



CODE WORD



Washington Association of Code Enforcement

WACE Newsletter

January 2019

President's Message:

I hope you all enjoyed the winter holidays with family and friends. As I reflect on the past twelve months, I'd like to focus on the positive events.

In 2018, the WACE Board welcomed fresh ideas and an infusion of energy to the executive board. This positive, motivated, and directed board organized and presented two excellent educational conferences where attendance exceeded capacity of the venue! The WACE organization membership has grown as we saw members from outside the state attend our fall conference! WACE added two new members to the board of directors from the east side of the state to help direct the future of WACE. Thanks in large part to the efforts of Kristina Blake with the City of Spokane Valley, WACE members will now receive the "Code Word" on a quarterly basis. Rosanna Johnson at City of Pasco, has been hard at work with the conference committee and assisting with the logistics of future WACE events, as we plan for the 2019 Spring and Fall educational conferences. Stay tuned for details coming to your email in-box soon!

As the president of WACE and a code enforcement professional, I am committed to devoting 2019 to officer safety awareness and training. Recent reports have shown light on the horrific murders of two code enforcement professionals: Jill Robinson of West Valley, Utah and Code Enforcement Officer Michael Tripus', Paradise Township, Pennsylvania. Both code enforcement professionals lost their lives in service to their respective communities and for no other reason than they were doing their work professionally.

As I processed these news reports, I recognized how often code enforcement officers go out on an inspection at the invitation of the subject of the complaint or respond to the counter to an unknown resident. For these two officers, the unthinkable happened, leaving the community and families to mourn. As we look to 2019, my hope is we'll all walk in to these types of situations with our eyes wide open and steadfast in our resolve to return home safely at the end of the day.

As I researched code enforcement officer safety, I found on an on-line document from the California Association of Code Enforcement Officers, www.CACEO.us titled "Code Enforcement Officer Safety, a Survival Guide." This document is packed with information and contains 45 Code Enforcement Officer safety best practices that are well worth reviewing. I know the WACE Officer Safety Committee that was formed at fall conference are aware of the document and are reviewing it as a resource for the committee.

Finally, I would like to once again, encourage all WACE members to consider how you can individually or as a member of a committee contribute to WACE. WACE can always use positive energy and fresh ideas as we work to improve our profession. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Liz Krzyminski, WACE President.

Take care and be safe out there!

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Professional Development
in Code Enforcement

SAFETY CORNER



Code Officer Safety

Utah Code Enforcement Officer, Jill Robinson was murdered in the line of duty this year. It was a stark reminder to many of us who are doing the same job, that being a Code Enforcement Officer is not always a safe job.

The man charged with murdering Officer Robinson is the same type of person many of us deal with every day. The person who is mentally unstable or the person who views our contact as "harassment" because we are the one telling them to mow their yard, get rid of the junk car in their yard or dispose of their trash. As a result, we are often the ones who bear the brunt of their anger and frustrations, re-gardless of how professional we act.

The fact that one of our own was murdered left many of us questioning how safe are we enforcing codes without a gun, pepper spray, a Taser, defensive tactics training or even a police radio? Are we being naive to believe we can interact with the same people that law enforcement officers deal with every day, without the benefit of the same safety equipment and training law enforcement officers receive and still be safe?

Stephen Mauer, (Pierce County) sent out a survey in November on behalf of the newly formed WACE Safety Committee, to explore what safety policies and procedures are already in place and what more is needed. If you haven't sent your survey back or didn't get one, contact Stephen Mauer.

Did you know: Overexertion is the top cause of injuries in manufacturing, healthcare, retail, transportation, warehousing, and wholesale (SupervisorSafetyBulletin.com).

Safety Committee Created

WACE formed a volunteer committee during the 30th Annual Conference to begin the process to explore Officer Safety and what measures WACE can try to spearhead into legislation to keep Code Enforcement Officers safer.

Derek Gain and Valerie Johnson are spearheading the committee along with Frank Hewey, and Larry Isenhardt, and Stephen Mauer, who is our Officer in the Spotlight as we begin a new year.



Legislative Corner



Municipalities with codes that address begging may need to take a second look at their codes to ensure they can pass scrutiny in light of Reed vs Town of Gilbert. While Reed was not specifically about begging, it did address freedom of speech and begging falls under this protection.

The Court in Reed held that a law is content-based anytime it defines the regulated speech based on a “particular subject matter or by its function or purpose.” Such content-based restrictions are presumed to be unconstitutional and are only upheld if the government can prove that it furthers a “compelling interest and is narrowly tailored to achieve that interest.”

The Washington Supreme Court has interpreted Reed to apply to begging in City of Lakewood v. Willis, in which the court assessed the constitutionality of a Lakewood ordinance that prohibited begging at on and off ramps of state highways and at roads.

Washington Supreme Court is inter-are restrictive based on content does this affect your own codes?

