



TRAINING CHALLENGES: ADJUSTING TO INCOMING AND OUTGOING TIDES

HOW YOU CAN KEEP YOUR HEAD ABOVE WATER

By Mark R. DuPont

In this ever evolving world in which we live, change is a constant. Change in climate, in leadership, in policies, in culture, in recruits, in technology, in connectivity and social media. I'm sure we can have a story telling session on each of those areas and how it has effected each of you, because each of those areas impact you as a maritime law enforcement officer, emergency responder or public safety official. It effects what you do, how you do it, who you do it with, and what you can and can't do with and the tools you use to do your job. This, in turn, puts additional pressure on us as maritime professionals to keep up with change, let alone get ahead of it. It is cumbersome and challenging to keep up with what is the latest and greatest (the incoming tide) and recognize what is yesterday's tactic, technique or procedure (the outgoing tide.)

For the purpose of this article, I want to focus on training as it relates to change in our world of work, our area of responsibility and operation: the Nation's waterways. We'll look at how training in general has evolved, what some of the current challenges are in the maritime environment, and then focus on recommendations for our "fluid" workplace. It's all about what could help you, your agency, and the professional community as we try to keep up with the shifting tides around us.

SOME HISTORY

Gone are the days of a county sheriff like Buford T. Justice in *Smokey and the Bandit* (okay, I'm dating myself) handing his buddy or nephew a badge and gun and "Deputizing" him to go out on the street and enforce laws that he/she had never been trained in (for the most part.) As the digital world in which we live reminds us each day, in today's modern law enforcement environment, police training is just as important as doctors attending medical school or lawyers passing the bar exam.



But that is not necessarily "new" news. In fact, that was the exact comparison made in John Sullivan's book, *Introduction to Police Science*, published in 1966.

*"While a physician may change his diagnosis or prescription, a lawyer may amend his pleadings, and a judge may take days or weeks to render a decision, when a peace officer makes a decision, it frequently must be instantaneous. Therefore, in order to cope with the many complex emergency duties and responsibilities that confront a peace officer in his/her role, the officer cannot depend entirely upon native ability. Instead he or she must be expertly trained to function effectively as an integral part of today's modern mechanized police force."*¹

That was in 1966, and in 1973 the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals reported that *"There is a serious flaw in the police profession-the insufficiency of initial and inservice training..."*², that the average policemen received less than 200 hours of training while *"barbers more than 4,000 hours."* The Commission recommended that *"Every State should enact legislation that establishes mandatory minimum basic training of 400 hours for police..."*, which leads us to where we are today.

SOME PERSONAL HISTORY: A SEA STORY

I look at the evolution of history and the maritime professional with a personal and distinctly unique perspective, having worked in law enforcement and emergency response at the local level, at the state level, at the federal level, and even in the private sector. I have lived and worked in all the dimensions, and on a daily basis as NASBLA's Director of Boat Operations and Training (BOAT), I interacted with law enforcement, fire, emergency response and public safety individuals and organizations from across the country. I see and hear multiple viewpoints, diverse challenges, and complex environments. I can relate to them all.

¹ John L. Sullivan, *Introduction to Police Science* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 225.

² *The Criminal Justice Standards and Goals of the National Advisory Commission, Digested from A National Strategy to Reduce Crime*, pp 26, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/54466NCJRS.pdf>

When I was first in the Coast Guard back in the early 80's, we did boardings and responded to law enforcement calls without guns, batons or pepper spray... we carried a flash light. As a harbor patrol officer up in New England in the 90's, there was no standard of training (I got the job because I was in the Coast Guard) and we were eventually issued a gun (which I still have, by the way.) In the aftermath of September 11th, 2001, there were no tactics, techniques and procedures established for the Harbor Defense unit we were standing up, or for the Coast Guard units across the country that now were



responsible to be the sentinels of security on America's waterways. And when I went to work for the state of Florida in 2007, there was no "Homeland Security" or Intelligence program, yet my agency was responsible for protecting the state's waterways, its resources and its critical infrastructure.

Over those three decades, change was the constant. Challenges were constant. Complexity was constant. And in each of those instances, a response was required. We had to do something, and surprisingly (not really), it all revolved around training. As a marine patrol officer in New

England, we had to develop a curriculum for Harbor

Masters. In Boston after 9/11, we had to develop a policy for escorts, boarding, and protection of high value assets. Then we had to come up with a curriculum for our people and for every unit across the country. For the State of Florida, as it stood up its Waterborne Response Teams (WRTs) as part of its Regional Domestic Security Task Forces, we had to come up with a Standard Operating Procedure, and then train each of the 41 WRTs accordingly. And as this mission grew and police departments and emergency responders throughout the nation struggled with interoperability with each other and their federal partners, a national standard of training, typing and credentialing was needed.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

As reported by the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Study of Local Police Departments in 2007*, an estimated 6% of departments nationwide (or 755 out of an estimated total of 12,575 state and local police departments), employing 39% of the total amount of officers in the country, operated at



least one boat during 2007³. Nationwide, the study pointed out that local police operated an estimated 1,350 boats. Another study published by DOJ in 2011, *Census of State and Local Enforcement Agencies – 2008*, noted nearly 15,000 full-time sworn personnel were employed in natural resources related jobs, and that another 900 full-time personnel were dedicated to harbor and port facilities.

