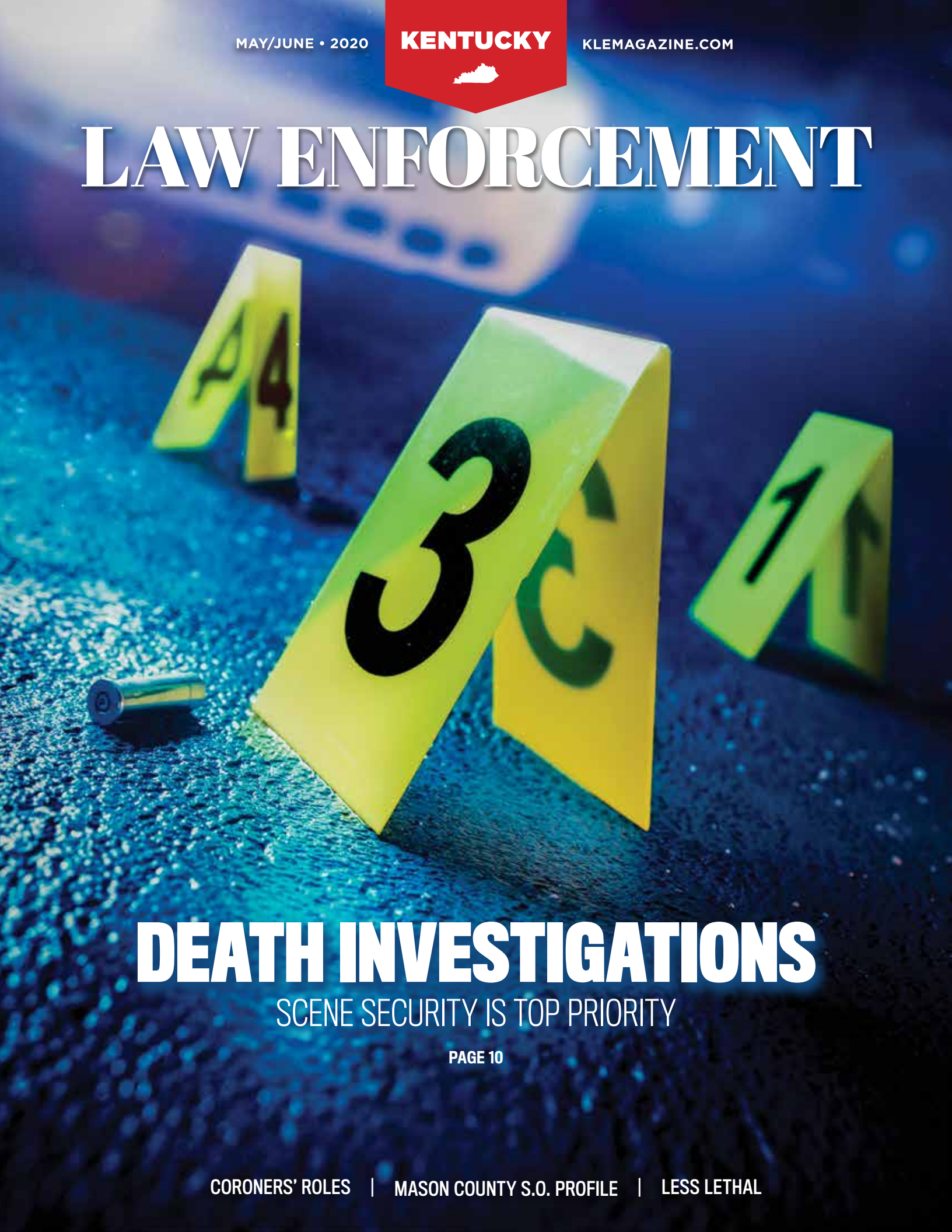




# LAW ENFORCEMENT



## DEATH INVESTIGATIONS

SCENE SECURITY IS TOP PRIORITY

PAGE 10

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**ANDY BESHEAR**  
Governor

**MARY C. NOBLE**  
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Cabinet Secretary

**NICOLAI R. JILEK**  
DOCJT Commissioner

STAFF:

