

Massachusetts Police Chief

The Voice of the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association



In Unity There is Strength

Summer Edition 2026

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The MCOPA is an association, comprised of nearly 400 municipal and campus law enforcement executives from all across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Working together, in the interest of continuing to improve the law enforcement profession, the MCOPA has been able to accomplish great things. The MCOPA remains very active in collaboration efforts with other law enforcement associations and agencies, in the Massachusetts Legislature, and in the appellate state and federal courts on issues affecting law enforcement.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Now that summer is here, I hope each of you has had the opportunity to spend some well deserved time with family and friends. Wishing you all a healthy, safe and enjoyable summer.

With so many new chiefs joining our association this year, I thought I'd borrow a page from Past President Eric Gillis's playbook for this summer edition. My advice is simple: don't spend too much time reading this newsletter and get outside, recharge and enjoy your summer. There will be plenty of time to tackle the challenges of profession when summer comes to an end.

Before you do that, however, mark your calendar for July 27th when our association will host the Annual Ralph Lepore Jimmy Fund Golf Tournament at Pleasant Valley Country Club. It's always a great day of camaraderie while supporting the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and honoring the legacy of Chief Ralph Lepore.

As we approach the halfway point of my presidency, I also want to highlight several important events coming this fall. Our Annual Fall Training Conference will be held September 15th thru the 17th at the Sheraton Four Points in Norwood. If you haven't registered yet, I encourage you to do so as soon as possible. Our conference planning team has put together an outstanding program designed to satisfy many of the mandatory in-service training requirements for attending chiefs while providing timely and practical leadership development. If you have any questions about the conference or any of our upcoming events, please contact Executive Director Mike Bradley at the MCOPA office or reach out to me directly.



Chief Shane D. Woodson
Southbridge Police Department



I also encourage everyone to sign up for the Jimmy Fund Walk on October 4th and join Team Police Chief. As I write this, we have 57 registered chiefs, but I know we can do better. Our goal is to surpass our previous record of more than 150 participating chiefs. Whether you walk, volunteer, or support a teammate, your participation helps make a meaningful difference in the fight against cancer.

Finally, I strongly encourage every chief, especially those who are new to our profession, to attend the IACP Annual Conference in Orlando from October 24th thru 27th. The educational sessions provide valuable insights into the evolving challenges facing law enforcement and the opportunity to network with chiefs from across the country and around the world is invaluable. It's a reminder that, while our communities may differ, many of the challenges we face are shared, and we are stronger when we learn from one another.

Thank you for your continued commitment to your communities, your departments and our association and I look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming events.

Stay safe, enjoy the summer and thank you for all that you do.

Respectfully,

Chief Shane D. Woodson
President MCOPA 2026



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Executive Director's Report

Chief Michael J. Bradley, Jr. (Ret.)

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE: NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN FOR THE 2026 MCOPA ANNUAL AWARDS PROGRAM

Every day, police chiefs across Massachusetts are finding new ways to serve their communities, support their officers, and lead their departments through increasingly complex challenges. The dedication, innovation, and leadership demonstrated by our members deserve to be recognized and celebrated.

That's exactly why the MCOPA Annual Awards Program was created. It allows us to recognize and celebrate the outstanding work being done by our fellow chiefs while sharing ideas and best practices that can benefit departments across the Commonwealth. If you know a chief whose leadership has made a difference, we encourage you to take a few minutes to submit a nomination.

The Annual Awards Program was established to:

- Recognize exceptional leadership, innovation, and dedication among MCOPA members.
- Highlight successful programs and best practices that improve public safety, community engagement, and organizational effectiveness.
- Celebrate the accomplishments of our peers while fostering collaboration and professional excellence across Massachusetts.

2026 Award Categories

Innovative Leader Award

Recognizing a chief who has implemented innovative strategies, developed impactful programs, or demonstrated exceptional leadership while serving on an MCOPA committee.

Community Policing Award

Honoring a chief whose commitment to community engagement has strengthened public trust, built meaningful partnerships, and enhanced relationships with those they serve.

Health and Wellness Leadership Award

Celebrating a chief who has championed initiatives that prioritize officer wellness, mental health, resiliency, and the overall well-being of their department.

Nominate a Deserving Chief

Every chief knows a colleague whose leadership has made a difference. Whether it is a groundbreaking initiative, an innovative approach to policing, or a commitment to supporting the health and wellness of officers, we encourage you to recognize their accomplishments.

Nominations should include a description of the nominee's achievements along with any supporting documentation, such as reports, media coverage, testimonials, or other materials that help tell their story.

An Awards Committee appointed by the MCOPA Executive Board will review all nominations using a standardized evaluation process, and recipients will be recognized during the **2026 MCOPA Fall Training Conference** in September. Award recipients will also be featured in the MCOPA newsletter and across our social media platforms.

The deadline to submit nominations is August 15, 2026. We encourage every member to participate by recognizing a fellow chief whose leadership exemplifies the very best of our profession. Together, let's celebrate the outstanding work taking place in departments across Massachusetts and the leaders who continue to move our profession forward.

– In Unity There is Strength

Fraternally yours,

Chief Michael J. Bradley, Jr. (Ret.)
Executive Director



Strengthening Our Voice: Support the MCOPA PAC

How You Can Help:

We are asking members to consider making a voluntary contribution of up to \$50 per year. You can donate quickly using the Venmo QR code (Please include your home address in the Venmo note field) **OR** by mailing a check payable to: MCOPA Political Action Committee, 353 Providence Road, South Grafton, MA 01560. Important Compliance Reminder: All contributions must be made from personal funds only. Agency funds or resources may not be used.



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Chief Chats

The Monthly Recap

This month's Chief Chats covered the following items.

1. AI and the FBI-LEEDA keynote. Eric keyed the FBI-LEEDA Executive Training Conference on legal and ethical guardrails for AI in law enforcement. The organizing idea: every chief wears three hats, Investigator, Employer, and Steward, and AI shows up under all three, with the employer and steward exposure the part most chiefs are not yet watching. The headline guidance for members: the officer, not the tool, is the author of any report; AI never justifies force, probable cause, or a warrant; CJIS, CORI, and personal information do not belong in consumer tools; and a facial-recognition hit is an investigative lead, never probable cause on its own. If a tool does not change the decision, it does not reduce the risk, and the vendor is never the one in the courtroom.
2. The 2026 Annual Leadership Conference. "Command Under Pressure: Decisions. Risk. Leadership." runs September 15 to 17 at the Four Points by Sheraton in Norwood. The program is built to deliver the mandated in-service topics at the command level, including AI in Policing, Legal Updates, De-escalation and Use of Force, Digital Investigations, Controlled Substances, and Operational Planning under ICS, with credit earned topic by topic based on attendance. The program is submitted to the MPTC for in-service-credit approval and presenters are anticipated and still being confirmed; the structure and highlights are being shared now. Engagement runs through the Whova platform, and members should watch for registration through the office.
3. Women's Leadership Committee pregnancy advisory and model policy. The committee, working with the General Counsel's office, has a model policy and a legal advisory in development for members. Four laws apply at once: the Massachusetts PWFA (G.L. c. 151B, six or more employees), the federal PWFA, the PUMP Act, and the ADA. The core accommodation duty is in effect, and Massachusetts protection is independent of the federal rule litigation. The recurring traps are forcing leave when an accommodation would allow the officer to keep working, quietly removing a pregnant officer from patrol, a specialty unit, or the detail and overtime rotation, demanding documentation for everyday accommodations like water, breaks, and seating, and providing a lactation space that is a bathroom or is routinely displaced. The practical guidance: make the first conversation a welcome, run the process through one named coordinator, and consult counsel before any denial, imposed leave, or reassignment. Watch for the advisory and policy through the office.
4. POST certification and retired officers on details. Working a detail as a police officer, exercising police authority, requires POST certification, and retirement does not change that. POST maintains a recertification track for retired officers who work details, with the employing agency submitting the application. A genuine police detail requires certification; a civilian flagging role does not, but a civilian flagger cannot exercise police powers. Chiefs should audit the detail roster, confirm that every retiree working in a police capacity is recertified, and submit through the agency for any who are not. (G.L. c. 6E; 555 CMR 7.00.)
5. Chatrre v. United States (U.S. Supreme Court). On June 29, 2026, the Supreme Court held that obtaining a person's cell-phone location history from a third party such as Google through a geofence warrant is a Fourth Amendment search that requires a warrant, extending Carpenter v. United States to Google's Location History. The Court rejected the arguments that a short time window, here two hours, or the third-party doctrine removed the warrant requirement. It did not decide whether the particular geofence warrant was valid, leaving the probable-cause and particularity questions for the lower court, and it did not address the good-faith exception. For chiefs: treat geofence and reverse-location requests as searches, build probable cause and particularity into every step of any such warrant, and coordinate with the prosecutor before using these tools. As a practical matter, Google has changed how it stores Location History and represents that it can no longer respond to these geofence requests, but the constitutional principle reaches cell-phone location data held by third parties more broadly.
6. Legislative update. Mike covered current legislative activity on Beacon Hill of interest to chiefs. Members who are hearing about legislation in their communities should contact the office; input is most useful while bills are still moving. Operative legal updates will be shared as developments warrant.
7. Annual Awards Program. 2026 MCOPA Annual Awards Program – Nominations are now open for the Innovative Leader Award, Community Policing Award, and Health and Wellness Leadership Award. Mike encourages members to recognize chiefs whose leadership and service have made a lasting impact on their departments, officers, and communities.



Calendar of Events

Foundation Jimmy Fund Golf Tourney
Pleasant Valley Country Club, Sutton
July 27, 2026

Annual Training Conference
September 15-17, 2026
Sheraton Four Points - Norwood

Jimmy Fund Walk - Team Police Chiefs
October 4, 2026

IACP Orlando
October 24-27, 2026

MCOPA IACP Hospitality
October 24, 2026



Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association

Join the MCOPA Mentor Program: Share Your Legacy of Leadership

Calling Experienced Chiefs!

As a respected leader in law enforcement, you've honed skills and insights that can empower the next generation. Join the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association (MCOPA) as a mentor and make a profound difference in our community.

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Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association

Take Your Leadership to the Next Level with MCOPA's Mentor Program

Are you a police chief looking to strengthen your leadership skills & expand your network?

The Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association (MCOPA) Mentor Program connects emerging leaders like you with experienced police chiefs. Learn from seasoned mentors who provide invaluable insights to help you navigate the complexities of modern law enforcement.