With regard to training, on average, academy training programs in 2006 included 761 hours of classroom training (about 19 weeks). Only a third of academies had an additional mandatory field training component with an average length of 453 hours⁴. In a NASBLA BOAT Program Study begun in 2012 and continuing through the Accreditation of various agencies around the country each year, ***on average, only 40 hours is devoted to maritime operational training for recruits.***

So, although some things have changed, a barber may still be getting more training. And when we look at the maritime law enforcement or emergency responder profession, its progression over time and into today's world of work has some complicated dynamics. Specifically;

- **Missions have expanded and become more complex.** A lot of things can change in 15 years. And in particular, a lot has changed in the aftermath of September 11th, 2001. Port Security plays a big role in what we do, and with that mission comes the complexity of enforcing security zones, intercepting bad actors, and pursuing adversaries that may wish to do us harm. CBRNE is now an acronym that we understand, and with it comes another mission set and equipment that we have to learn how to use, especially for fire departments that have now expanded their maritime footprint. Couple that with the 80 million boaters out there that we will interact with, and we have a full plate.
- **Responsibilities have increased.** With that increase in missions comes increased responsibility. We are expected to do more, cover more territory, be proficient in multiple skills, and have a never ending pool of knowledge and expertise.
- **Expectations of our superiors, citizens and constituents have increased, and the time has decreased.**



We live in a "microwave world." We, and the people around us, expect the instant result. They want the meal in 10 minutes, the solution to the crime story in 20. Everyone wants a quick solution, an instant answer, and we can thank Steve Jobs and the internet for that. And because

³ Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, pp. 20, <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/lpd07.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=77>

of this increase in external pressure on our leaders, they are caught up in the vortex of instant gratification and expect instant results from their people.

- **Tools have become more complex.** We have bigger, faster boats, with infra-red cameras, “fly-by-wire” throttle systems, jet drive propulsion systems, integrated radar and gps units, encrypted radios, tasers, rad-nuc detection equipment, mobile data terminals, and more. In fact, discussions surrounding the revised Recreation Boating Safety Strategic Plan for 2017-2021 that will be published by the United States Coast Guard cite new and emerging technologies in recreational boating safety as “outpacing assimilation.” If you’ve been around long enough, just look back 15-20 years, and compare the boats, tools and equipment that you had back then with what you have available now.
- **Resources and funding have diminished.** With those increased expectations, expanded missions, and additional or advanced equipment, the dollars haven’t always followed. They did for a while, but from a struggling economy and a constricting budget, we are becoming increasingly austere. And guess who suffers the consequence. We now have to do more with less, and we have to find a way to sustain our efforts without the benefit of increasing funds to support it. This is particularly true when you look at the purchase of boats for our department. Often, the thing that’s shaved off the price sheet is the training that should come with the new platform. Unfortunately, we are paying the price in a different way: mishaps, accidents, and perceived warranty failures. All because we choose to forego the training that should come with the boat purchase, and do it on our own.
- **Knowledge, skills and abilities have diminished.** As budgets have tightened, retirement plans have been forced to adjust, which in turn has motivated a lot of our institutional knowledge (the older guys) to jump out while the parachute could still fully open. We end up with supervisors and leaders in positions of authority without the legacy experience to facilitate good choices and ensure the knowledge is transferred down the chain.
- **The new applicant pool has changed, while retention is increasingly difficult.** Welcome in the Millennials. And to quote a Forbes article by George Brant⁵, “*don’t even try to manage Millennials, the largest generation in the workforce. Lead them.*” Agencies are having increased difficulty managing the young talent, and adjusting to new perspectives and views of the world. We are taking what we used to do or “the way its always been done” and applying those teaching techniques or processes to this new work force, and wondering why performance is



⁵ Trying to Manage Millennials? Give Up and Lead Them Instead.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/georgebradt/2014/05/27/trying-to-manage-millennials-give-up-and-lead-them-instead/#33163ac911ba>

declining and job dissatisfaction is increasing. To juxtapose an old expression, you can't teach new dogs using old tricks.

- **Liabilities have increased.** We live under a microscope. Someone is always behind us taking a picture or videotaping what we are doing (or not doing.) People are expecting more, and the standards of performance are increasing. The bar is getting raised every day, by our leadership and by the public we serve. And because expectations have increased, people are quick to judge our actions in the field of public opinion. We therefore have a responsibility to make sure we are putting the right tools with the right training in the hands of the right people. As the Supreme Court held in *Brown v. Bryan County* in April of 2001, the failure to train one officer adequately, and evidence of a causal connection between that lack of training and the injury, may create municipal liability⁶.