Art Director | **KEVIN BRUMFIELD**

Public Information Officer | **KELLY FOREMAN**

Public Information Officer | **CRITLEY KING-SMITH**

Public Information Officer | **MICHAEL A. MOORE**

Photographer | **JIM ROBERTSON**

CONTRIBUTORS:

**JOSEPH WALLACE**  
**DOUG BARNETT**

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ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:

KLE Staff, Funderburk Building  
4449 Kit Carson Drive • Richmond, KY 40475

EMAIL: [KLEmagazine@ky.gov](mailto:KLEmagazine@ky.gov)



ON THE COVER:

Many facets come into play during a death investigation. When law enforcement officers first arrive on scene, they have a myriad of tasks to perform. Those include scene safety, isolating and securing the scene, minimizing the number of people who enter the scene and documentation.



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*Is law enforcement ready for handgun optics?*

# IS LAW ENFORCEMENT READY FOR HANDGUN OPTICS?

**W**ith factory optic-ready handguns available, many agencies are considering them for duty weapons. As with any move from tradition in law enforcement, opinions can vary greatly. Let's take an objective look at this topic.

I can say that having used a rifle with both iron sights and an optic, I will take an optic any day of



IRON SIGHT



OPTIC SIGHT

the week. Maintaining a target-focus has a significant advantage over a sight-focus methodology, which is what is needed for using iron sights. Seeking acceptance for rifle-mounted optics was a long, difficult fight. Most officers now agree that it has enormous advantages. I believe we are facing the same situation with handgun optics.

The advantages are faster engagement times and accuracy. Younger officers are preprogrammed for optic use from video games while aging officers have a hard time shifting focus back and forth from the target and sights. Target focus provides the advantage of better situational awareness.

The biggest issue with running an optic is that people expect to be able to pick one up and run it like a pro without putting in the time. If you have spent "x" number of years on irons and suddenly pick up an optic, of course, it will be slower initially. When you develop proficiency with the pistol and optic, you will get a lot faster.

Durability seems to be a concern of most agencies. Any piece of equipment can fail. I have witnessed many iron sights fly off handguns over the years. If you start with a factory optics-ready handgun and a quality optic, you should have few issues with durability or reliability. The question arises when you purchase sub-par electronics or machine your slide to save money. Any handgun optics should be used in conjunction with a quality set of iron sights.

Fogging of the optic seems to be another concern. I suggest agencies establishing a set of rigorous yet realistic testing criteria to include operating the weapon and optic combination during inclement weather. If you experience any fogging, use CatCrap or Rain X anti-fog on the lens. Those products are fantastic and will solve that problem. The fogging issue is less of a problem as you can still get good hits by framing your target in the optic window.

Before you form an opinion on the topic of handgun-mounted optics, I ask you to take time to learn the facts. If you decide to adopt this technology, please update your agency policies. Policies will need to be written for weapon, optic, and holster selection. Training and maintenance standards will also need to be instituted.

Handgun optics are a tool that can add to an officer's and community safety but need substantial investment, selection and training. 🇺🇸



**BY JOSEPH WALLACE**  
TRAINING FIREARMS SECTION SUPERVISOR,  
DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE TRAINING

# WE HAVE YOUR BACK



**K**YPCIS is very important to Kentucky Law Enforcement because it provides officers and telecommunicators a safe environment in which they are free to express themselves without fear of being criticized or judged.

Historically, leaders in our profession lacked the knowledge and understanding of how critical incidents affected those under their command, thus perpetuating cycles of unacceptable behavior in officers' professional and personal lives. KYPCIS is important to me because it affords me the opportunity to get members of my first responder family the help they deserve. The Owensboro Police Department has benefitted greatly from KYPCIS; to date, several sworn officers and telecommunicators have attended KYPCIS.

KYPCIS has been a Godsend for our officers and telecommunicators across the Commonwealth. Although overwhelming stress can be a byproduct of a critical incident, our people no longer have to carry the burden of dealing with these situations in complete solitude. To the officers and telecommunicators struggling to deal with any type of trauma, there is help out there – It's called Kentucky Post-Critical Incident Seminar. You are not alone. You no longer have to suffer in silence.

