



POLICE  
OFFICER  
INVOLVED  
VEHICULAR  
FATALITIES  
IN

2009



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**Purpose of the study:** To identify the circumstances involved in line of duty automobile accidents resulting in officer fatalities in 2009.

**Definitions of Terms Used:**

**Law Enforcement Officer:** A duly commissioned certified law enforcement officer, with statewide arrest powers who is normally armed.

**Line of Duty:** A concept applicable only to law enforcement officers who is considered to be performing "in the line of duty" when that officer is engaged in activities pursuant to the laws, regulation, policies, procedures, or instructions issued by proper authority

**Focus of Study:**

1. Officer demographics.
2. Road and weather conditions.
3. The make and model of the law enforcement vehicle involved.
4. The type of activity the officer engaged in at the time of the accident.
5. Was the vehicles emergency equipment being utilized at the time of the accident?
6. Were seatbelts being used by the officer at the time the accident occurred?
7. Did the seatbelt fail?
8. Are there state laws in reference to law enforcement use of seatbelts?
9. Accident circumstances.

**Base Line Statistics for the period 2000 through 2009:**

| <b><u>YEAR</u></b> | <b><u>Total Deaths</u></b> | <b><u>Female</u></b> | <b><u>Male</u></b> | <b><u>Automobile Collision</u></b> |
|--------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2000               | 164                        | 6                    | 158                | 42 = 26%                           |
| 2001               | 242                        | 12                   | 230                | 39 = 16%                           |
| 2002               | 159                        | 15                   | 144                | 42 = 26%                           |
| 2003               | 148                        | 6                    | 142                | 53 = 36%                           |
| 2004               | 164                        | 9                    | 155                | 40 = 24%                           |
| 2005               | 165                        | 5                    | 160                | 39 = 24%                           |
| 2006               | 150                        | 9                    | 141                | 39 = 26%                           |
| 2007               | 196                        | 9                    | 187                | 54 = 27%                           |
| 2008               | 145                        | 12                   | 133                | 38 = 26%                           |
| <u>2009</u>        | <u>126</u>                 | <u>1</u>             | <u>125</u>         | <u>39 = 31%</u>                    |
| <b>Totals</b>      | <b>1659</b>                | <b>78</b>            | <b>1581</b>        | <b>425 = 26%</b>                   |

**Data obtained from the surveyed agencies:**

Of the 37 agencies contacted, 28 or 75.6 % responded to the Request for Information (RFI). Data provided in the responses ranged from minimal data to very comprehensive. All responding agencies provided reports concerning the motor vehicle accident. Some agencies provided copies of follow up investigative reports, coroner's reports and findings, scene photographs and diagrams as well as internal memos and reports. Due to the variances in the quantity and quality of the data received, there are variances in the number of responses to individual questions and data percentages. An unknown answer results from information not being in any of the documents provided by an agency.

**1. Officer demographics:**

a. Gender:

Male: 39      Female: 0

b. Age:

