	11	0
MA	2	2	2	0
MI	3	3	3	1*
MN	4	4	4	0
MS	4	4	3	1
MO	14	21	19	2
NE	1	1	0	1
NV	4	4	3	1
NH	1	1	1	0
NJ	1	1	1	0
NM	1	1	1	0
NY	10	14	14	0
NC	10	14	11	3
ND	2	3	2	1
OH	13	15	13	2
OK	3	4	3	1
OR	2	2	2	0
PA	7	7	6	1
PR	2	2	0	2
SC	9	9	6	3
TN	6	6	6	0
TX	34	34	27	8*
UT	3	3	2	1
VA	9	9	9	0
WA	4	4	3	1
WV	2	2	1	1
WI	6	6	6	0
	263	312	268	47***



2020 - LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS SHOT IN THE LINE OF DUTY

INCIDENT LOCATION DENSITY MAP

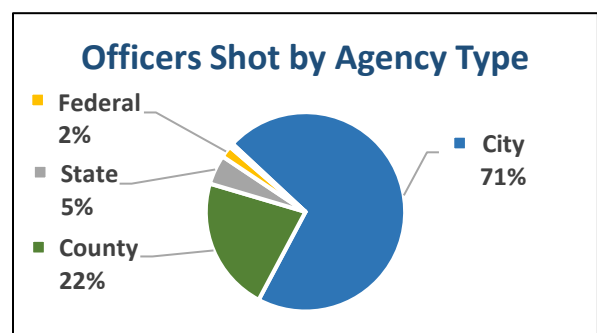
Officer shootings were reported in **43** states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Texas had the highest number of shooting incidents at **34**, followed by California at **16**. The state with the next highest number of incidents reported was Missouri (**14**). No officer shootings were reported in **7** states (Alaska, Maine, Montana, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming). The map below depicts shooting incident density across the nation.



INCIDENT DATA BY AGENCY TYPE

Sixty-nine percent of all shooting incidents involved city or municipal law enforcement agencies. The data and chart below depict incidents based on agency type. State law enforcement officers who were shot died at a higher rate (**31 percent**) than city and municipal officers (**6 percent**) and county officers (**9 percent**).

Incidents by Agency Type				
<i>Each asterisk (*) represents one officer who was shot prior to 2020 but succumbed to a gunshot wound in 2020.</i>				
Agency type	Shooting incidents	Officers shot	Number survived	Number killed
CITY	172	218	186	34**
COUNTY	56	70	65	6*
STATE	16	16	11	5
FEDERAL	4	6	6	0
TRIBAL/OTHER	2	2	0	2
	250	312	268	47***

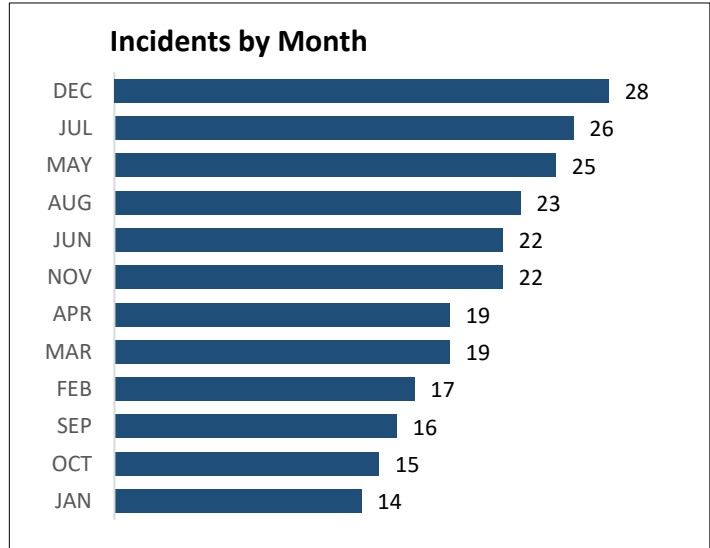


2020 - LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS SHOT IN THE LINE OF DUTY

INCIDENT DATA BY MONTH

The month with the highest number of incidents was December (**28**). The month that saw the highest number of officers shot was July (**37**).

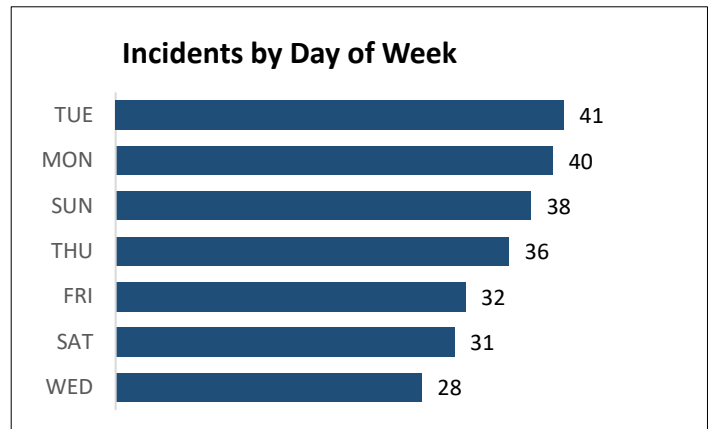
Incident Data by Month				
<i>Each asterisk (*) represents one officer who was shot prior to 2020 but succumbed to a gunshot wound in 2020.</i>				
Month	Shooting incidents	Officers shot	Number survived	Number killed
JAN	14	16	13	3
FEB	17	22	18	5*
MAR	19	24	19	5
APR	19	27	23	5*
MAY	25	29	25	5*
JUN	22	32	27	5
JUL	26	37	33	4
AUG	23	31	29	2
SEP	16	19	16	3
OCT	15	19	14	5
NOV	22	25	23	2
DEC	28	31	28	3
	246	312	268	47***



INCIDENT DATA BY DAY OF WEEK

The day of the week with the highest number of officers shot was Tuesday (**53**), followed by Monday (**51**) and Sunday (**50**). **NOTE:** The officers (**3**) who were shot prior to 2020 but succumbed to a gunshot wound in 2020 were not included in the data below.