*Art Ealum*  
Chief of Police Art Ealum  
Owensboro Police Department

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: KEVIN BRUMFIELD / DOCJT

HANDGUN PHOTOS: GUY SAGI / 123RF.COM



# SMALL AGENCY RISES TO THE CHALLENGE

## MASON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Written By  
**MICHAEL A. MOORE**

Photography By  
**JIM ROBERTSON**

**M**ason County Deputy Devin Hull has law enforcement and Mason County in his blood. An eight-year veteran of the Mason County Sheriff's Office, Hull comes from a law enforcement family as his father once served as an MCSO deputy.

"I grew up here, and I have always been around law enforcement," Hull said.

Deputy Cameron Griffin tells a similar story. "We all grew up around here," he pointed out. "I don't think we have many deputies who are not from this area."

Sheriff Patrick Boggs said recruiting and grooming local talent is by design.

Because of the potential talent poaching Boggs, who has been sheriff for 13 years, targets his recruitment to a few counties surrounding Mason.

"I feel that hometown families might stay here, even if it is for less money," he said.

While MCSO focuses on recruiting from a local pool, the crime they face is not

(ABOVE) The Mason County Sheriff's Office patrols a county of approximately 17,000 residents. Because of its proximity to larger cities such as Cincinnati, Ohio, deputies with MCSO deal with plenty of crimes typically associated with urban settings. **PATRICK BOGGS** (third from left) has been sheriff for 13 years, and MCSO employs 11 full-time and two part-time deputies.

dissimilar to what larger cities, such as Cincinnati or Lexington, face, Boggs said.

"I call us a gateway between it all because we have Ashland, Portsmouth, Ohio and Cincinnati are an hour away, as is Lexington," Boggs said. "We see a lot of drug trafficking that comes down from Dayton, Ohio, which is a little more than an hour and a half away. Many drugs come through there via Detroit."

The drugs of choice in Mason County are typically methamphetamine and cocaine, Boggs said.

"We get the occasional heroin, but it's mainly meth and cocaine," Boggs stated.

While larger agencies often devote several officers to dedicated drug units, Mason County doesn't have the luxury of doing so, as it employs 11 full-time sworn deputies (including Boggs) and two part-time road deputies.

Instead, Boggs said his deputies learn and experience a wide range of policing skills that will help their careers in the long run.

"Everybody works everything, here," he pointed out. "I want my deputies to have universal knowledge of every type of crime. Should they move on to a larger agency, it can only help to promote themselves."

Boggs paused, reflecting on the phrase "my deputies."

"We're a family here in this office," he emphasized. "While they might be labeled my employees, they're all my co-workers and my brothers and sisters. We have mutual respect."

### PARTNERSHIPS

Though it is a small staff, MCSO has also formed a partnership with the Maysville Police Department that brought about a community emergency response team.

"I have four deputies on that team," Boggs said. "We have a great working relationship with them. We work hand-in-hand, and we cover for them if they are swamped, and they cover for us if we're swamped."

MCSO has also partnered with the Mason County School District to provide school resource officers, Boggs added.

"I have two (deputies) certified under the old SRO law, and they are currently enrolled for the new SRO classes, and I have two more signed up for training," he said. "Our relationship with the school board is fantastic, and our deputies, even though they may not be SROs, stop in routinely, as do the officers with the city of Maysville."

One of the SROs is Brittani Price. She stressed to be an effective SRO, an officer or deputy must know how to relate to kids.

"They seem to respond to me well," she said. "I also have good relationships with the administrators, but mostly, I love interacting with the kids."

Working as an SRO is not all fun and games, Price said, pointing out that it has many challenges.

"We see social-media bullying, images being circulated and drugs every once in a while," she said. "THC vaping is a big epidemic, and so are vapes in general. We have a big problem with that here."

From drug investigations to meeting the needs of having SROs in schools, Mason County offers many opportunities for its deputies.



(1) Mason County Sheriff **PATRICK BOGGS** has served in his role for more than a decade. He said his community is a "gateway" for criminal activities, which come in from other places such as Lexington.