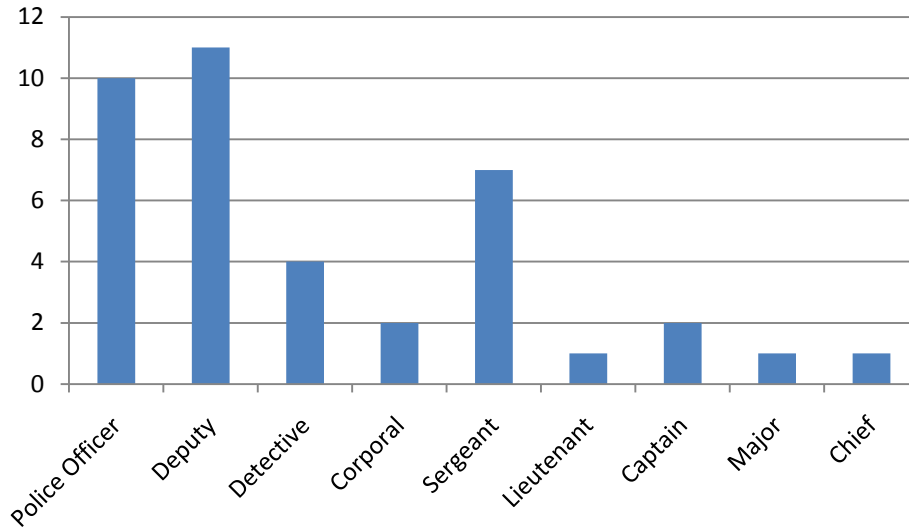
Youngest: 21    Oldest: 55

*Average: 36.8 years old*

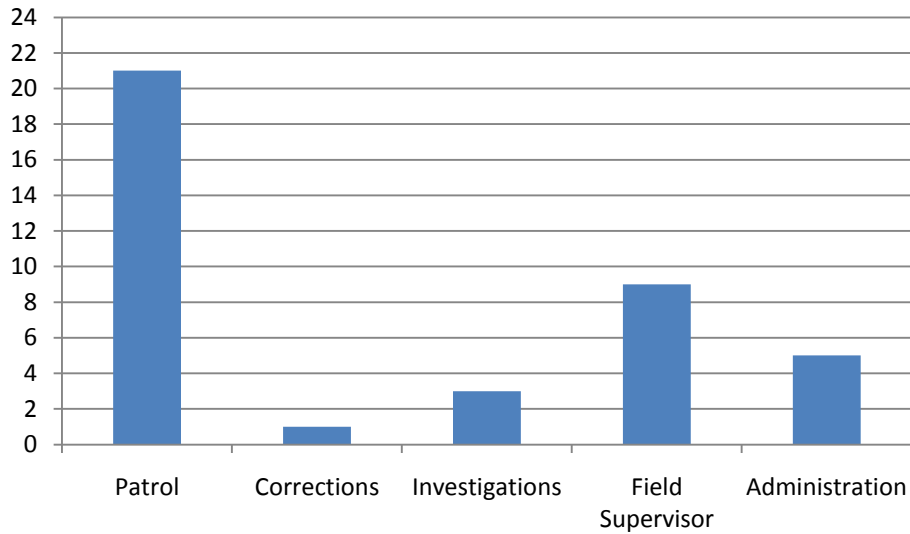
c. Years of Law Enforcement Experience:

Shortest: 3 months      Longest: 28 years  
*Average: 10.3 years of service*

d. Rank:



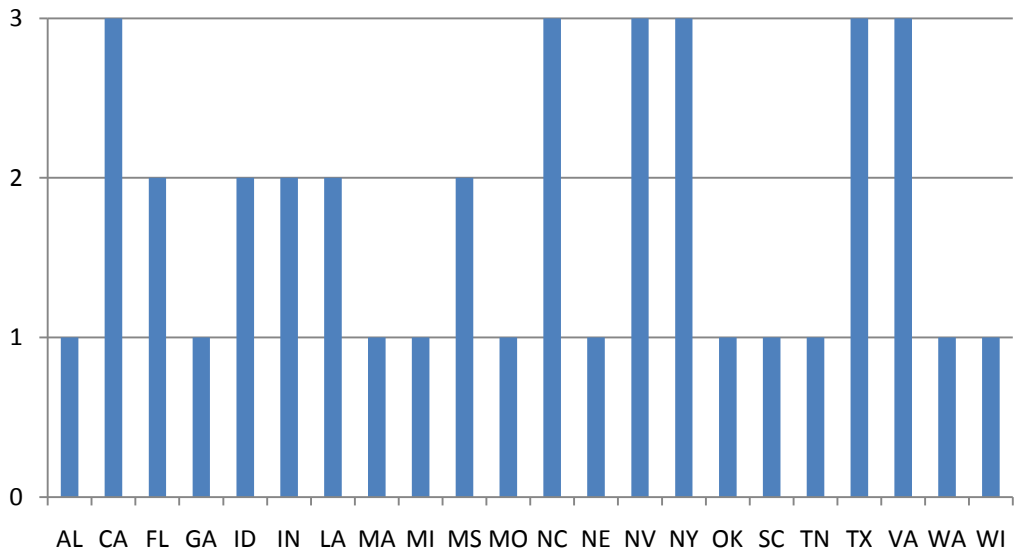
e. Duty Assignment:



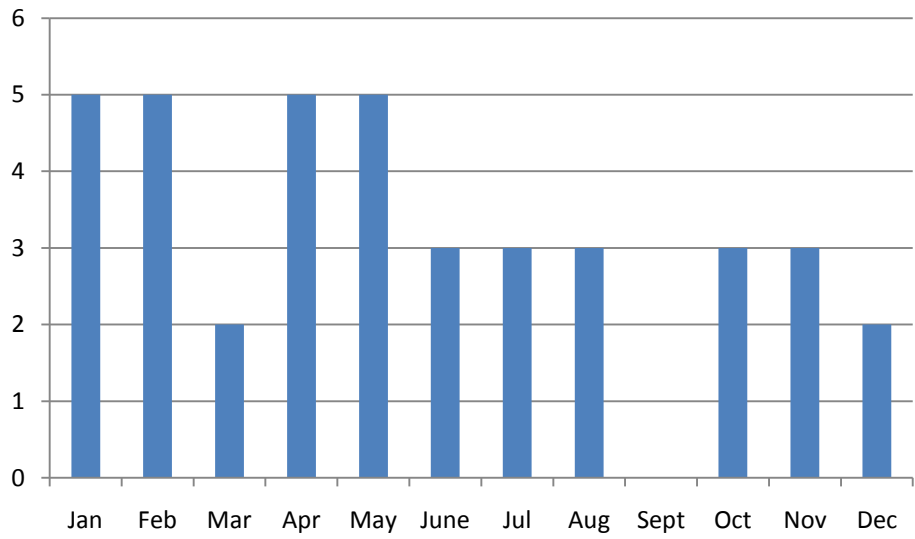
f. Agency Type:

