

UNSUING HEROES

Law Enforcement Officer Deaths Decline

(NAPSA)—Fewer law enforcement officers died in the line of duty in 2005 than in previous years because of improvements in body armor, better training and less-lethal weapons.

A recent report indicates that 153 law enforcement officers across the nation died in the line of duty, marking a continued downward trend over the past 30 years.

During the 1970s, more than 220 officers were killed each year, making it the deadliest decade in law enforcement history. But with the exception of 2001 and the high number of officers killed in the 9/11 attacks, the officer fatality rate has declined to 160 per year.

California, which lost 17 officers over the past year, had the nation's most line-of-duty fatalities, followed by Texas, with 14, and Georgia, with 10. These figures were released by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) and the Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS), two nonprofit organizations. While deaths have declined, further safety measures are called for.

"The fact remains that an officer dies nearly every other day, and we need to stay focused on the measures that will protect their lives," said National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund Chairman Craig W. Floyd.

The NLEOMF and its partner organization, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), noted the importance of body armor.

According to the IACP Dupont Kevlar Survivors' Club®, which tracks incidents in which the



More can be done to improve the safety of law officers.

armor has saved officers' lives, nearly 3,000 officers have been protected from potentially fatal injuries since 1975.

Because this is the second consecutive year in which traffic-related accidents either equaled or topped gunfire as the leading cause of death, the NLEOMF and COPS are calling for better driver training for officers, safer automobiles, and a driving public that is more attentive to officer safety when approaching accident scenes and traffic stops.

Every officer who died in the line of duty during 2005 will be honored at a Candlelight Vigil on May 13, 2006, during National Police Week.

"When law enforcement officers die in the line of duty, their families need strong support. Concerns of Police Survivors will be there for the families who lost an officer in 2005," said COPS National President Shirley Gibson, whose son, Police Master Patrol Officer Brian T. Gibson, was killed in 1997.

The NLEOMF operates the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, D.C. To learn more, visit www.nleomf.com.