(2) Mason County Deputy **DEVIN HULL** has followed his dad's example by being a deputy. Hull is a prime example of Sheriff Patrick Boggs' commitment to recruiting local talent.

(3) Mason County Deputy **CAMERON GRIFFIN** also grew up in the area and eventually came on board as a deputy. He said the agency has seen a noticeable increase in drugs in recent years.

(4) Mason County Deputy **BRITTANI PRICE** serves as a school resource officer. Price said building trust and relationship with students is vital in being a successful SRO. Price and other deputies routinely visits schools in Mason County.

(5) The Mason County Sheriff's Office is located in the heart of downtown Maysville. Sheriff Patrick Boggs credits a close working partnership with many outside agencies, such as the Maysville Police Department, to having an effective law enforcement presence.



# GETTING IT RIGHT



(OPPOSITE PAGE) Madison County Coroner **JIMMY CORNELISON** emphasized the importance of professionalism and a willingness to communicate with others as the most important things new coroners should remember.

(TOP-LEFT) Richmond Police Major **RODNEY TUDOR** (pictured prior to his recent promotion) said that working with an experienced coroner can benefit a police department as they bring a different bank of knowledge and extra set of eyes.

## MORE EYES MAKES WISE GUYS

According to Richmond Police Major Rodney Tudor, working with an experienced coroner can be a huge benefit to a department.

“We are always taking guidance from (Cornelison), and he has always been able to provide input that maybe we don’t understand or see from our perspective because we are (busy) collecting evidence or interviewing people,” said Tudor. “When it comes to manner of death or what he thinks caused it, things like that, it’s crucial (to listen) because he knows that stuff and shares (that knowledge) with us . . . he can show up at a scene and can tell you things that someone else might not see right off.”

In Henry County, Pollard said that assisting at a death scene can take multiple forms. The coroner might help law enforcement go through an individual’s personal effects in search of receipts to nail down a timeline of events or photograph and share pictures with departments for their investigation.

## A JOINT PATH

Law states that a coroner is in charge of the body at a death scene. However, according to Cornelison, if a coroner comes in with that attitude, they are an idiot.

“You take detectives who have been detectives for 10 years, and they’ve got all the resources in the world, why would (a coroner) go in there and throw their chest out and make everybody mad,” he said. “Then you never solve anything. It’s a give and take . . . when you act like a professional organization, you’ll be treated like one. Period. Simple as that.”

Establishing communication early is the biggest step coroners can take to have a long and productive working relationship with their local law enforcement, whether that means going out for a cup of coffee or just stopping in to say hello.

Discussions away from the scene of a crime, can allow both coroners and law enforcement to discuss what they need to accomplish their job. For coroners this can be things like making sure nothing on or around the body is moved prior to their arrival, and that it is the coroners’ job to notify families.

Regardless, both sides must always leave egos at the door, said Tudor.

“You’ve got to work together for a positive outcome,” he said. “In my opinion, you can’t get (to a scene) and split the investigation into two. If you can work it as one investigation together, you’re going to be more apt to get a positive outcome than if we are working on our side and they’re working on theirs and there is no communication. That doesn’t do anyone any justice.”



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For an expanded version of this article, please visit [klemagazine.com](http://klemagazine.com).

## CORONERS (AND LAW ENFORCEMENT) TALK ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND COLLABORATION

**W**hen it comes to death investigations, one will always find the coroner’s office and law enforcement on the scene. Both sworn agencies play integral roles but have very different responsibilities. The two must find ways to work together for the common good. To that goal, coroners across the state are paving the way as collaborative, investigative bodies and as a vital resource in catching criminals.

### HOLDING THEIR OWN

It’s well known that a coroner’s duties include pronouncing deaths, notifying families and determining the manner and cause. However, according to longtime coroners Jimmy Pollard, of Henry County, and Jimmy Cornelison, of Madison County, each

individual newly elected into the position must decide what kind of coroner they want to be.

“Some coroners out there say (to police), ‘When you get through with your investigation, let me know, and I’ll come pick up the body,’” said Pollard. “They don’t want to be involved in the investigation, or they will go to the scene and not really interject themselves into the investigation. We have others who want to be there and work every step. I’m that way. That’s the part of the job that I like, the investigation part and coming up with the result.”