|                   |                      |       |         |
|-------------------|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Police Department | Sheriff's Department | State | Federal |
| 14                | 19                   | 5     | 1       |

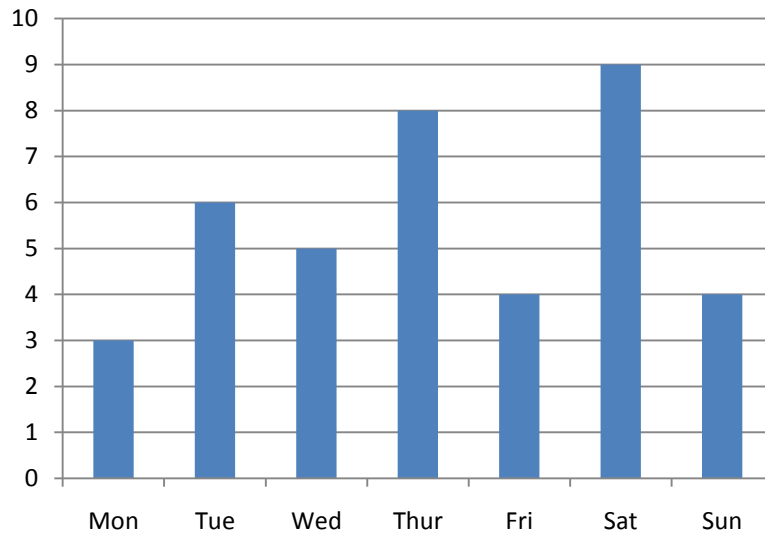
g. Individual States Involved: (22 States)



h. Month Occurred:



i. Day of Week Occurred:



j. Weather Conditions:

|       |      |     |      |         |
|-------|------|-----|------|---------|
| Clear | Rain | Ice | Snow | Unknown |
| 19    | 2    | 1   | 2    | 4       |

k. Type of Roadway:

|          |           |          |            |         |
|----------|-----------|----------|------------|---------|
| Two Lane | Four Lane | Six Lane | Interstate | Unknown |
| 14       | 5         | 1        | 1          | 7       |

l. Roadway Condition:

|     |      |      |         |
|-----|------|------|---------|
| Bad | Fair | Good | Unknown |
| 1   | 2    | 17   | 8       |