Program Highlights

- ✓ **Monthly Check-Ins**
Engage in regular one-on-one sessions with your mentor to discuss topics like community relations, personnel management, crisis response, and leadership strategies. Build a foundation of trust and get support for your immediate leadership challenges.
- ✓ **Professional Development Goals**
Set personalized goals with your mentor to focus on the areas you want to improve, from operational strategies to team management. Progress evaluations help ensure you're achieving meaningful growth throughout the program.
- ✓ **Quarterly Meetings & Networking Events**
Join MCOPA gatherings to expand your network, share experiences, and gain fresh perspectives from law enforcement leaders across Massachusetts.

Interested?

Visit our website to apply or learn more about how you can benefit from MCOPA's Mentor Program.

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Proposed Memberships

Active

Interim Chief Andrew Booth, Carlisle Police Department

Chief Stephanie Burdick, Lee Police Department

Associate

Deputy Chief Daniel Campbell, Marlborough Police Department

Life

Chief Craig Desantis (Ret.), Lee Police Department

General Counsel's Corner

Attorney Eric Atstupenas



Social Media, the Uniform, and Officer Discipline: Wenzler v. United States Coast Guard

The Seventh Circuit's decision in *Wenzler v. United States Coast Guard*, No. 25-1896 (7th Cir. June 1, 2026), upheld the removal of a Coast Guard Auxiliary member who posted crude and insulting statements on LinkedIn while displaying himself in uniform and listing his leadership positions, then refused the directive to take the material down. The decision is a clean application of the public-employee speech framework to social media, and its reasoning on institutional deference travels directly to police departments.

Legal Analysis

Public-employee speech runs through the two-step Connick/Pickering framework: whether the speech addressed a matter of public concern, and, if so, whether the employee's interest in speaking outweighs the government's interest in efficient public service. *Pickering v. Bd. of Educ.*, 391 U.S. 563 (1968); *Connick v. Myers*, 461 U.S. 138 (1983). The court assumed the posts touched on matters of public concern and still ruled for the agency at the balancing step, crediting the organization's interest in discipline, harmony among its members, and public confidence, including the reputational and recruiting harm the speech could cause.

The more useful holding is structural. The parties fought over whether the Auxiliary was a "paramilitary" organization entitled to greater deference. The court declined to treat "paramilitary" as a label that switches deference on or off. It held that the deference a court extends flows from the nature and mission of the organization itself, not from a separate categorical test. For a police department, that reasoning cuts the right way: the deference a court gives rests on what the department actually does and the public trust it depends on, not on a label it can claim or lose.

Why This Matters to Chiefs

Wenzler is Seventh Circuit, but the First Circuit applies the same Supreme Court framework, so the doctrine travels. Consider whether the department's social-media policy distinguishes between an officer speaking purely as a private citizen and an officer who holds himself out as a member of the department, in uniform or by title, which is what moved the balance here. Consider documenting the operational and reputational concerns at the time discipline is imposed, because the balancing test credits the employer's reasonable, contemporaneous predictions of disruption, not after-the-fact rationalizations. And remember this remains a balancing test: it is fact-specific, and the same framework that favored the agency here can cut the other way when the speech sits closer to core public concern and the disruption is thin.

Key Takeaways

- Public-employee speech discipline is governed by the two-step Connick/Pickering test: public concern, then balancing. The First Circuit applies the same framework.
- An employer can prevail at the balancing step even assuming the speech touched a matter of public concern, where discipline, harmony, and public confidence are credibly implicated.
- Deference to a law-enforcement employer flows from the nature and mission of the agency, not from a "paramilitary" label.
- Speech carries more weight when the officer holds himself out in uniform or by title; policies may want to draw that line clearly.
- Document the operational and reputational concerns contemporaneously; the test credits reasonable predictions of disruption made at the time.

Majority-Group Discrimination Claims After Ames

A unanimous Supreme Court decision from last year, *Ames v. Ohio Department of Youth Services*, 605 U.S. 303 (2025), removed a hurdle that several circuits had placed in front of "majority-group" discrimination plaintiffs under Title VII. The Fifth Circuit's recent decision in *Bravo v. Dallas Independent School District*, No. 25-10982 (5th Cir. June 1, 2026), shows courts now sorting out how far *Ames* reaches, and it is a useful occasion to flag the development for Massachusetts departments as employers.

Legal Analysis

In *Ames*, a heterosexual woman alleged she was denied a promotion and demoted in favor of gay colleagues. The lower courts dismissed her claim because she had not shown "background circumstances" suggesting her employer was the unusual one that discriminates against the majority, an extra burden several circuits imposed only on majority-group plaintiffs. Writing for a unanimous Court, Justice Jackson held that Title VII draws no distinction between majority-group and minority-group plaintiffs: the statute protects "any individual," and courts may not impose a heightened evidentiary standard on majority-group claimants. The familiar McDonnell Douglas framework applies to everyone on the same terms.

Bravo illustrates the limits of that holding. A Mexican-American teacher, fired after student complaints about racially insensitive remarks, argued that *Ames* had swept away the Fifth Circuit's separate requirement that a plaintiff identify a similarly situated comparator. The court disagreed, reading *Ames* as addressing only the majority-group "background circumstances" burden and leaving the comparator requirement intact. The point worth carrying away is not the comparator rule, which is circuit-specific procedure, but the confirmation that *Ames* has put majority-group and minority-group plaintiffs on identical footing at the threshold.

Why This Matters to Chiefs

For a Massachusetts department, Ames is more confirmation than change. The decision binds nationwide and resolves a split among the circuits, but the First Circuit, which covers Massachusetts, never applied the background-circumstances rule, and Massachusetts does not impose a heightened burden on majority-group plaintiffs under G.L. c. 151B. The equal-footing principle Ames announces was already the law here. The decision's value is the reminder it carries: a majority-group employee, for example a white, male, or heterosexual officer, can bring a Title VII or c. 151B claim on the same terms as anyone else, and personnel decisions touching promotions, assignments, discipline, or any initiative with a demographic dimension can draw one. The practical response is unchanged but worth restating: make sure promotion and discipline decisions rest on a documented, legitimate, non-discriminatory rationale applied the same way regardless of the employee's group, and that any program framed around demographics rests on job-related criteria that can withstand a challenge from any direction.

Key Takeaways

- Ames v. Ohio Dep't of Youth Servs., 605 U.S. 303 (2025), holds that majority-group Title VII plaintiffs face no heightened "background circumstances" burden. The decision is unanimous and binding nationwide.
- All Title VII plaintiffs are held to the same McDonnell Douglas prima facie standard, regardless of majority- or minority-group status.
- Bravo reads Ames narrowly, leaving the Fifth Circuit's separate comparator requirement intact, but that point is circuit-specific procedure.
- The First Circuit never applied the background-circumstances rule and c. 151B imposes no heightened majority-group burden, so Ames confirms existing Massachusetts law rather than changing it.
- Document a legitimate, non-discriminatory rationale for promotion and discipline decisions, applied uniformly; consult municipal counsel on specific personnel actions.

Visible Body-Camera Recording Is Not a Wiretap Violation: Commonwealth v. Grimaldi

On June 2, 2026, the Supreme Judicial Court reversed an order suppressing body-worn camera recordings of an OUI suspect at a sobriety checkpoint, holding that State Police troopers did not "willfully commit an interception" under the wiretap statute because nothing showed they intended to record the defendant secretly. Commonwealth v. Grimaldi, SJ-13842 (Mass. June 2, 2026). It is the Court's clearest statement yet on how G.L. c. 272, § 99, applies to open body-camera use, and the result favors departments that record in plain view.

Legal Analysis

Massachusetts is an all-party-consent jurisdiction. Section 99 makes it a crime to "willfully commit an interception" of an oral communication, and it allows a defendant to suppress communications intercepted in violation of the statute. An "interception" is a secret recording made without all parties' prior authority. The Court has already held that a body-worn camera is an "intercepting device," Commonwealth v. Rainey, 491 Mass. 632 (2023), and that a violating recording requires suppression of both

audio and video, Commonwealth v. Du, 495 Mass. 103 (2024). Grimaldi turned on the element not yet tested in this context: willfulness.

The troopers recorded the defendant performing field sobriety tests in a floodlit checkpoint "pit." A large reflective sign at the entrance warned of audio and video recording, the cameras were worn openly at chest level with visible red lights, and one trooper detached his camera and pointed it at the defendant's feet during the walk-and-turn test. Drawing on Commonwealth v. Brennan, 481 Mass. 146 (2018), and Commonwealth v. Ennis, 439 Mass. 64 (2003), the Court held that an interception is willful only where the officer intends to record secretly, that is, without the subject's knowledge. The troopers' open conduct foreclosed that intent. As in the jail-call cases, Commonwealth v. Boyarsky, 452 Mass. 700 (2008), and Ennis, a particular person's failure to register the notice does not convert an open recording into a willful secret interception.

The Court also addressed departmental policy. The State Police policy required troopers to verbally advise civilians they were being recorded, and they did not. The Court held that a failure to follow that written policy is not, by itself, a ground for suppression under § 99, because a wiretap violation does not turn on a reasonable expectation of privacy the way a constitutional search question does. It distinguished contexts such as inventory and strip searches, where policy noncompliance can require suppression on constitutional grounds, Commonwealth v. Barillas, 484 Mass. 250 (2020), and it took no position on whether the sign alone sufficed as notice.

Why This Matters to Chiefs

What defeats a wiretap suppression motion here is the absence of intent to record secretly, proven by conduct: cameras worn visibly, indicator lights on, signage where appropriate, and verbal notification where feasible. Grimaldi is a reason to reinforce conspicuous-recording practices, not to relax them. Verbal notification remains the better course, and where a department's policy requires it, that policy still governs officer conduct; the decision holds only that a lapse does not automatically equal a willful wiretap violation. The all-party-consent rule is unchanged, and genuinely covert recording, where officers do intend to record without a subject's knowledge, remains a different and far riskier matter under § 99. One posture note: this is a slip opinion subject to formal revision before publication.

Key Takeaways

- Commonwealth v. Grimaldi, SJ-13842 (June 2, 2026), holds that openly conducted body-camera recording is not a "willful" interception under G.L. c. 272, § 99.
- Willfulness requires intent to record secretly; visible cameras, indicator lights, and checkpoint signage defeat that intent.
- A subject's failure to notice the recording does not convert open recording into a willful secret interception.
- Noncompliance with a body-camera notification policy is not, by itself, a basis for suppression under § 99, but verbal notification remains best practice and the policy still governs officer conduct.
- The holding rests on willfulness alone; the Court did not decide whether the recording was "secret" or whether the sign sufficed as notice. The slip opinion may be revised.