Cornelison noted that he, too, has always been hands on, a reason both he and Pollard are members of the Kentucky Mass Causality Team that has assisted in tragedies such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the crash of Comair Flight 5191 in August 2006 at Blue Grass Airport in Lexington.

Written By  
**CRITLEY KING-SMITH**

Photography By  
**JIM ROBERTSON**



(BOTTOM-LEFT) Longtime Henry County Coroner **JIMMY POLLARD** (pictured with Henry County Sheriff **KEITH PERRY**) speaks with local law enforcement daily. Pollard said when new coroners come into office they should schedule time to meet up with law enforcement so each can discuss expectations.

# ATTENTION TO DETAIL

CRIME-SCENE INTEGRITY CRITICAL IN DEATH INVESTIGATIONS

IGOR STEVANOVIC / 123RF.COM

**D**eath investigations are never an easy task, but if done correctly, the outcome of the case will be successful, said Jim Sparks, a certified crime-scene analyst and senior crime scene technician with the Louisville Metro Police Department.

“The officers and first responders have a lot coming at them,” Sparks said. “The so-called death scene can be several things. It can be a homicide, a suicide or natural causes ... so you don’t know what you’re getting into.”

The primary elements in a scene involving a death include scene safety, isolating and securing the scene, minimizing the number of people who enter the scene and documenting the scene.

## SCENE SECURITY

Once an officer has determined a death has occurred, they must secure the scene, which includes rendering necessary first aid, suspect apprehension (assuming the person is in the immediate area) all while maintaining scene integrity.

“That is where crime-scene management comes into play,” Sparks explained. “When they get to the part when they know it is a valid crime scene, they need to isolate, secure and contain it.”

Often, they perform this task while working on mobile data terminals, radios and answering phone calls from their supervisors, Sparks said.

Securing a scene is where law enforcement breaks out the yellow tape, and Sparks said there is a method to the madness.

“I have a moniker I call the law of halves,” he said.

The law of halves involves yellow tape placement, Sparks explained.

“If the crime scene is 100 feet, then I go out 100 feet, then go an additional 50 feet and set up the first barrier tape,” he said. “Then I would go beyond that, and you would use your best judgment, and set up the second barrier tape. The second barrier tape is where the public and media would be.”

The area between the two barriers of tape is the staging area, an area where detectives and crime-scene unit personnel meet, Sparks said.

Once the scene is established, it should be secured and isolated, Sparks said.

“You want to eject everyone that is not essential out of the scene,” he explained. “You want to keep it as clean as possible.”

A detailed scene log must also be kept, Sparks said.

“Document whoever comes across the yellow tape,” he stressed. “If the chief comes out there, you log them in. You’re legally documenting whoever entered the crime scene. If you are in an outdoor situation, and you have a scene that is a block or two long, you have officers putting up tape down the block. You need to instruct

them nobody crosses that barrier tape, and I mean nobody. They must enter and exit at an established point.”

## EVIDENCE

Establishing the barriers helps maintain the most important type of evidence – the physical evidence.

Sparks said there are four main categories of evidence in every case. Each type has a crucial role to play in a case.

Physical evidence is the most critical of the four, Sparks said.

“Physical evidence establishes a crime has taken place,” he explained. “It links the victim to the crime scene, and it also links the perpetrator to the crime scene.”

When it comes to physical evidence, scene security with controlled entry and exit points are of the utmost importance, Sparks said.

“It’s a scientific principle – the Locard Exchange Principle,” he said.

Dr. Edmond Locard was a pioneer in forensic science. He formulated the basic principle in forensic science as “Every contact leaves a trace.”

“Every time you go into that scene, you are introducing contaminants into it,” Sparks explained. “Conversely, every time you leave that scene, you’re taking stuff out.”

“I work with a lot of our cold case detectives, and they’ve been working on a homicide case that is 10 or 20 years old, and it comes down to a hair on a sock,” Sparks continued. “We can get DNA off that hair, but the case comes down to a single fiber of hair, and now you (the patrol officer) go stomping through that crime scene, and through static, that hair attaches to your pants, and you walk out without knowing it. That is why we want to try to minimize access to that scene.”