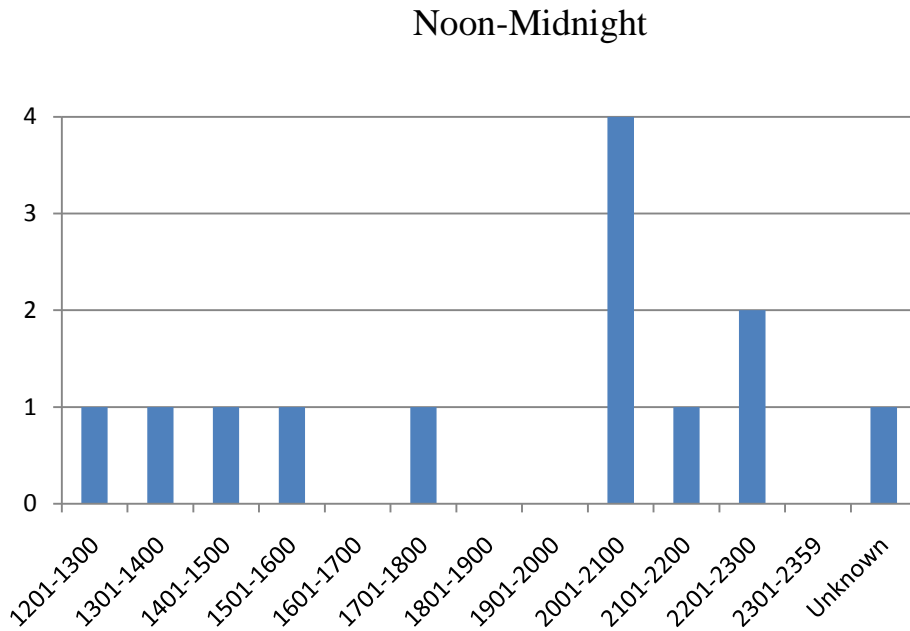
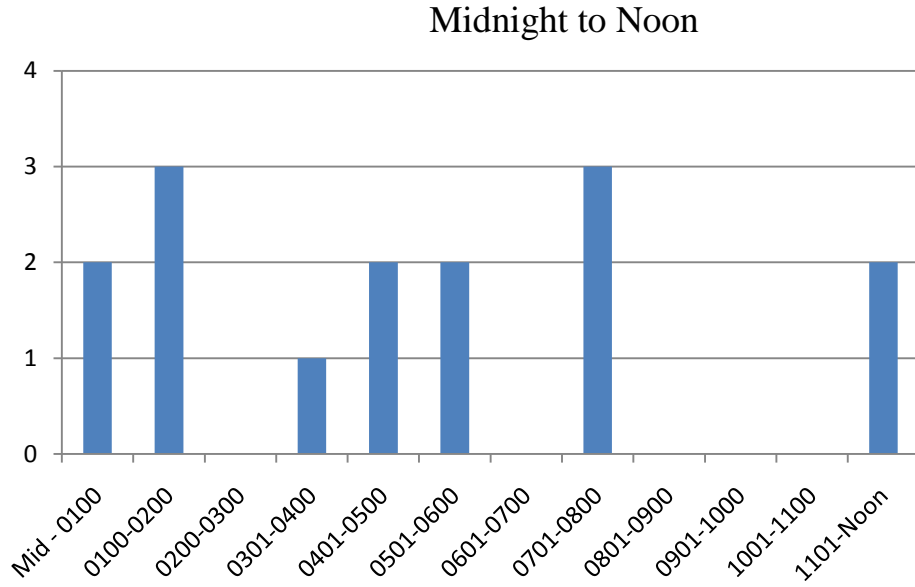
m. Make and Model of the Police Vehicle Involved.

Make: Chevrolet (3) Dodge (1) Ford (22) Honda (1) Pontiac (1)

Model: Charger (1) Crown Victoria (16) Civic (1) Econoline (1) Expedition: Fusion (1)  
Grand Prix(1) Impala (2) Montero (1) Trailblazer (1)  
Unknown (2)

Style: Marked (13) Unmarked (8) Unknown (7)

n. Hour of Day Occurred:



**11. Type of Activity the Officer was Engaged in at the Time of the Accident.**

Routine Patrol (7) Emergency response (12) Pursuit (1) Other (8)

**12. Was the Vehicle's Emergency Equipment Being Utilized at the Time of the Accident?**

Yes: 12 No: 13 Unknown: 3

**13. Were Seatbelts Being Used by the Officer at the Time the Accident Occurred?**

Yes: 15 No: 9 Unknown: 4

**14. Did the Seatbelt Fail?**

Yes: 1 No: 22 Unknown: 5

**15. Was Wearing of Seatbelts in a Police Vehicle Required by Departmental Policy and/or State Law?**

Department Policy: Yes: 10 No: 2 Unknown: 16

State Law: Yes: 12 No: 3 Unknown: 13

**16. Based on the Opinion of the Investigating Agency, was the Accident Survivable with Current Technology?**

Yes: 2 No: 16 Unknown: 10

**17. Accident Investigation Finding:**

Officer at fault: 16 Officer NOT at fault: 12

**18. If Officer was at Fault, the Reason Given:**

Speeding (6) Stop Sign Violation (1) Following to close (1)  
Too fast for conditions, lost control (8)

**19. Cause of Death (as determined by the coroner/pathologist):**

Blunt force trauma in 26 of the incidents, with fire resulting from the crash causing the death in 2.



### **Observations concerning the data:**

1. No Federal agency maintains a central database, with information about line of duty deaths of Law Enforcement Officer's.
2. All requests for data in this study was directed to the Records Custodian of each agency, however in later telephone contacts with agencies, it was apparent that upon receipt of the RFI there was no standard methodology established to handle such requests.
3. Because the accidents involved the death of an officer, several of the agencies had the State Police of their jurisdiction perform the accident investigation.
4. A small number of agencies expressed reluctance to release the requested information until the objectives of this study were thoroughly explained. Only information that was readily available by the general public was requested and used for the purposes of this study.