Covington for example, prohibits aggressive panhandling within specific parameters and thus avoids vio-lating any freedom of speech in their code. Instead of focusing on panhandling, Covington’s code focus-es on how the panhandler is conducting themselves and if they are intimidating the people they are soliciting. Other municipalities such as Lakewood and Pasco both have codes which prohibit panhandling in specific areas such as on the premises of a business or address something that is already specifically illegal which is public intoxication, incorporating this into the code to prohibit panhandlers from soliciting under the influence.

Do you have Case Law that you would like to share with other members of WACE? If so, please send an email to Immerz@wenatcheewa.gov with your response.



Personal Safety



“Go home safely at the end of your shift” is the goal of every Law Enforcement, Corrections, and Code Enforcement Officer on the job. Being properly equipped goes a long way towards making that goal a reality but other factors also play a role in officer safety, including situational awareness.

Depending on where you are, your stress and awareness levels either increase or decrease, and so does your situational awareness. Make a conscious effort to begin practicing situational awareness in your everyday interactions so your mind begins to do it automatically. Pay attention to those around you, what are they doing, wearing, what’s their bio? Make it a habit to take in this information everywhere you go until it becomes a habit. Training your mind to become attentive and aware could end up saving your life one day.

Do you know if the person you’re talking to is carrying a weapon? A weapon can be a gun but it can also be a knife and if you’re not looking for those clues you may find yourself caught off guard. Pay attention to waistbands and look for bulges or knife clips-the clues that the person you’re talking to has access to a weapon.

We have all heard "watch the other guy’s hands", but what about your own hands? Where are your hands when you are interacting with people? Are they tied up trying to juggle paperwork, a phone, or a camera?

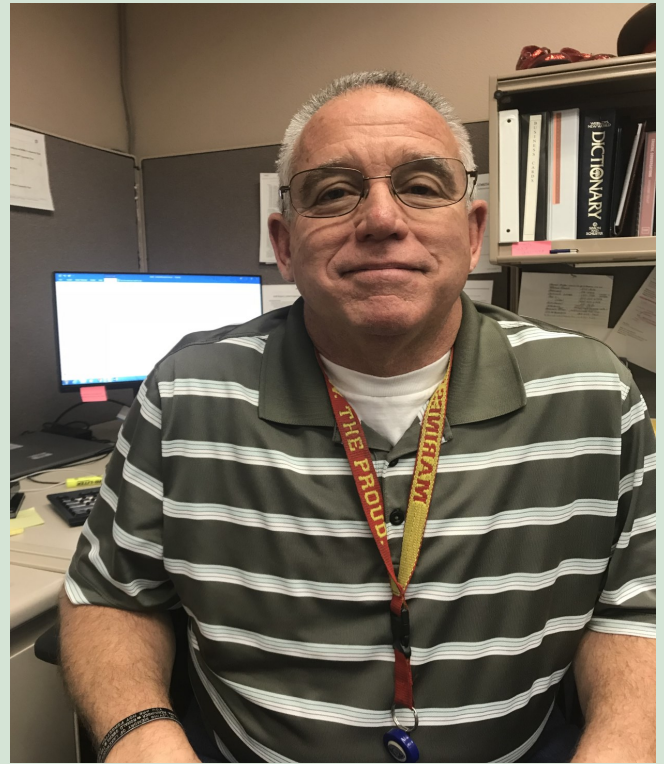
Are your hands in your pockets or hanging on your vest? According to the Spokane Police Department, which offers a limited commission training for Park Rangers, Store Security and others including Code Enforcement Officers, your hands should always be free and above the waistline. Officers who hold onto their ballistic vest may have their hands above their waistline but they also have their hands tied up and they aren’t ready for an unexpected attack.

Do whatever it takes to keep your hands above your waistline. Talk with your hands to gesture and keep them moving and ready to defend yourself if you have to. Finally, the most important safety tip is to have a plan. Practice scenarios mentally to ensure your prepared for any unexpected scenario that you may encounter.

By being proactive and planning worst case scenarios mentally, you will be ahead of the game when a worst case scenario actually happens.

CODE OFFICER IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Stephen Mauer is the Code Enforcement Officer with Pierce County. He is an instrumental WACE member and is always finding ways to make our jobs safer.



Stephen has an impressive bio (below in his own words);

"I am a retired Police Officer with just under 29 years service with Fife, Puyallup and Lakewood PD. As a youngster, I served in the Marine Corps. I spent my last three years with Lakewood as the supervisor for a joint Code Enforcement Team that included CEO's, Community Service Officers and worked closely with Community Liaison Officers. I have been with Pierce County going on two years now. Looking at the work we do as Code Enforcement Officers and then having the history as a Police Officer, knowing what tools I had at that time and what is not available to me as a Code Enforcement Officer, I believe strongly that we need to realistically address the risks we face as we do our jobs and take steps to give us the best chance to "go home at night."





The Aftermath of Utah Code Officer Murder

By: Kristina Blake

In the wake of Utah Code Enforcement Officer Jill Robinson's murder in the line of duty, Salt Lake, Utah has taken proactive steps to prevent another death through a 15 week training focused on officer safety. Since Code Officers are unarmed, the training is centered on increasing verbal skills to give "assertive responses" and create "positive positives". For example, Officers are taught to use their words carefully and not use phrases such as "junk" when dealing with hoarders for example.