Welfare Checks and Overdose Calls After Case v. Montana

In January 2026, a unanimous Supreme Court held that an officer rendering emergency aid needs only an objectively reasonable basis to believe someone faces serious harm, not probable cause. *Case v. Montana*, 607 U.S. ___, 146 S. Ct. 500 (2026). In May, the Eleventh Circuit applied that standard to uphold the seizure of a suspected overdose victim and grant qualified immunity. *Marbut v. Phillips*, No. 24-13309 (11th Cir. May 22, 2026). Together they sharpen the constitutional rules for calls Massachusetts departments handle every shift.

Legal Analysis

The emergency-aid exception lets officers enter and seize without a warrant when intervention is needed to prevent death or serious injury. *Brigham City v. Stuart*, 547 U.S. 398 (2006). It is distinct from vehicle-based community caretaking, which the Court held in *Caniglia v. Strom*, 593 U.S. 194 (2021), does not by itself justify a warrantless home entry. Case arose from a warrantless entry on a report that a man had threatened suicide and might have shot himself. The Court declined to import probable cause, which is tied to criminal investigation, and reaffirmed the *Brigham City* test: an objectively reasonable basis, on the totality of the circumstances, that intervention is needed to prevent serious harm. It also cabined the exception, limiting officers to what is reasonably necessary to address the emergency, not a license to search the home more broadly.

In *Marbut*, a mother reported that her daughter had passed out and might have overdosed. Officers found her unresponsive and unable to answer basic questions for several minutes. The court reasoned that if reasonableness suffices for the more intrusive home entry in *Case*, it suffices for a seizure outside the home, and held it was at least arguable that the officers had an objectively reasonable basis to detain her for evaluation. A brief sign of improvement, a medic's passing comment that she seemed "sound of mind," did not erase that basis given the short observation window. The court alternatively found probable cause to arrest, and rejected the excessive-force and failure-to-intervene claims.

Why This Matters to Chiefs

The federal floor is now clearly objective reasonableness, and that floor already matches Massachusetts practice. Under art. 14 of the Declaration of Rights, the SJC asks whether officers had reasonable grounds to believe an emergency existed and whether the response was reasonable, with the burden on the Commonwealth. *Commonwealth v. Duncan*, 467 Mass. 746 (2014). Case confirms rather than loosens what officers here must do, and art. 14 can demand more, including the long-standing rule that the exception cannot be a pretext for an investigatory search. What makes an intervention defensible is the articulable basis: the report, what officers observed, the subject's responsiveness, and EMS input. Reasonableness is judged in the moment, not with hindsight, and a transient sign of improvement does not automatically dissolve it.

Two cautions. Use of force is a separate question governed by *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989); a lawful emergency seizure can still become unlawful through disproportionate force, and *Marbut's* minimal-force analysis is Eleventh Circuit law, not the

standard a Massachusetts court would apply. And when the crisis is behavioral-health rather than medical, the Massachusetts vehicle for emergency detention and transport is G.L. c. 123, § 12, which turns on a likelihood of serious harm by reason of mental illness.

Key Takeaways

- *Case v. Montana* (Jan. 14, 2026) holds that emergency-aid intervention requires an objectively reasonable basis, not probable cause; *Marbut* (11th Cir. May 22, 2026) applies it to an out-of-home overdose seizure.
- The standard already matches Massachusetts practice under art. 14 and *Commonwealth v. Duncan*, 467 Mass. 746 (2014); art. 14 may demand more and bars pretextual use.
- Document the articulable basis: the report, observations, the subject's responsiveness, and EMS input. Reasonableness is judged in the moment.
- Use of force is analyzed separately under *Graham v. Connor*; *Marbut's* minimal-force holding is out-of-circuit and not Massachusetts law.
- Behavioral-health detentions in Massachusetts run through G.L. c. 123, § 12.

Withheld Evidence and the Limits of Qualified Immunity: *Cotton v. Hughes*

Cotton v. Hughes, No. 25-1201 (6th Cir. May 22, 2026), is an out-of-circuit reminder of two principles that apply with full force in Massachusetts: the police are part of the constitutional duty to disclose exculpatory evidence, and qualified immunity does not reliably shield an officer who knowingly withholds or fabricates it. Two men whose murder convictions were vacated after nearly twenty years sued two Detroit Police Department officers under § 1983, alleging the officers withheld evidence that a key witness had been bribed to make a false identification and that an informant's confession testimony was fabricated. The court allowed the core claims toward trial.

Legal Analysis

The Michigan-specific portions of the opinion do not govern here, but the federal constitutional baseline does. Under *Brady v. Maryland*, 373 U.S. 83 (1963), and *Kyles v. Whitley*, 514 U.S. 419 (1995), the prosecution's duty to disclose favorable, material evidence reaches evidence known only to the police, so investigators must route apparent exculpatory and impeachment evidence to the prosecutor. The knowing use or creation of false evidence is a separate due process violation. *Napue v. Illinois*, 360 U.S. 264 (1959). The First Circuit applies both principles. In *Haley v. City of Boston*, 657 F.3d 39 (1st Cir. 2011), a man released after more than three decades when an undisclosed exculpatory police report surfaced was permitted to pursue a § 1983 claim that Boston police officers deliberately concealed evidence and allowed false testimony. In *Drumgold v. Callahan*, 707 F.3d 28 (1st Cir. 2013), a jury found that a Boston homicide detective had withheld material exculpatory evidence.

Qualified immunity gained the *Cotton* officers little traction. They tried to argue on appeal that the police duty to disclose was not clearly established, but they had conceded that point below and the court treated it as waived. The more durable lesson is that the duty is well established today, so an officer who knowingly withholds apparent exculpatory evidence or fabricates testimony cannot

expect immunity to make the case disappear. And because a defendant appealing a denial of qualified immunity may not relitigate whether the record shows a genuine factual dispute, *Johnson v. Jones*, 515 U.S. 304 (1995), claims of this kind generally reach a jury once the plaintiff has evidence on each element.

Why This Matters to Chiefs

The exposure is real, and the lesson is about discipline, not litigation tactics. Investigators sit inside the disclosure chain, and material bearing on a witness's credibility, such as an informant's cooperation arrangement, a witness's prior inconsistent account, or a later recantation, is exactly the favorable evidence that must reach the prosecutor. Departments may want to reinforce, in training and supervision, that apparent exculpatory and impeachment evidence goes to the prosecutor as a matter of course, that informant arrangements are documented, and that case files capture inconsistent statements rather than bury them. The department's role is to move evidence into the process, not to filter it. Two caveats: *Cotton* is a Sixth Circuit decision applying Michigan law and is not binding here, and whether any particular nondisclosure is a constitutional violation is intensely fact-specific.

Key Takeaways

- Under *Brady* and *Kyles v. Whitley*, the disclosure duty reaches evidence known only to police; investigators must route exculpatory and impeachment evidence to the prosecutor.
- Knowing use or creation of false evidence is a separate due process violation under *Napue*; the First Circuit recognizes both claims, *Haley v. City of Boston*, 657 F.3d 39 (1st Cir. 2011).
- The police disclosure duty is well established today, so qualified immunity offers limited protection for knowing concealment or fabrication.
- A denial of qualified immunity generally cannot be appealed by disputing the facts, *Johnson v. Jones*; these claims tend to reach a jury.
- *Cotton v. Hughes* is out-of-circuit and not binding in Massachusetts; constitutional liability for nondisclosure is fact-specific. Document informant arrangements and preserve inconsistent statements.

Religious Accommodation After Groff: The Standard Just Got Harder for Employers

A wave of commentary followed Pope Leo XIV's May 25, 2026 encyclical on artificial intelligence, with employment lawyers predicting more religious-accommodation requests from employees who object to using AI tools at work. The AI angle is new, but the framework behind it is one every chief who manages personnel should understand, because it reaches far beyond AI.

Legal Analysis

The pivotal development is *Groff v. DeJoy*, 600 U.S. 447 (2023), where the Supreme Court raised the bar an employer must clear to deny a religious accommodation under Title VII. For decades, many courts let employers refuse an accommodation on a showing of little more than a minimal or de minimis cost. *Groff* rejected that. An employer must now show that granting the accommodation would result in substantial increased costs in relation to the conduct of its particular business. Inconvenience, administrative hassle, occasional voluntary shift swaps, and coworker grumbling generally will not clear that bar.

Why This Matters to Chiefs

For a police department, the durable significance is not AI. It is the everyday request: an officer who seeks a beard or head covering for religious reasons, a schedule adjustment for a Sabbath or holy day, or an exception to a grooming or uniform standard. After *Groff*, denying those requests requires a genuine, documented showing of substantial operational cost, not a reflexive no.

Key Takeaways

- The belief need not be mainstream, organized, or denominational. Under EEOC guidance, the questions are whether the belief is religious in nature and sincerely held. An employer may make a limited inquiry only where it has an objective basis to doubt sincerity or religious character, and should not judge the validity of the belief itself.
- The process matters as much as the result. *Groff* and the EEOC both expect a prompt, individualized, interactive dialogue. An employer that explores alternatives and documents the analysis is in a far stronger position than one that simply says no.
- This is now an enforcement priority. The EEOC's new National Enforcement Plan, covered separately in this issue, lists religious accommodation among its stated priorities, so denials are more likely to draw agency attention.
- Massachusetts law applies independently. G.L. c. 151B contains its own religious-accommodation requirement, enforced by the MCAD. Title VII compliance does not end the analysis.
- On AI specifically, the same framework governs. The department would assess whether the objection is religious rather than personal or political, identify exactly what tool or task creates the conflict, and consider whether a narrower accommodation (manual completion, reassigning the specific task, human review of outputs) works without substantial cost. Where a tool is truly essential to the role, denial may be justified, but it should rest on concrete facts, not on the general claim that the tool is useful.

Pre-Employment Assessments: Outsourcing the Tool Does Not Outsource the Risk

A recent federal ruling out of a Colorado sheriff's office is a useful prompt to revisit how departments use pre-employment assessments. In *EEOC v. Psychological Dimensions, LLC*, No. 1:26-MC-00072 (D. Colo. June 3, 2026), the EEOC was investigating a discrimination charge connected to the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office and served two administrative subpoenas on the outside vendor that administered the office's candidate assessments. The court declined to enforce the subpoenas, applying the long-standing relevance standard from *EEOC v. Shell Oil Co.*, 466 U.S. 54 (1984), and finding that the applicant data the EEOC sought had no connection to the charging party's actual claims.