So with all those points, and as the gap in the picture illustrates, we end up with increasing responsibilities, more complex mission areas, advancing technology and decreasing personnel resources that collectively impact our increase in liabilities. I have one question (ok, maybe more than one): What are we doing to close that gap? Are we training to use that new equipment or perform that mission? Are we doing it appropriately, efficiently, effectively? Are we reducing our liabilities, or are we actually increasing them? Are we attracting new talent, or are we actually driving it away?

DEVELOPING A TRAINING SOLUTION (AND KEEPING YOUR HEAD ABOVE WATER)

By now we've belabored the point about what has caused change to be constant, but let's try to boil it down a little more concisely. We know that the evolving environment, increasing complexity, differences in culture, advancing tools and technology, and the outcomes of those changes (morale issues, mishaps, mission failures, public/customer dissatisfaction, etc.) require us to look at our training and see where we can close the gap (or respond to the incoming tide.)

So let me make this a simple approach to keeping your head above water in this fluid work place we operate in. (I've even got a flotation device that I will offer in the end to help in the process.) I started in the title by referring to incoming and outgoing tides. That's what change is. And the TIDE is what will give us the answer.

Four easy steps or phases of your training solution (just like phases of the moon.) Let's begin.

⁶ *Police Liability for Failure to Train*, International Association of Chiefs of Police
<http://www.iacp.org/ViewResult?SearchID=18>

T = Take a break, Take note, Take charge. Sometimes we get so caught up in what is going on around us that it is hard to see what's coming or going. So try to step back and *Take a Break*. Step away from the clutter and confusion and *Take Note* of what is going on, what your challenges are, and what you have at hand. *Take Note* of what changes are starting to have an effect on you, your unit or your agency. *Take Note* of the challenges, as well as the resources that you have working on your side, working for you. Sometimes we lose sight of what's right in front of us, and what is often our most important assets. How is your training staff, and are they able to keep up to the changes and challenges? Once you've taken a breath and looked around, step forward and *Take Charge* of the issue(s). Don't let a performance gap or problem fester. You have an obligation to your people, your agency and to the people you serve to make sure you and your fellow officers are prepared properly. Make it happen.

I = Identify. Influence. *Identify* the training need. What is it that you have to change, or what change do you have to react to? Is it a new piece of equipment, a new technology, a new platform that you will be operating? Is it the fact that your maritime training has diminished over the years, and you need to revitalize it? *Identify* the problem or performance gap through a thorough Needs Assessment and Analysis (this is what we do through our BOAT Program.) *Identify* potential solutions to the problem. Make sure you articulate how this solution closes the performance gap or effects the change that you want it to. People making decisions (or questioning your decisions) always like it when you have the proven data and process to prove the validity of your steps and your proposed solution. *Identify* the resources that you either have internally to address this issue, or resources outside your organization. *Influence* the change through your people and your superiors. If you've done a good Needs Assessment, Identified the proper resources and course of action, you can start influencing change.



D = Decide. *Decide* to change what you are doing (or not doing.) *Decide* on the solution that will rectify your performance gap. If you can't make it happen immediately due to budget or other constraints, *Decide* on an action that will mitigate the risk over time or gradually. *Decide* on the standards that you will implement or follow. In the public safety world, we understand standards. They help ensure that we do our jobs in an effective and efficient manner that is recognized by others. This helps protect our people, our organization, and our nation. Implementing or adopting a national standard can also eliminate the guesswork of training.

E = Execute and Evaluate. *Execute* the training plan. And once it gets going, *Evaluate*. Check to see that it is effecting the change that you wanted it to. Is the performance gap being corrected? Are we now training to a national standard that mitigates our risks?

Remember, to look at the TIDE, note what state of the TIDE you are in, if it's incoming or outgoing, and that what you do will make a difference on the water. **Training Is Defining (and Ensuring) Excellence**, excellence of your people, your unit, your agency... and you. Ask yourself right now if your Training Is Defining and Ensuring the Excellence of your unit, your agency? Can you answer it honestly? Is there a performance gap that you know is there, and maybe has been there a while? Have you been "lucky" that nothing worse has happened? If so, go with the TIDE. Take Note and Take Charge, Identify the problem and the solution, Decide to change it, and Execute a good training program.

HERE IS YOUR RESCUE LINE, YOUR LIFELINE

If you need help, the National Maritime Law Enforcement Academy can help, thru its recognized best practices and standards of training, through its constant curricula review process (keeping up with what is current and needed by the community), and through its Master Trainers and Instructional Designers in the maritime public safety arena, can be your lifeline and an extension of your training staff or department. Whether it is some consultation, a needs assessment, course design or review, or help with your grant package, we are a community of professionals that can help.

Onward and forward.