Officers are also taught to keep a 12 foot distance between themselves and the client they are talking with whenever possible and having an object between them when it's not possible such as a car or a table. (For most law enforcement this distance is usually swinging distance to maintain a natural distance).

Officers are also taught to simply leave if the person becomes too angry or aggressive. Remember the most important rule of safety is to go home safe at the end of your shift.




Comings and Goings

Dan McConaughy, City of Tacoma Code Enforcement Supervisor has retired. Good luck in the new phase of life Dan.

Debbie Hohnstein, City of Kenmore, WA has also retired from Code Enforcement.

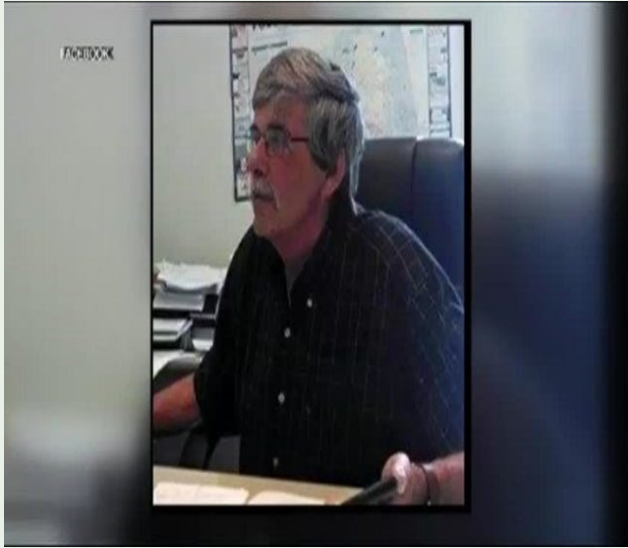
Dennis Barry, City of Bellevue, WA has retired after 45 years of dedicated service.

A belated congratulations to **Melanie Boehm** who is the Code Enforcement Officer for City of University Place who just let the Code Word know her city honored her for Code Officer Appreciation week back in October and we missed including her in our last newsletter.



Another Code Officer Murdered in the Line of Duty

By: Kristina Blake



Sewage Enforcement, Code Enforcement and Building Code Officer, Michael Tripus, 65 was shot at the Paradise Town-ship, PA Municipal Building in December 2018.

According to court documents, the suspect came to Tripus' office, asked for him by name, and when Tripus responded,

he was shot in the mouth. The suspect, David Green, 72, then paced the floor until he was taken into custody by responding police. A co-worker administered CPR to Tripus until paramedics showed up, but Tripus was declared dead at the scene. It was further reported that Tripus told a co-worker before he was shot that he had "no idea" who Green was.

Tripus had apparently only had one contact with Green the week prior, when he showed up at the Green residence unannounced regarding sewage permits which Green was having trouble getting. Nothing from that meeting apparently triggered warning bells with Officer Tripus that Green was unstable and dangerous. Officer Tripus apparently did nothing to trigger the attack that took his life.

Paradise Township is in a rural area and has a population of about 3,200. It employs three full time workers and one part-time worker in the office, and six on the road crew. The township building has no security camera, but there is a panic button that links to 911.



HERO'S OF THE MONTH:



WENATCHEE — A pair of city of Wenatchee code enforcement officers are credited with helping evacuate a family from a burning home Wednesday, November 30th, in the early morning hours.

Code Officer Lance Merz and Code Officer John Fairbanks were working in an alley on the 900 block of Kittitas Street when they saw a column of black smoke rising from a home about 200 feet away.

Five members of the Revele's family were inside the home, and although the smoke detectors had sounded, they didn't know the home was on fire until they were alerted by Officer's Merz and Fairbanks who helped evacuate the family, which a included 3 month old baby, the mother, and father, an elderly woman, an adult man with special needs and a poodle named Dash.

Way to go Lance and John!! Your our Code hero's of the month!!



A Code Enforcement Officers Prayer

By: Michael J.F. Meeka,

Oh Lord, my God, this city is so great, and my car is so small.

Watch over me, and my brother and sister code officers as we go about our daily tasks.

Grant that I may reach my area, and then return home safely without being struck down, or injured in the line of duty.

We willingly go in harm's way, to do our duty, to the best of our ability, and to support our loved ones. We go forth alone, unarmed, and unafraid, protected only by Your armor.

We pray Thee that today, not be the day that one of us knocks on the wrong door, at the wrong time. If that awful moment should come, we pray that our families will be comforted by the knowledge that we will always hold a place of honor in the hearts, and minds of those who shared the hazards with us every working day. We know in our hearts that You will hold us in Your eternal grace for all time.

And at the end of our last tour of duty, out there oh Lord, we pray that all code officers be led by those who do not just "talk the talk," but by those who have "walked the walk."

If no one else acknowledges us, Lord, we believe that You appreciate our sacrifices and will "enforce" this, a "Code Officers Prayer."

The prayer was written by Hollywood Code Enforcement Officer Michael J.F. Meeka, February 18, 1996. Dedicated to all Code Enforcement Officers, past, present, and future.