Legal Analysis

The holding is therefore narrow. It is about the limits of the EEOC's subpoena power, not about the legality of any assessment, and the underlying charge remains unresolved. Two things make the case worth a chief's attention anyway. First, it shows the EEOC actively scrutinizing public-safety pre-employment assessments. Second, the agency's stated areas of concern map onto two compliance principles that every department using these tools should keep in view.

First, the ADA's line between pre-offer and post-offer screening. The ADA bars medical examinations and disability-related inquiries before a conditional offer, and permits them afterward only if required of everyone entering the job category. 42 U.S.C. § 12112(d)(2)-(3). A psychological evaluation designed to identify diagnosable mental-health conditions is a "medical examination" and must wait for the post-offer stage. This is not about the label on the test or who administers it. A personality inventory used to reveal mental impairment can itself become a medical examination, as the Seventh Circuit held of the MMPI in *Karraker v. Rent-A-Center, Inc.*, 411 F.3d 831 (7th Cir. 2005), an instrument still common in public-safety psychological screening. Administering a medical-type assessment pre-offer is a frequent and avoidable source of liability.

Second, be careful about screening on protected activity. The items that drew the EEOC's attention in this matter were pre-offer questions asking applicants whether they had experienced workplace harassment, filed complaints against an employer (including EEOC charges), or been involved in lawsuits. The court did not decide whether those items were lawful; it ruled only that the data about them was not relevant to this charge. But the underlying principle is settled: selecting against applicants because they engaged in protected activity is potential retaliation, regardless of how the instrument is labeled or that a vendor wrote it. As the commentators put it, outsourcing the tool does not outsource the legal risk.

Why This Matters to Chiefs

For Massachusetts departments, this sits atop an already layered framework. Civil service departments operate under G.L. c. 31 with HRD-administered examinations and medical and physical standards; all departments now operate under the POST Commission's certification regime, G.L. c. 6E; and c. 151B and the ADA apply throughout.

Key Takeaways

- Map the sequence. Confirm that any psychological or medical evaluation occurs only after a conditional offer, and that physical-ability testing and genuine non-medical screening are placed correctly.
- Read the instrument. Do not treat a vendor's assessment as a closed box. Review the actual items for questions that elicit disability information pre-offer or that touch protected activity.
- Protect confidentiality. Medical and psychological results must be kept confidential and separate from general personnel files under the ADA.
- Get audit rights. Vendor contracts should include the right to review content and validation and should allocate compliance responsibility.
- Members reviewing their hiring assessments can consult the MCOPA Disability Discrimination guide for the ADA framework and should coordinate with municipal counsel and, where civil service applies, with HRD.

The EEOC's New Enforcement Plan: Why Massachusetts Employers Cannot Relax on Disparate Impact

On June 4, 2026, the EEOC adopted a new National Enforcement Plan for fiscal years 2025 through 2029, replacing the prior Strategic

Enforcement Plan. The plan realigns the agency's stated priorities. Among other things, it directs the EEOC to prioritize what it characterizes as DEI-related race and sex discrimination, national-origin discrimination tied to visa and certification programs, single-sex spaces, and religious accommodation, and it instructs the agency not to bring or continue disparate-impact cases, citing Executive Order 14281 and a supporting Office of Legal Counsel opinion. It also folds regional enforcement plans into a single nationwide model.

This is a politically contested area, and the plan reflects the current administration's priorities rather than a change in the underlying statutes. For chiefs, the goal is not to take a side but to understand what changes operationally and, more importantly, what does not.

Legal Analysis

What changes is the federal agency's posture. The EEOC signals heightened scrutiny of practices such as diverse-slate requirements, diversity statements, demographic-data sharing, and compensation tied to diversity goals, framing them as potential race- or sex-based discrimination. That scrutiny is reinforced by recent Supreme Court decisions the plan invokes, including *Ames v. Ohio Department of Youth Services*, 605 U.S. 303 (2025), which eliminated a heightened evidentiary requirement some courts had imposed on majority-group ("reverse discrimination") plaintiffs, and *Muldrow v. City of St. Louis*, 601 U.S. 346 (2024), itself a police-transfer case, which lowered the bar for showing an adverse action in job-transfer and similar discrimination claims. Departments that conduct diversity-focused recruitment should understand the distinction the law continues to draw between broad outreach that encourages applications and using race or sex as a factor in an actual employment decision.

Why This Matters to Chiefs

What does not change is the law, and this is the critical point for Massachusetts. The EEOC's decision not to pursue disparate-impact claims is an enforcement choice, not a repeal. Section 703(k) of Title VII still authorizes disparate-impact liability, and private plaintiffs can still bring those claims. More to the point, Massachusetts has its own anti-discrimination statute, G.L. c. 151B, enforced by the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, which recognizes disparate-impact liability and is not bound by federal enforcement priorities. Police entrance and promotional examinations have long been a focus of disparate-impact litigation in Massachusetts, and nothing in the new federal plan reduces that exposure.

Key Takeaways

- Do not abandon disparate-impact diligence. A selection device that screens out a protected group at a markedly higher rate remains challengeable under c. 151B and by private Title VII plaintiffs, regardless of EEOC priorities. Validation and job-relatedness still matter.
- Review diversity-related practices with counsel. Recruitment outreach, slate requirements, and evaluation rubrics that touch race or sex warrant a careful look in light of *Ames* and the EEOC's stated focus.

- Watch for state-federal divergence. Where the EEOC's priorities point one way and Massachusetts law another, the department must comply with both, and the stricter requirement controls.
- Because this area is shifting quickly and is legally and politically sensitive, members weighing changes to hiring, promotion, or diversity practices should consult municipal counsel and may contact the General Counsel under the Policy on Member Access to Legal Services before acting.

A Quick Word on AI Note-Takers and the Wiretap Act

One thread from the current wave of AI-in-the-workplace commentary deserves a separate flag for Massachusetts, because our law is stricter than most. Automatic transcription and note-taker features now built into Teams, Zoom, Otter, and similar platforms record and transcribe conversations by default. In Massachusetts, that capability runs straight into the Wiretap Act, G.L. c. 272 § 99, one of the strictest in the country.

Legal Analysis

Unlike the many states that allow recording with one party's consent, Massachusetts prohibits the secret recording of a conversation. Recording requires the actual knowledge of all parties. *Commonwealth v. Hyde*, 434 Mass. 594 (2001). An AI tool that silently joins a meeting, an internal-affairs interview, a disciplinary conference, or a personnel discussion and captures audio can create exactly the secret recording the statute forbids, and a violation is criminal, not merely civil.

Key Takeaways

- Treat AI transcription as recording. If a tool captures audio, the all-parties rule applies. Disclosure at the start, with a real chance to object, is the baseline.
 - Be especially careful in sensitive settings. Interviews, interrogations, IA proceedings, and Garrity or union settings are not places for a default-on transcription tool.
 - Audit your platforms. Default settings change with software updates. Departments should know which tools are recording, where the data goes, and who can access it.
- (The rules for recording police officers performing their duties in public are different and carry their own First Amendment dimension. This flag concerns internal meetings and interviews, not citizen recording of police in public.)



Be sure to check-out the latest Legal Advisories posted on our website by clicking the Icon above



COPPER

"Chiefs of Police Pleasantly Enjoying Retirement"

Chief Michael R. Healy, Ret.

Twenty-six years ago this month the tall ships came to Boston, much like they are doing this year in celebration of our country's 250th Birthday, for Sail Boston 2000. At the time I was on the Executive Board representing Bristol County. During our Executive Board meeting in May, then MCOPA President Rick Marchese from Longmeadow, made notification that the Sail Boston 2000 committee had reached out to him looking for police chiefs who would like to be drivers for the Captains of the numerous tall ships while in port in Boston. The captains would need to be driven to various social gatherings, meetings at the State House and for occasional personal trips. The chiefs who volunteered would be provided new cars to drive which were donated by dealerships in the greater Boston area. There were 140 tall ships and sailing vessels from 35 different countries anticipated to be arriving in July for an eleven day maritime festival. Chief Marchese asked the members of the executive committee if anyone was interested in being drivers. Of course I volunteered as did several other chiefs. Although over 140 ships would be in port, drivers were needed for captains of about twenty-five to thirty of the larger vessels representing various countries. A benefit of being a driver was that you were able to attend many of the events scheduled for the captains including a presentation at the State House and on board cocktail receptions that several of the large wooden sailing vessels provided. The new cars we were given to drive all had official, made at MCI Cedar Junction, Massachusetts registration plates that said, "Sail Boston" with the sail Boston logo. After the event the drivers were able to keep the vehicle registration plate from the car they were driving. My plate, which I still have, is pictured below. This massive international event began July 11th and continued to July 21 and included over 20 Class A sailing ships. The drivers were responsible to pick up the Captain or executive officers from the ship they were assigned and take them where ever they needed to go. The ship I was assigned to was the STS "Lord Nelson" a sailing training ship out of England. The only time I needed to be in Boston at night was for the event at the State House other than that most trips for the Captain of the Lord Nelson were local tourist excursions or shopping trips for personal items of things for the ship. Because the Sail Boston 2000 was an eleven day event and I was going back and forth from Westport I shared the chauffeuring duties for the Lord Nelson with a good friend of mine Lt. Charlie Heaton of the MSP. We altered days and the

captain was good enough to provide us a schedule of his needs in advance. One of the highlights was a private cocktail reception held on board of the Lord Nelson the night before the tall ships departed Boston. During the cocktail reception several young members of the Lord Nelson crew were walking around passing out appetizers and beverages. Chief Marchese, myself and our wives were standing on the deck when one young lady sailor came up to us with a tray of appetizers. She said, "Would you like a pølsehorn"? It turned out to be a small hot dot wrapped in phyllo dough. The young sailor was from Sweden and spoke with a very broken accent. My wife Penny thanked her and took one and said to the young girl that in America we call this appetizer a "Pig in a blanket". The girl started to laugh and repeated, "pig in blanket"? to make sure she was saying it right. She then went to one of the other servers and told her the story of pigs in a blanket. For the rest of the night she was asking everyone if they wanted pigs in blanket laughing the whole time.

Below are some pictures from July 2000 of my experiences participating in the Sail Boston 2000 event. I was so glad to have the opportunity to become one of the drivers.



If any of you COPPER chiefs who may have been drivers have any old pictures of this event I would love to share them in a future COPPER article. In fact if you have any old MCOPA event photos I would greatly appreciate sharing them with me. Either scan and send or if you would rather send them via snail mail I will make sure I get them back to you after I scan them. How about something unique that happened during your career or an incident or case you feel was funny, unusual or something other chiefs can relate with to or get a laugh out of. We all have some stories that are a hit within our social groups. Send them to me to share with the COPPER audience.