There are many things a patrol officer can do to help the case, Sparks said. For example, they a piece of



*Written By*  
**MICHAEL A. MOORE**

*Photography By*  
**JIM ROBERTSON**

Louisville Metro Police Department Senior Crime Scene Technician **JIM SPARKS** said scene security and safety are two of the most important elements of any death investigation. He also said establishing a single scene entry and exit point is critical.

evidence such as a shell casing, they can use their business cards and fold them in half to mark the location.

"If you chase someone, and they throw drugs or a handgun over in a bush, you know where it is, and you can place another officer there to secure it and make sure no one illegally takes it or tampers with the scene," Sparks said.

The other three classifications of evidence are testimonial, documentary, and demonstrative.

The testimonial is simply that – statements from witnesses and suspects on the scene.

"That is why you Mirandize the individual," Sparks said. "You tell them their rights."

Documentary evidence is any material that may be available at the scene—for example, surveillance camera footage or a suicide note.

Demonstrative evidence is often used in court where legal counsel asks the officer to demonstrate something for the court, such as what they did to take the suspect down, Sparks said.

#### DOCUMENTATION AND THE FIVE SENSES

More often than not, a patrol officer will arrive on the scene long before a detective or crime scene technician. From the moment they arrive, they must start documenting the scene.

"I tell patrol officers that if they have a camera issued to them, take as many photos as quickly as they can,

with the understanding they have many responsibilities on them, to begin with," Sparks said. "As people come in, such as fire, EMS, and detectives, they are introducing all kinds of outside stuff to that crime scene, and it's being contaminated. If officers can take some photos of that scene before anyone else arrives, the old saying of a picture is worth a thousand words comes into play."

Note-taking must be beyond reproach for the good of the case, officer and agency, Sparks said, adding that after a while, the many different scenes begin to blur together.

"I'll get subpoenaed, and I'm like, 'Did I go to that scene?' The report says I did, but I don't remember it," Sparks said. "In Louisville, there are so many of those cases. If you're in a small town, that might not be the case."

Good initial note-taking can aid the detectives once they arrive on the scene.

Taking detailed notes and using your five senses – sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste – can be critical to a case.

If you go to a scene where smoke is involved, and maybe there is a metallic taste in your mouth. Is that not important to note?" Sparks asked. "It sure is. While it may not mean diddly squat to you, an investigator will say, 'There is a certain chemical that causes that,' and unbeknownst to you, it could be very critical. So put it in your notes."

#### SMALLER AGENCIES

LMPD has the resources to field a robust unit dedicated to working crime scenes. Many smaller agencies may not have that luxury, but it doesn't mean the quality of the investigation should suffer.

"I know budgets and personnel limit many smaller departments, but having people who've gone through courses like the Kentucky Criminalistics Academy is vital," Spark said. "(KCA) is where you can learn how to take good, quality pictures with a digital camera, whether it is a point and shoot or a single-lens reflex (SLR). It is as vital as being proficient with your weapon. Your weapon protects you and the camera documents and tells the story. (Officers) need to know how to do it."

KCA also teaches officer skills such as bullet trajectory and blood-spatter-pattern analysis, Sparks added.

Through proper training and technique, such as photography and note-taking, once the case moves into the trial phase, everything will pay off, Sparks said. Without attention to detail, things could go south in a courtroom.

"Taking good notes helps with memory when it comes to trial," Sparks said. "It may be a year to two years down the road (before it comes to court), but when you're trying to remember the details about the scene, taking good, copious notes is very important." 📸



(TOP) A wrecked SUV sits in the garage of the Louisville Metro Police Department Crime Scene Unit. Crime scene technicians will go over the SUV for evidence in a case LMPD is working



(LEFT) Crime scene technician **STEPHANIE SILSBY** performs detailed photography on collected evidence in a case she is working on for the Louisville Metro Police Department in the crime scene lab.



(BOTTOM-LEFT) The Louisville Metro Police Department Crime Scene Unit uses drying cabinets during processing. LMPD's evidence crime scene unit processes several pieces of evidence for the department every day.

