



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OFFICER SAFETY PROGRAMS SAVE LIVES

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In the wake of recent violent attacks against law enforcement professionals, the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced that since January 1, 2011 nearly 30 law enforcement and corrections officers have been saved by protective vests. Of these saves, 16 officers were wearing life-saving vests purchased, in part, with funds awarded through the DOJ's Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) Program. Administered by DOJ's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the program provides critical resources to state, local and tribal jurisdictions to purchase bullet and stab-resistant body armor for sworn law enforcement and corrections officers.

“Departments across the country have mourned the loss of too many dedicated colleagues and friends, but my colleagues and I at the Justice Department are determined to turn back this rising tide,” said Attorney General Eric Holder. “I want to assure the family members and loved ones who have mourned the loss of these heroes that we are responding to this year's increased violence with renewed vigilance, and will do everything within our power – and use every tool at our disposal – to keep our police officers safe.”

Since 1999, BVP funds have been awarded to more than 13,000 jurisdictions nationwide. In FY 2011, BJA reimbursed jurisdictions, across the U.S., over \$23 million for a total of 79,684 bullet-and stab-resistant vests. The BVP awarded more than \$24 million to jurisdictions nationwide for the future purchase of body armor. A full list of BVP awards is available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bvpbasi/.

“With the recent tragedies in Georgia, New York and Virginia this month, the need to protect our officers has never been more present,” said Laurie O. Robinson, Assistant Attorney General for DOJ's Office of Justice Programs. “Through the Attorney General's Officer Safety Initiative, we are actively working to reduce the number of assaults on our nation's law enforcement officers because one officer death is one too many.”

According to data from the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, 173 officers were killed from January 1, 2011 to December 28, 2011. And, 2011 was the first time in 14 years that firearms-related deaths outnumbered traffic deaths. Firearms-related deaths in 2011 increased from last year's 59 deaths to 68 deaths, while traffic-related deaths decreased from last year's 71 deaths to 64 deaths in 2011.

“As a partner with law enforcement agencies across the nation, BJA takes the issue of officer safety very seriously,” said Denise O'Donnell, BJA Director. “The constant wearing of

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body armor is similar to the use of seatbelts and should be given the same priority. Body armor, like seatbelts, can save lives.”

The BVP Program is just one part of the Department’s comprehensive officer safety portfolio. In 2011, Attorney General Holder released an Officer Safety Toolkit designed to share resources with federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement leaders in an effort to promote officer safety. Since its release, approximately 5,000 print and electronic copies of the toolkit have been distributed nationwide. This toolkit and a memo distributed to all U.S. Attorneys outlining officer safety information, were direct outcomes of the Attorney General’s Officer Safety Summit held in March. The Toolkit is available at: www.valorforblue.org.

In addition, BJA supports the following officer safety programs:

VALOR: BJA’s VALOR—Preventing Violence Against Law Enforcement and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability—Program, was designed to help law enforcement professionals respond to the precipitous increase in ambush-style assaults on officers. To date, 538 officers have been trained through the program, and more than 100 incidents where officers were forced to use their firearm have been analyzed. This information has been used to update an officer training curriculum and outreach materials to ensure trainings are current and reflect real-world scenarios.

Reducing Officer Injuries Study: BJA, in partnership with the International Association of Chiefs of Police, recently published a new study, *Reducing Officer Injuries: Developing Policy Responses*, which examines officer injuries occurring within 18 participating agencies over a 1-year period. The report provides training and policy recommendations based on the study’s findings.

Public Safety Officers’ Benefits: When tragedy strikes, BJA is there to assist officers, their families and their agencies through the Public Safety Officers’ Benefits (PSOB) Program. The program provides death and education benefits to survivors of fallen law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders, and disability benefits to officers catastrophically injured in the line of duty. In Fiscal Year 2011 alone, the PSOB Office received 345 death claims representing America’s fallen public safety officers nationwide.

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The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), headed by Assistant Attorney General Laurie O. Robinson, provides federal leadership in developing the nation’s capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP has six bureaus and offices: the BJA; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART). More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.