How about a couple enlightening summer things you need to know to enhance your knowledge? Did you know crickets change the speed of their chirping according to temperature? Physicist Amos E. Dolbear is known for his work on early telephones and other inventions, but an 1897 issue of *The American Naturalist* contained a different type of scientific contribution: the hypothesis that cricket chirps are linked to air temperature. Dolbear's observations (likely of snowy tree crickets) led him to theorize that the frequency of their chirps increased with warmer weather, and slowed as the thermometer fell. Surely, the phenomenon could be used to "easily compute the temperature when the number of chirps per minute is known," Dolbear wrote. Most entomologists now agree that his theory, called Dolbear's Law, is pretty spot-on, thanks to how insects respond to environmental changes. As cold-blooded creatures, crickets are unable to regulate their body temperatures internally, relying on the sun's heat to fuel their metabolisms and provide the energy they need. Warmer temperatures allow the six-legged critters to use more energy, allowing more of the chemical reactions in their bodies that produce muscle contractions (and thus chirps) to occur which we hear in the form of faster-paced songs. So this summer on a warm night you can easily test Dolbear's Law on the next warm, buzzing night. Tune in to one cricket's song, count the number of chirps you hear in 15 seconds, and add 37 for an approximate forecast in degrees Fahrenheit. (If math isn't your strong suit, the U.S. National Weather Service has a handy cricket chirp converter that also provides a Celsius conversion). There are some limitations to using a cricket temperature gauge, however: Most crickets won't sing when temps dip below 55 degrees or when heat pushes the thermometer past 100. And while many crickets respond to temperature shifts this way, not all chirp at the same rate. Fortunately, the snowy tree cricket is widespread throughout the United States where, perhaps unsurprisingly, it's also known as the thermometer cricket. If any of you take on this challenge to test the accuracy of cricket temperature gauge let me know your findings.

Did you know mosquitoes prefer certain blood types? Summer means mosquitoes and if it feels like they always specifically seek you out, you may not be imagining it. While mosquitoes are drawn to a range of signals including the carbon dioxide you exhale, body heat, sweat compounds such as lactic acid, skin bacteria, and even visual cues such as movement and darker clothing — some research suggests blood type may also play a role in how attractive a person is to mosquitoes.

Some controlled experiments have found that mosquitoes land on people with type O blood about twice as often as those with type A, with preferences for type B and type AB typically falling somewhere in-between. Researchers have theorized that this pattern may be linked to subtle differences in chemical signals tied to blood type antigens that can

appear in skin secretions and influence body odor. But the research into this is limited, and scientific opinion remains divided on the significance of the studies that have been conducted so far. The findings of this, I'm sure costly experiment and study, have nothing to do with the fact type O+ blood is the most common and makes up for 37% to 38% of the population.

Lastly for your summer knowledge. Did you know some plants can hear? Plants may not have ears, but they're able to detect sound vibrations in ways that would astonish most gardeners. Scientific research has revealed some plants perceive and respond to acoustic signals in their environment. They then use those vibrations to make crucial decisions about defense, growth, and even reproduction. In 2019, biologist Lilach Hadany of Tel Aviv University discovered evening primroses can pick up the specific frequencies of bees' wings. Within minutes, the plants increase their nectar's sugar concentration, making themselves more attractive to the visiting pollinators. Hadany surmised that the flower's bowl-shaped blossoms act as an earlike structure, helping to detect the vibrations.

Nepenthes rajah, the world's largest pitcher plant, secretes a sweet-scented nectar to lure prey including rats, frogs, and insects into its acidic pitcher traps, which then slowly digest the unfortunate creatures. And in 2014, researchers at the University of Missouri found that when a caterpillar chews on the leaves of a plant, it creates distinctive vibrations that travel through the plant's tissues. Some plants can detect those very specific vibrations and perceive them as a threat; they then engage their chemical defenses, producing compounds that make their leaves less palatable to the munching insects. Researchers refer to this as "hearing" because the plants aren't just reacting to being touched or shaken they're "listening" for the unique "sounds" (vibrational rhythms) of the specific input (such as a predator chewing). Remarkably, the study showed plants can distinguish between different vibrations, whether it's a munching insect or another mechanical disturbance such as the wind or raindrops activating their defenses only when genuinely threatened. Further studies have shown plants can even use sound to navigate their environment. In 2014, researchers discovered that plant roots are capable of locating water sources by sensing the vibrations generated by moving water further evidence that plants can sense more than we give them credit for.

So this summer if you have some free time at night sit out back and calculate the temperature as you listen to the melody of the crickets chirping. Or during the day explore your garden and try to identify which plants are listening to nature looking for food or to provide nectar. In either case if your blood type is O you may want to pass on these experiments or cover yourself in clothing and bug repellent. Who actually crawls around looking to see if plants listen for water or if some plants prefer to feed certain bugs more nectar? How many people

have the time or need to compare cricket chirps to temperature or the need to watch who gets bitten by mosquitoes more? What a waste of money. Instead give it to the Jimmy Fund.

Thoughts for the day

You never forget the person who came to you with a torch in the dark.

The fact that jellyfish have survived for millions of years despite not having a brain is great news for a lot of people on Facebook.

People do not decide their futures; they decide their habits, and their habits decide their future.

Words of Wisdom

Don't let your ears hear what your eyes didn't see, and don't let your mouth say what your heart doesn't feel.

Please don't ever trade your authenticity for approval. Let people dislike you.

One of the most expensive things you could ever do is pay attention to the wrong people. – Ed Mylett

Mystery Trivia

June's trivia question was self-serving. I received two items at the trade show that I had no idea what they were. Apparently I wasn't alone. The responses I received were low. Only twelve chiefs responded. For one reason not a lot of COPPER chiefs attended the show and my guess is the active chiefs didn't know either. The first chief to respond identifying at least one item was Chief David Sedgwick identifying the second item as a small gun cleaning tool. Other chiefs identified the first item as a tire tread measurer but were not first. No one could identify both. Congratulations Chief Sedgwick on winning for the month of June.

This month's trivia question

We have all written reports throughout our careers. Then as we advanced in rank we were responsible for reviewing and proofing subordinates reports for accuracy, language and spelling. The question for the July/August trivia is, what word is always spelled incorrectly in the reports your officers have written?

If you are the first to answer the monthly trivia question you will receive a prize. That prize will be a monogrammed MCOPA item that's in stock at the office. You win and the prize will be mailed to you. If you think you have the correct answer send it to me at topcopwpd1@gmail.com. Cheryl will make sure you are rewarded.

Just think of life as fun

We'll be friends until we're old and senile, then we'll be new friends.

Kids these days are pretty soft. I'm pretty sure I died once when I was eight and my mom made me walk it off.

Kids today don't know the fear of leather rapidly being removed through pant belt loops.

Jimmy Fund

The good news is five more members joined our Team Police Chiefs walk team. That brings us to a total of 57 signed up to walk and support their fellow chiefs. The bad news is there's close to 300 members of the MCOPA who could care less about our association's pledge to the Jimmy Fund or just refuse to make a commitment. As I mentioned last month two people who donate to me every year asked why their chief was not listed on our Jimmy Fund page. Well, again this week I was eating dinner at our yacht club here on the Cape with my wife and three other couples. One couple, who always send in money for my walk, asked the same question. The husband mentioned a previous chief he and I both knew and said he used to send him a check every year. He went on to say their new chief has never asked for support and when he looked at our Jimmy Fund page to see how I was doing to reach my goal his new chief wasn't even listed as a walker. Again my response was go ask your chief. I did tell him with over 300 members less than 1/3 participate. That is a sad truth.

Thirty years ago when the COPPER chiefs were a little younger and could run we held our 12th Run for Jimmy. Now we walk. That year we were fortunate to have McDonald's sponsor us. They provided hats with our new logo "The Robert Mortell 12th Run for Jimmy" in honor of Chief Bob Mortell from Paxton who was shot to death two years earlier. McDonald's for the month of September in 1996 also had the paper placemat's they place on serving trays in all Massachusetts restaurants printed with our logo and the list of all the Massachusetts police chiefs who participated in the Run for Jimmy.



Thirty years ago Run for Jimmy with McDonald's as our sponser.9/29/1996

We no longer run now we walk

Mass chiefs standing before the hall of badges Dana Farber

How many McChief hats are still around?

McDonald's placemats they put on trays in their restaurants in September

Chiefs who participated were listed on the placemat

Quote of the Day

"Excellence is not a singular act, it's a habit." Aristotle .



SLAINTE MHATH



Carpe Diem

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Includes Criminal Procedure Guide!

Chief Kevin Kennedy (Ret)

**July 21 & 22 - Grafton PD
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
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Malden PD - August 17-21
Grafton PD - October 5 -9
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IDENTIFYING AND
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Lt. James J. Raso
7/28 - Andover PD
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

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 - MASTER FIELD SOBRIETY TESTS WITH HANDS-ON PRACTICE



THE TRUTHFULNESS ISSUE FOR MA POLICE OFFICERS

Recent police officer misconduct cases, case law in Massachusetts, and the Massachusetts POST Commission (M.G.L. Chapter 6E Definitions) have established a clear, statewide definition of truthfulness and untruthfulness for Massachusetts police officers. The law clearly defines when an officer's untruthfulness requires separation from service and when lesser disciplinary action is appropriate.

This seminar will clarify what is expected of MA police officers and the consequences that must follow when an officer's misconduct renders them unfit to continue in the police profession due to a failure to be truthful or the seriousness of their conduct. Police departments must adopt a written policy on truthfulness (a sample policy will be provided).

Alfred P. Donovan

Grafton PD

JULY 27, 2026

8:30 am - 2:30 pm
\$199

Operation of the Evidence Room

For
Evidence
Officers

Stephen A. Taranto, J.D. & Captain John Serson (Ret.)

Westport PD
July 24, 2026
\$199
9:00 AM-3:00 PM

THIS CLASS IS SUITED FOR ALL LEVELS OF THE EVIDENCE/PROPERTY ROOM COMPONENT. THE CLASS PRESENTS BEST PRACTICES FOR THE DESIGN, OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE PROPERTY ROOM.



FOUNDATIONAL LEADERSHIP: CORE LEADERSHIP SKILLS FOR NON-SUPERVISORS

Chief Ron Glidden (Ret.)