(BELOW) Louisville Metro Police Department Crime Scene technicians **STEPHANIE SILSBY**, left, and **JIM SPARKS**, right, talk about the evidence Silsby is working on.





# ALTERNATIVE TO BULLETS

## LESS-LETHAL OPTIONS ARE EFFECTIVE

**A** law enforcement officer uses many tools in his or her work. Those tools range from handcuffs and oleoresin capsicum (OC) spray to a variety of tactical weapons, both lethal and less-than-lethal.

In the world of special response tactical teams, the popular less-than-lethal ARWEN-37 offers law enforcement officers versatility, according to Department of Criminal Justice Training Firearms Section Supervisor Joe Wallace.

“The ARWEN affords more options because there are a host of munitions you can shoot with it,” Wallace said. “You can shoot CS (tear) gas with it, and rubber or wooden batons. It gives you more capability.”

In all, the ARWEN-37 uses AR-1 impact baton rounds, AR-5 barricade penetrating rounds, OC, and CS chemical munitions.

The impact baton rounds are essentially big, hard rubber bullets that are fired at a non-compliant suspect to gain pain compliance, Kentucky State Police Sgt. Dallas Greer said.

According to Greer, assistant team commander with the KSP Special Response Team, that agency began using the ARWEN when it first came out in 1980.

“All KSP SRT members are trained on how and when to use the ARWEN-37, but only four members are designated as ARWEN-37 specialists and are assigned the weapon as part of their standard loadout,” Greer said.

In all, the ARWEN-37 uses AR-1 impact baton rounds, AR-5 barricade penetrating rounds, and OC and CS chemical munitions, Greer said.

“They can also be used to knock out windows or street lights to gain a tactical advantage on a call out,” Greer added.

The ARWEN isn’t a tool that sits around, gathering dust. Greer said KSP SRT uses it routinely.

“(We) use this weapon, in some form or fashion, on almost every single call out,” Greer explained. “Whether it’s launching impact baton rounds at a non-compliant suspect, or launching chemical munition barricade penetrator rounds into a residence on a

barricaded subject, the ARWEN-37 is relied on heavily by KSP SRT as its primary less-lethal weapon. We also use Tasers, but the ARWEN-37 is still our primary less-lethal option.”

### WEAPON BENEFITS

The most significant benefit to the ARWEN-37 is the fact it cannot be confused with any other weapon, Wallace said.

“We want to make sure it cannot be interchanged because, under stress, that can be an issue,” Wallace explained. “Because it’s a 37mm, there is no way to confuse it with a 40mm munition. You cannot confuse a lethal round with a less-lethal round. Having this type of weapon system removes that risk.”

Additionally, the sound the weapon makes is much different from that of a sidearm, shotgun, or rifle, Wallace continued.

“If somebody uses a shotgun for a bean bag, and you have a guy with a knife, and you want him to drop it, if a shotgun is used, it sounds like a shotgun,” Wallace said. “Then other people are going to respond with what is called sympathetic gunfire, where they think (the person using the shotgun) sees something they don’t, so they start shooting. With this weapon, it is easily recognized that it is not a shotgun, rifle or handgun. It makes a thumping noise. It doesn’t sound like a regular gun.”

The ARWEN-37 also allows for optics, which aids SRT greatly, Greer said.

“The biggest pro to the ARWEN-37 is that it is a rifled barrel that is capable of mounting a red-dot optic,” Greer said. “This allows it to be extremely accurate as a less-lethal launcher, especially when compared to smoothbore launchers or launchers with only standard iron or plastic leaf sights.”

Another benefit is the impact on the target.

“First, it is best to classify the ARWEN-37 as a ‘less-lethal’ weapon because it still has the lethal

capability if used a certain way,” Greer explained. “But a lethal outcome is not likely to occur when using this weapon in a prescribed way.”

If appropriately used, Greer said the suspect would suffer soft-tissue injuries or bone fractures. When KSP SRT members are trained, they are taught to target the solar plexus, back, arms and legs.

“We avoid the head, chest and groin,” he said.

Less-lethal weapons like the ARWEN-37 have helped law enforcement do their jobs more efficiently and safely, Greer said.