Incident Data by Day of Week				
Day	Shooting incidents	Officers shot	Number survived	Number killed
SUN	38	50	42	8
MON	40	51	45	6
TUE	41	53	47	6
WED	28	34	29	5
THU	36	45	40	5
FRI	32	37	30	7
SAT	31	42	35	7
	246	312	268	44





NATIONAL BLUE ALERT NETWORK

2020 LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS SHOT IN THE LINE OF DUTY



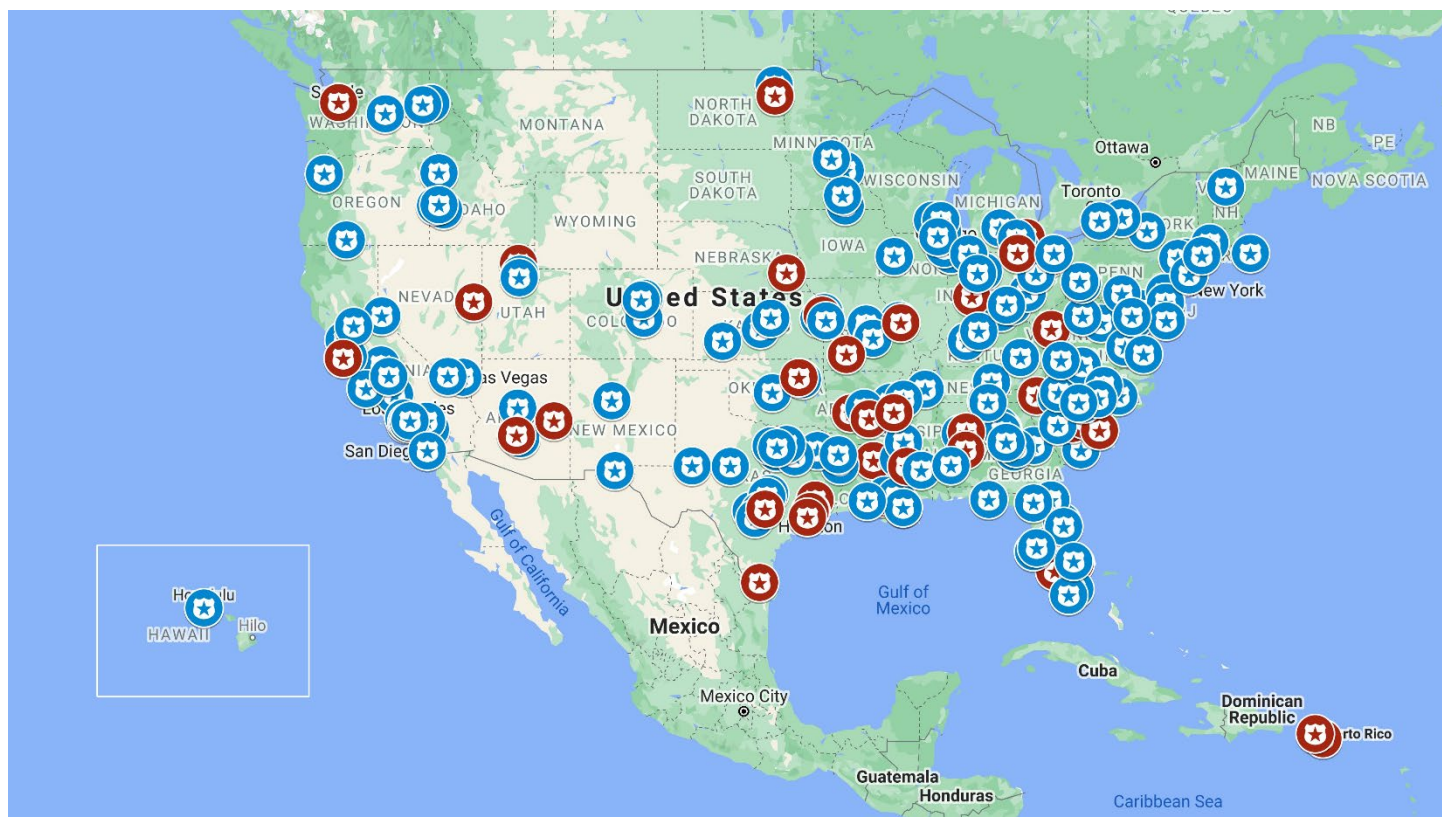
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	2020	2019	% Change
Total Number of Shooting Incidents	14	17	19	19	25	22	26	23	16	15	22	28	246	224	+ 9.8%
Total Number of Officers Shot	16	22	24	27	29	32	37	31	19	19	25	31	312	273	+ 14.3%
<i>Number of Officers Survived</i>	13	18	19	23	25	27	33	29	16	14	23	28	268	229	+ 17%
<i>Number of Officers Killed</i>	3	5*	5	5*	5*	5	4	2	3	5	2	3	47***	44	+ 6.8%

Each asterisk () represents one officer who was shot prior to 2020 but succumbed to a gunshot wound in 2020.*

246 Shooting Incidents / 312 Officers Shot

Officer Shot and Wounded (268)

Officer Shot and Killed (44)



** Assaults on law enforcement occurring on-duty during calendar year 2020 with firearms resulting in an officer being wounded or killed. Does not include assaults by means other than firearms due to inconsistent availability of data. Markers represent approximate geographic location.*