November 19 - Sudbury PD

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

\$199

- Communicate more effectively with coworkers and supervisors
- Improve emotional intelligence
- Learn time management and prioritization skills
- Develop learning agility to effectively navigate new situations
- Improve critical thinking and decision-making skills

Who should attend? New employees or any employee not yet serving in a formal leadership role but who could benefit from developing their foundational leadership skills—especially employees who might have the potential to grow into leadership roles.

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5 DAY



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TOPICS INCLUDE:

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- Documenting, Recording and Correcting Employee Behavior
- Procedural Justice, Cooperation and Police Legitimacy
- Employee Rights vs Supervisory Functions
- Supervision Liability
- Duty to Intervene & MORE

Alfred P. Donovan

July 20 - 24 @ College of
the Holy Cross, Worcester

\$699

8:30 AM - 2:30 PM

The "Officer in Charge"

Superintendent Lanita Cullinane, Boston PD

December 9, 2026

Sudbury Police Department

Through lecture, demonstration and class interaction, this course will assist the OIC as they develop in their roles and responsibilities as shift supervisor.

\$199

9:00 am - 3:00 pm





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Legislative Updates

Legislative Update – July 2026

As we enter the final weeks of the formal legislative session, activity at the State House is picking up quickly. Under the Massachusetts Constitution, formal sessions conclude on July 31, making the next few weeks the most important period of the legislative year. During this time, MCOPA continues to work closely with legislative leaders, committee staff, and our advocacy team to advance the Association's public safety priorities before the Legislature adjourns.

FY27 Budget Includes Training Reduction, but Protects Jail Diversion Funding

The FY27 Conference Committee budget has been released and is expected to be approved by both the House and Senate before being sent to Governor Healey for her signature.

While the budget maintains funding for the Municipal Police Training Committee, it includes a significant reduction in funding for veteran, reserve, and in-service police training.

Municipal Police Training Committee (Line Item 8200-0200)

- FY27: \$18,895,529
- FY26: \$21,412,003
-

This represents approximately a **\$2.5 million decrease** in funding for veteran, reserve, and in-service training programs. MCOPA will continue working with legislative leaders and the Municipal Police Training Committee to better understand how these reductions may affect training opportunities for departments across the Commonwealth.

There was also positive news in the final budget. The Conference Committee included a dedicated **\$19 million** earmark for Jail Diversion programs within the Department of Mental Health's Adult Mental Health and Support Services account. This investment recognizes the tremendous value of co-response and jail diversion initiatives that help connect individuals experiencing behavioral health crises with appropriate care while reducing unnecessary involvement in the criminal justice system.

Legislative Priorities: The Finish Line Is in Sight

Several of MCOPA's legislative priorities remain active as lawmakers work toward the July 31 deadline. While time is short, important legislation can move quickly during the final days of formal session.

Current Status of MCOPA Priority Legislation

- **Support for Reconvening and Maintaining the Special OUI Commission (S.1737):** Pending before Senate Ways & Means
- **Adding Campus Police Officers to the HEART Bill (S.1895):** Pending before Senate Ways & Means
- **Including Higher Education Campus Police Officers in Group 4 Retirement (S.1920):** Pending before Senate Ways & Means
- **Eliminating Caps on Post-Retirement Earnings (H.2796):** Pending before House Ways & Means
- **Law Enforcement Councils and Tort Claims Act Inclusion (S.1199):** Sent to Study
- **HALO Act (25-Foot Buffer Zone) (HD465):** Sent to Study
- **Blue Star Families (S.2903):** Passed by both the House and Senate and awaiting final enactment
- **Blue Envelope Law:** Signed into law by Governor Healey

How You Can Help

As the session draws to a close, your voice continues to make a difference. We encourage members, particularly our campus police chiefs, to continue reaching out to their legislators in support of including higher education campus police officers in the HEART Bill and Group 4 Retirement. Legislators consistently tell us that hearing directly from police chiefs in their districts helps shape their understanding of the real-world impact these proposals have on recruitment, retention, and public safety.

MCOPA will remain actively engaged throughout the remainder of the legislative session and will continue advocating for policies that strengthen law enforcement, improve public safety, and support the dedicated professionals serving communities across the Commonwealth. We will keep members informed as these important bills advance during the final days of formal session.



Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association

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- Content filtering
- Cloud-based wireless access point management

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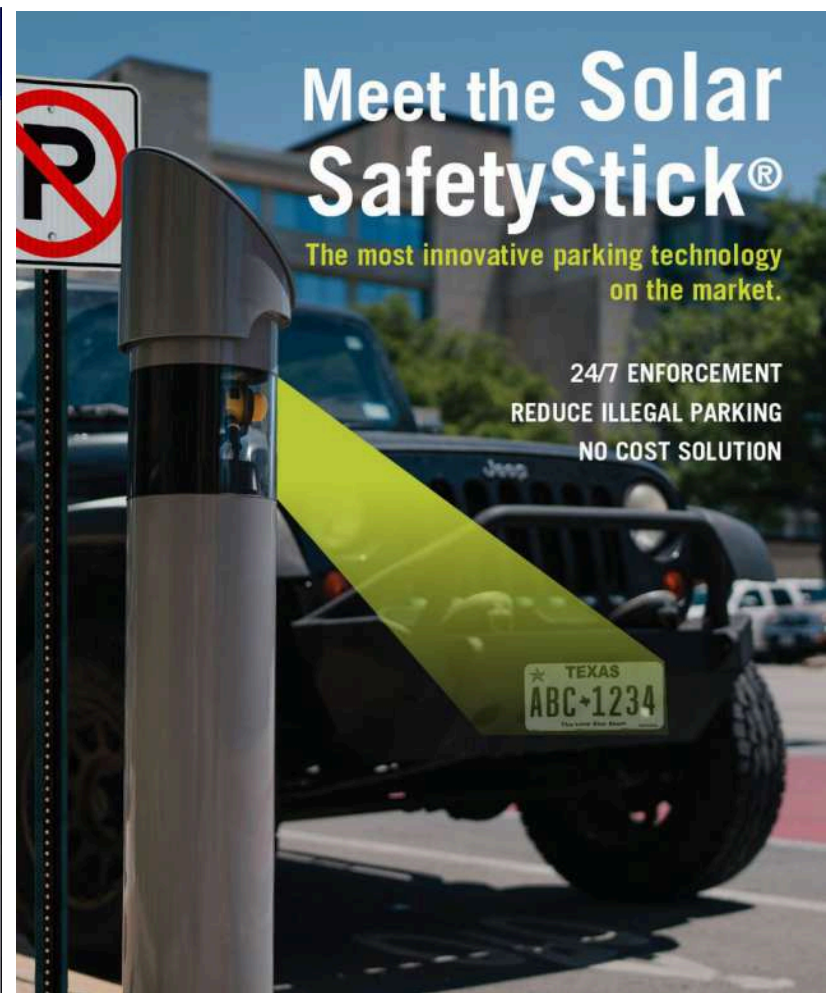
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Network Management

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Walk for a Cause: Join Team Police Chiefs Registration is OPEN!



Don't forget to check-out our NEW website!



Click Here to Join Team Police Chiefs

We are excited to share that registration is now open for the 2026 Jimmy Fund Walk for Dana-Farber! Join Team Police Chiefs on October 4 as we take steps together against cancer.

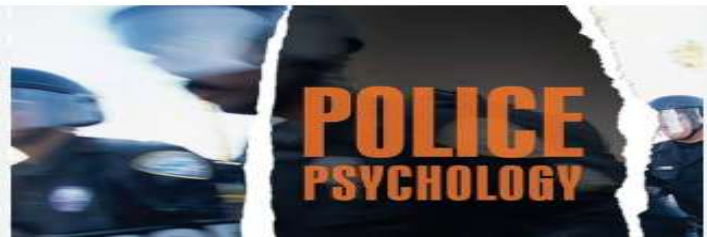
This year, we have a goal to raise \$130,000 for Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund and hope you will join us in this effort. Register here and use code CHIEF to save money on the registration fee.

All Chiefs will also be receiving Jimmy Fund collection canisters in the coming days – these are a great fundraising vehicle to put in your communities and help raise money for the cause.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to us, or Jess Abbott with the Jimmy Fund, if you have any questions.

Chief Jeffrey Lourie & Chief Larry Barrett
Team Captains, Team Police Chiefs, Jimmy Fund Walk

</



Leo F. Polizoti, Ph.D Police Consulting Psychologist

The use of profanity when dealing with the public.

I recently read an article that basically states if it's reported that a police officer used profanity in the performance of their duties and that it is mentioned in a courtroom situation, the arrest can be thrown out. This is news to me and maybe not to you but just in case I thought I would put this info in the article.

Now we all understand that using profanity statements are probably not the best thing to do when you're making an arrest. But, in some situations, when the person is really giving you a hard time and you slip out with a profanity about the process and or at the person themselves, it's difficult to maintain composure.

I'm sure many times you've heard other officers on the job, or maybe even yourself, make a comment like "oh this son of a bitch" or worse in response to being so upset by the way the person is treating you. Given the way people speak in our culture nowadays, including a lot of young people, it is easy for the officer to get upset for any number of reasons and "fired up" in situations and use comments that are considered profanity.

In my experience in dealing with officers, they are obviously attempting to do a tough job and can slip at times and use profanity.



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New England State Police Information Network

Digital Evidence Focus: Going Back to the Video Source

By Michael Breton, Senior Digital Forensic Analyst, LEVA-Certified Video Forensic Technician since 2008

Good-quality video can be the keystone of an investigation, and a simple mistake during collection can severely degrade its quality, sometimes without officers noticing it in the moment. NESPIN's Digital Forensics Unit has been clarifying digital video for more than two decades, and we have seen requests involving nearly every video source type.

One of the most frequent issues we encounter is officers recording a video playing on their computer monitor. Recording a computer screen really limits the Digital Forensics Analyst's ability to clarify the video; a downloaded copy of the source video is always preferred. What does it really mean to get a copy from the source, and is every copy technically from the source? The bigger problem is that investigators may unknowingly collect a lower-quality version of a video. It would be cumbersome to cover every possible issue here, but we have highlighted some common ones in this article, which we hope will encourage a closer look at important cases.

Example 1.

Sending media via text message (SMS) is a classic problem: a witness has a good video of an incident and sends it to the investigator via SMS. The investigator receiving the video may have no idea that the quality was dramatically reduced by the cell carrier's compression of the video. This problem usually occurs when media is sent from an Android device to an iPhone, or vice versa.

To demonstrate this effect, a five-second video of a slow-moving train car was recorded with an Android phone, with the source video at 1920 x 1080 pixels (also known as 1080p). It was then sent via SMS to an Apple iPhone, and the video received looked good to the layperson, but it was 1280 x 720 (also known as 720p). The result is 55% less pixels, and the pixel resolution is only one way to measure image quality.



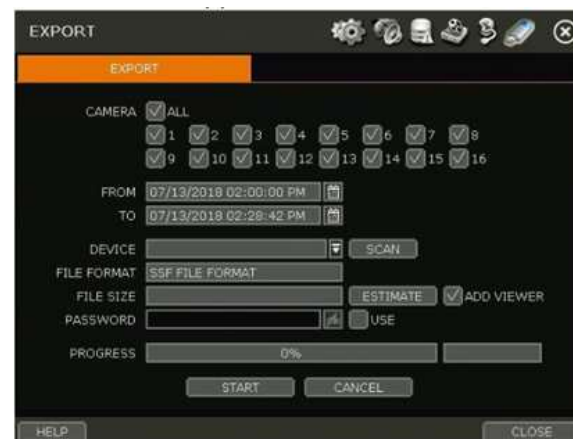
SMSQuality.jpg

Ex. 1 Caption: A video shared via SMS can lose critical information in transmission.

Example 2.

Digital Video Recorders (DVRs) and Network Video Recorders (NVRs) are present in most businesses and many homes. Understandably, there are times when the only way to collect a video in a hurry is by recording a computer screen with a cellphone; unfortunately, that is the worst possible way to obtain a copy of digital evidence. The monitor screen introduces "noise" known as "the screen door effect." The cellphone-holder's hands may be shaky, and the cellphone-holder tries to be helpful by zooming in on the image, but this only amplifies the problems. Downloading the video directly from a DVR to a flash drive should be the perfect solution, but it isn't always. Depending on the make and model of the DVR, you might be presented with multiple export formats, and they are not all created equal.

Universal and Standard formats, such as MP4, AVI, or QuickTime, are typically copies of the native video that have been re-encoded into a more compatible format for easy playback without requiring a third-party video player. This video imaging may be of lower quality in some cases. If you are ever unsure, try to collect it in each format. A skilled Video Forensic Analyst will identify the highest-quality video of the incident to work with. Some formats are DAV, .H264, .264, or any number of vendor-proprietary formats including .EXE. These are usually the highest quality, but additional issues may arise when playing them back or working with them.



DVRSample.png

Ex. 2 Caption: The file format setting looks innocent but has a significant effect on video quality.

Image source: https://digital-watchdog.com/vmax/DW_MAN_VMAXIPPlus.pdf

Example 3.

Many investigators are learning that Tesla vehicles have multiple external cameras, and if Sentry Mode is properly configured, six video angles can be recovered from the car (a seventh, “Inside Cabin Camera,” did not write a video file to the storage at the time of testing). Teslas can be a rolling DVR that provides a much closer angle to an incident or license plate. If a witness is willing to share the video, skip the app and go directly to the witness’s flash drive in their glove box. We tested a 2023 Tesla Model Y with Hardware 4. The camera titled “RIGHT PILLAR,” located in the B-pillar, would provide a 724 x 470-pixel video if exported via the Tesla App; however, if you acquire it directly from the storage drive, the resolution is almost doubled at 1,448 x 938 pixels. The increase in quality between the two versions is dramatic during playback with motion.



Ex. 3 Caption: Apps are handy but may not deliver the highest-quality images.

The concern about apps displaying and/or saving lower-quality video is not isolated to Tesla; it is an older problem with wireless cameras such as Blink, Ring, and others. Many apps display a “sub stream” or lower-resolution video to enable smoother remote viewing. This is important to know because when a witness screen records the playback on their smartphones because they don’t know how to download videos directly, it can hinder your investigation. Whenever possible, recommend to witnesses that they access their wireless camera footage using a computer’s web browser in an attempt to receive higher quality video.

The Bottom Line

Because these issues can be easy to miss in the field, attending specialized training on video recovery and getting hands-on experience with recording systems can help you get the best video. If you are not sure which video download format to choose, collect all available formats and consult a Digital Forensic Analyst to identify the ideal version.

NESPIN’s Digital Forensic Services can assist officers by clarifying video, image, and audio files from investigations. We can also provide support by creating demonstrative evidence aids, linking videos and audio in several formats for court presentation. If you have questions about these services, please email Forensics@nespin.riss.net. To submit a request for Digital Forensics assistance, please visit: <https://nespinrequests.riss.net/> and click on the “Requests” tab, and then choose “Forensic Request” in the drop-down menu. Once you submit your request, you will receive information on how to upload the video files.

Success Stories

Fraud by False Pretenses: A Member Agency contacted NESPIN after a resident reported that they sent \$11,328 to an unknown person during a relative-in-jail scam. NESPIN analytical staff conducted a trace of the victim’s funds to an account that was attributed to an individual. As a result, an arrest warrant was issued for the owner of the account, and the victim’s \$11,328 was able to be frozen.

Fraud/Theft: A Member Agency took a report of a female using fake identification and a stolen debit card. The suspect was successful in withdrawing \$6,200 from a bank and made attempts to do the same in two other communities. The Agency used the search feature of NESPIN’s past publications to search for the word “cane” as the suspect was seen walking with one. The search results showed a 2024 case out of Maine. The Maine law enforcement agency was able to identify the suspect, who has a lengthy criminal history. An arrest warrant is forthcoming.

Negligent Homicide: A Member Agency is prosecuting a negligent homicide case. A key witness in the case was unable to be located and served with legal process to ensure attendance at trial. The Agency contacted the NESPIN intelligence research staff for assistance in locating the witness. NESPIN was successfully able to locate the witness and provide address information to the investigator, who was then able to serve the witness, ensuring attendance at trial.

Sexual Assault: A Member Agency contacted NESPIN digital forensics staff and requested assistance in the clarification of an audio recording needed as trial evidence. The NESPIN staff was able to clarify the audio, and as a result, the jury was able to hear the recording, which was critical in obtaining a conviction for sexual assault.

Vehicle Accident With Serious Bodily Injury: NESPIN hosted a Member Agency’s Investigative Services Bureau for an overview of NESPIN resources available to the agency. During this time, NESPIN analytical staff briefed the attendees about an analytical process they had built around the analysis of a particular database that was not decoded by available commercial tools. As a result, the Agency was able to replicate this process with the assistance of the NESPIN digital forensics and information technology services and utilized this database in an investigation. After reviewing the findings, the Agency was able to confirm witness accounts and suspect statements that resulted in charges not being pursued.

Identity Fraud: A Member Agency located an abandoned safe off a roadway in their town. The contents of the safe included several Massachusetts Driver’s Licenses with several different names and identifying information but displaying the same photograph of a male. The safe also contained evidence of a multi-jurisdictional check fraud operation, as well as drug paraphernalia. The NESPIN Law Enforcement Coordinator offered assistance by querying RISSIntel. A match in RISSIntel showed that one of the Massachusetts Drivers Licenses recovered matched a driver’s license submitted to RISSIntel by an investigator at a neighboring Agency. The information on the driver’s license contained the same name, date of birth, and address,

however the license collected had a different male photograph. The identification cards recovered in each community are high-quality counterfeits and most likely came from the same source. The investigators are now collaborating on the case.

Bank Fraud/Narcotics/Identity Theft: A member Agency requested the services of the NESPIN Digital Forensics Unit to attempt to clarify 30 audio files related to an ongoing investigation involving bank fraud, narcotics distribution, and identity theft. The NESPIN Digital Forensics Unit was able to clarify the audio files and provide high-level transcription services, leading to the furtherance of the investigation.

Fatal Motor Vehicle Accident: A Member Agency contacted the NESPIN Digital Forensic Unit for assistance in clarifying a video obtained from a local business that captured a fatal motor vehicle accident. The video clarification completed by NESPIN allowed investigators to determine the movement of the suspect vehicle prior to the collision, helping to piece together the events leading up to the point of impact. Charges are pending following the completion of the accident reconstruction report.

Larceny: A Member Agency conducted an investigation into the theft of a gaming system from a student on their campus. The gaming system serial number was entered into NCIC as a stolen item. A routine cross reference of stolen articles in NCIC and pawn transactions in RISSProp resulted in a match of the serial number. The gaming system had been pawned at a local pawn shop just days after being reported stolen. The stolen item was recovered from the pawn shop, the suspect identified and charges have been issued.

Narcotics and Firearms: A Member Agency requested the use of a NESPIN cellular remote-view pole camera system and GPS unit during the investigation into a mid-level heroin/fentanyl distribution network. Utilizing the GPS device and a pole camera in the vicinity of the suspect's residence, the Agency was able to determine that an additional residence outside of the city limits was being used to store drugs, cash, and weapons. After using the electronic surveillance equipment supplied by NESPIN, the Agency successfully executed controlled buys which resulted in search warrants for both residences and the suspect. During the execution of the search warrants, the Agency located and seized \$125,315 in US currency, one pistol, a pickup truck, 5,739 folds of heroin/fentanyl (1,910 grams) and one kilo of fentanyl.

Narcotics: A Member Agency requested the use of an officer safety listening device from NESPIN Equipment Services. Investigators utilized the platform to support real-time communication, coordination, and evidence collection. The tool enabled secure and efficient management of the operation, contributing directly to its successful execution. As a result of the operation, officers effected an arrest on multiple charges, including three counts of Distribution of Cocaine, Possession with Intent to Distribute Cocaine, and a Fugitive from Justice warrant. The deployment of center equipment enhanced operational effectiveness by providing reliable technical support during the critical phases of the investigation and enforcement action. This successful outcome underscores the value of the platform used in facilitating proactive narcotics enforcement and improving officer safety and coordination in the field.

Passing Counterfeit and Attempted Larceny: A Member Agency contacted the NESPIN Law Enforcement Coordinator and requested assistance with an Attempted Larceny case involving the passing of a large amount of counterfeit US currency at a local retailer. The counterfeit bills were seized by the investigating officer after the suspect fled the area. The serial numbers were entered into the RISS Money Counter Network and resulted in a hit against a recent similar case investigated another New England state. Both agencies are now collaborating on the case.

Prostitution and Human Trafficking: A Member Agency requested the use of a NESPIN covert audio recording system. The system was used in a prostitution and human trafficking investigation. The audio recording system enabled agencies to identify suspects and vehicles operating a large prostitution and human trafficking operation. The information gained from the NESPIN system was used to apply for search and arrest warrants. One suspect was arrested. Seizures resulted in \$51,474.00 in U.S. currency. The SPD credits the use of the NESPIN equipment with the collection of vital information that enabled this investigation to be successful.

Sex Trafficking: A Member Agency requested Audio/Video Clarification by the NESPIN Digital Forensics Unit in a sex trafficking investigation. Clarification was made and the investigator reported the clarification was beneficial to their investigation.

Traffic Offenses - Hit and Run: A Member Agency investigated a hit and run accident. A vehicle hit another vehicle in a parking lot, causing damage, and left the scene. The incident was recorded on video, but the license plate of the suspect vehicle was not fully legible. The Agency contacted NESPIN's Digital Forensic Service and requested video clarification of the submitted video. The NESPIN Digital Forensics Unit was able to clarify the plate and vehicle images so that the Agency was able to identify and locate the vehicle and the driver. The operator was ultimately convicted.

Warrant Service: A Member Agency contacted NESPIN for assistance in identifying and locating a wanted subject. The subject was a target in a case involving drugs and weapons. Using a NESPIN pole camera, officers were able to view the subject's activities and make a positive identification. He was arrested without incident.

A final thought.

NESPIN has been in operation for more than 45 years. We have a myriad of services that support your work and help secure successful resolutions. Information sharing, equipment loans, digital forensics, training, event/target/currency deconfliction, analytical and criminal investigative support are what we do. I'm confident we can help you and remain just a call away.

Please remain healthy, safe and enjoy the Summer.

Just Move

Reclaiming the Aerobic Engine in High-Stress Professions

John Horvath, Chief of Police, Rockport Police Department

There is a quiet crisis inside public safety. It does not make headlines. It does not show up in press releases. It does not appear in after-action reports.



It shows up in cardiac events at age fifty-two.

It shows up in chronic fatigue at forty-six.

It shows up in the officer who once ran academy miles with ease but now avoids stairs.

For individuals in high-stress professions including law enforcement, fire service, EMS,

corrections, and dispatch, the greatest operational threat is rarely tactical. It is physiological. And the most powerful countermeasure is not complex: it is simply moving. Walk, jog, run... just move.

This is not about racing. It is not about chasing personal records. It is not about elite performance. It is about rebuilding the aerobic engine that modern stress and life's conveniences quietly erodes.

The Human Design Problem

Humans have evolved as endurance organisms. Walking is our baseline movement pattern. Running is our built-in upgrade. The metabolic cost of transport which is how much energy it takes to move a given distance reveals that walking and running are deeply efficient when performed at appropriate speeds.¹

We are all wired for sustained, rhythmic locomotion. What we are not wired for is chronic sympathetic activation such as sirens, radio traffic, shift rotations, cortisol spikes, interrupted sleep, repeated adrenaline surges, and other impacts that the law enforcement profession provides.

When chronic stress meets physical inactivity, the result is predictable:

- Elevated resting heart rate
- Reduced stroke volume
- Declining VO2 Max
- Increased cardiovascular risk

And here is the uncomfortable truth: VO2 Max is not merely a performance metric. It is one of the strongest predictors of long-term mortality.² VO2 Max (maximal oxygen uptake) is the maximum rate at which your body can absorb, transport, and utilize oxygen during intense exercise. It's expressed as milliliters of oxygen consumed per kilogram of body weight per minute (mL/kg/min) and is widely considered the gold standard measure of cardiovascular (aerobic) fitness.

As Joe Friel documents in *Fast After 50*, VO2Max declines with age, but the rate of decline is dramatically slower in individuals who maintain consistent aerobic training.³ In other words, aging is not the sole variable. Disuse is.

The Public Safety Risk Profile

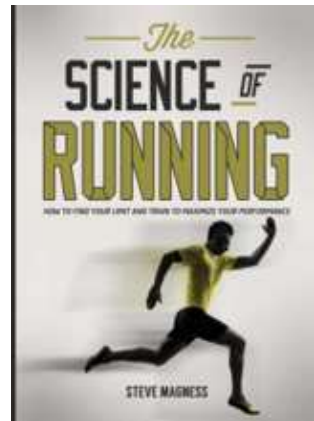
Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of line-of-duty deaths among firefighters and a major contributor to mortality in law enforcement.⁴ High stress, irregular sleep, and metabolic disruption compound the risk. Yet many professionals in these fields approach fitness in two extremes:

1. Intense, sporadic training during motivation spikes
2. Long stretches of minimal structured aerobic work

Neither model protects the aerobic base, but walking and controlled running do.

The aerobic system including the mitochondria, capillary density, and stroke volume, responds best to consistent, moderate stimulation. Steve Magness describes this adaptation process as a stimulus recovery balancing act; too little stimulus yields stagnation, too much yields breakdown.⁵

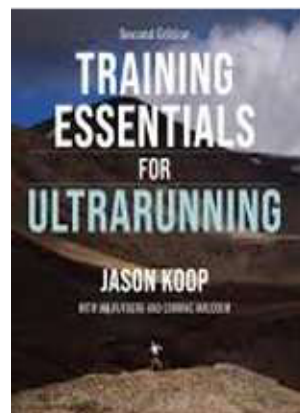
Most high-stress professionals are already living at a high stimulus level occupationally. The solution is not more intensity. It is controlled, rhythmic, parasympathetic-dominant movement.



The Aerobic System: Your Stress Buffer

Low-intensity aerobic training strengthens more than muscle. It strengthens:

- Stroke volume (how much blood the heart pumps per beat)
- Capillary networks
- Mitochondrial density
- Fat oxidation efficiency



SEndurance athlete, coach, and author Jason Koop's work in endurance physiology demonstrates that the aerobic system supplies the overwhelming majority of energy in prolonged efforts, even when intensity briefly rises.⁶

An underdeveloped aerobic system means:

- Higher heart rate for the same workload
- Slower recovery between stress exposures
- Greater perceived fatigue

For a patrol officer on a 12-hour shift or a firefighter operating in heat gear, that matters.

Walking briskly for 30–45 minutes most days improves:

- Resting heart rate
- Blood pressure
- Insulin sensitivity
- Mood regulation

The CDC’s Physical Activity Guidelines confirm that even moderate walking significantly reduces all-cause mortality.⁷ You do not need to run marathons. You need to move consistently.

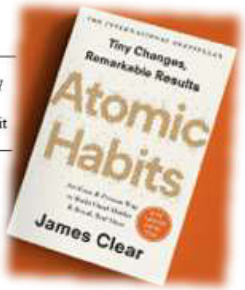
Why Walking First?

There is a reason walking comes first in this discussion. Walking is accessible. Walking has lower ground reaction forces than running.⁸ Walking is sustainable under fatigue.

Walking builds compliance. For individuals returning to structured fitness or for those over forty with accumulated orthopedic stress, walking establishes:

- Connective tissue loading tolerance
- Cardiovascular stimulation without excessive cortisol
- Habit formation

Pausing for a break here... If you haven't read or listened to the book, *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones* by James Clear, do yourself a huge favor and get it! If you read it previously and have moved away from some of the valuable insights, read it again.



Once walking becomes habitual, short bouts of controlled running can be layered in. But the foundation remains the same

Aerobic development is the base of the pyramid.

Magness describes endurance development as multifaceted, but the base remains low-intensity aerobic capacity.¹⁰ Remove the base and everything above it collapses.

The Age Factor

After forty, hormonal changes affect recovery capacity. Testosterone, growth hormone, and overall anabolic signaling decline gradually with age.³ What does that mean practically? You cannot out-intensity aging, but you can build health and wellness consistency practices. High-intensity work still has value, but only when supported by a durable aerobic base. The most common mistake among former academy standouts and lifelong athletes is assuming past performance equals current readiness. The body does not negotiate with nostalgia. It adapts to current stimulus.

The Mental Health Component

There is another dimension rarely discussed in fitness plans: psychological decompression.

Rhythmic aerobic movement has been shown to reduce anxiety and improve executive function. Walking outdoors, especially without headphones, reduces sympathetic dominance and enhances parasympathetic activation. For public safety professionals who live

in hyper-vigilant environments, this matters as much as cardiovascular markers.

Movement becomes:

- A decompression ritual
- A stress buffer
- A psychological reset

Reframing Fitness

If we as a profession are to thrive and live healthy lives deep into retirement, the conversation must shift. Walking and running are not “training programs.” They are maintenance of the most fundamental human system.

If you are forty-five, sixty, or somewhere in between and work in public safety, the question is not: “How fast can I run?” The question is: “How strong is my aerobic engine?”

Because that engine determines:

- How well you tolerate stress
- How quickly you recover
- How long you remain operational
- How you age

Walking and controlled running are not optional hobbies. They are career longevity strategies. The assignment is simple: Start by walking for thirty minutes a day, five days a week. Build good habits and you will see results. You owe it to yourself and your loved ones. Just... move.



MOVE TODAY. PROTECT TOMORROW.
Prioritize your health so you can continue to lead, serve, and make a lasting impact.

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John Horvath is the Rockport Chief of Police and chair of the MCOPA School Safety & Security Committee and the Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management | Violence Risk Assessment (BTAM | VRA) Committee.



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July 14, 2026	Juvenile Justice: From A to Z	Grafton Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	\$199
July 15, 2026	Advanced Criminal Law	Grafton Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	\$239
July 16, 2026	Bulletproof Leadership: Tools for Improving Morale, Accountability and Performance	Grafton Police Department	9:00AM - 4:00PM	\$199
July 20 – 24, 2026	Mastering Leadership in Law Enforcement: Core Leadership Principles	College of the Holy Cross, Worcester	8:30AM – 2:30PM	\$699
July 21 & 22, 2026	2 Day Criminal Procedure Review & Update	Grafton Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	\$369
July 24, 2026	Operation of the Evidence Room for Evidence Officers	Westport Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	\$199
July 27, 2026	The Truthfulness Issue for MA Police Officers	Grafton Police Department	8:30AM - 2:30PM	\$199
July 28, 2026	Advanced Massachusetts Motor Vehicle Law	Grafton Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	\$299
July 28, 2026	Roadway Safety: Identifying and Handling Drug-Impaired Drivers	Andover Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	\$199
July 29, 2026	Investigating Acts of Deception for Massachusetts Internal Investigators	Grafton Police Department	8:30AM - 2:30PM	\$199
August 3 – 7, 2026	Street to Courtroom: 5-Day Massachusetts Law Intensive	Shrewsbury Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	\$990
August 3 & 4, 2026	2 Day Criminal Procedure Review & Update	Shrewsbury Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	\$369
August 4, 2026	Accountability & Discipline for all Ranks	Bellingham Police Department	8:30AM – 2:30PM	\$230
August 5, 2026	Advanced Criminal Law	Shrewsbury Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	\$239