“Without a doubt, the ARWEN-37, and less-lethal launcher weapon systems in general, have changed the game regarding how SWAT teams, including KSP SRT, do business,” he said. “It allows us to have a less-lethal option that can reach out and touch someone from a greater distance than other less-lethal options like the ASP baton and Taser, and with the added capability of being able to launch chemical munitions into a residence. It has expedited the timeline which tactical teams can safely end barricades.”



(OPPOSITE PAGE) A Kentucky State Police Special Response Team member practices firing an ARWEN-37 at the Richmond Police Department firing range in February. KSP SRT uses the ARWEN-37 regularly when it is called out, according to Sgt. Dallas Greer.

(TOP-LEFT) The ARWEN-37 is popular with law enforcement as it provides the ability to shoot multiple munitions, including a rubber or wooden baton, tear gas and CS chemical gas

(BOTTOM-LEFT) A Laurel County deputy prepares to train on the ARWEN-37 with the Kentucky State Police Special Response Team in February at the Richmond Police Department firing range.





# PUBLIC SERVANTS

## CORONERS PLAY KEY ROLE IN KENTUCKY LAW

**C**oroners play a significant role in public service. In KRS 72.400, the General Assembly recognized the coroner as an “elected constitutional peace officer” and that the coroner’s work in “the ascertainment of the cause and manner of death in cases in which the coroner has jurisdiction is an essential governmental service.”

Coroners are called upon to handle matters related to the death of an individual in the community. Sometimes, coroners must initiate and conduct investigations into a person’s death that was accidental, sudden, unexplained or may have been the result of criminal activity. Within these investigations, coroners often engage in actions that are typically within the traditional province of law enforcement.

The coroner’s legal authority arises from Kentucky’s Constitution and mandates the election of the coroner for a four-year term in each county.

While the Kentucky Constitution creates the office of the coroner, the Kentucky Revised Statutes provide

the scope of authority for the office. Coroners and deputy coroners are required to take the constitutional oath of office and must execute a surety bond before assuming office. (Ky. Const. § 228; KRS 72.010.)

KRS 64.185 establishes the minimum compensation for coroners and their deputies. The minimum compensation is based upon the county’s population and level of continuing education.

KRS 64.185 also defines the number of deputies that can be employed by the coroner. Specifically, KRS 64.185(6) provides that the number of deputy coroners in a county shall not exceed one for every 25,000 residents based on the most recent federal census.

KRS 64.185(6) does, however, permit the coroner to appoint additional deputy coroners regardless of population upon the consent of the legislative body of the county.

The Kentucky Revised Statutes define the duties, powers and responsibilities of the coroner. KRS 72.410(1) requires the coroner to investigate the cause and manner of all deaths that are declared a “coroner’s

case.” A “coroner’s case” is defined in KRS 72.405(2) as a case wherein the coroner has reasonable cause to believe that the death was caused by any of the conditions outlined in KRS 72.025.

KRS 72.025 mandates coroners to require a post-mortem examination of the deceased when the death of a human being appears to be the result of:

- Homicide/act of violence
- Suicide
- Presence of drugs/poisons in the body
- Motor vehicle accident and the operator left the scene, or the body was found in or near a highway or railroad
- Occurred in a mental institution or while in police custody and no previous medical history can explain the death
- Motor vehicle accident and no appearance of lethal traumatic injury
- Fire/explosion
- Child abuse
- Unnatural circumstances
- The finding of skeletal remains
- Decomposition exists to the extent that external examination of the corpse cannot rule out injury or where criminal activity cannot be ruled out
- Drowning
- Sudden infant death syndrome
- Accident
- The deceased being under 40 years of age and no past medical history explains the death
- A death occurring at a worksite and/or industrial toxins may have contributed to the cause of death
- The body is to be cremated and no past medical history explains the death
- When the death is sudden and unexplained, and
- There are no current medical treatment and no ascertainable medical history indicating the cause of death.

Under KRS 72.020(1), any person, hospital, or institution finding or having possession of the body of any person whose death occurred under any of the circumstances outlined in KRS 72.025(1)-(12) shall immediately notify the coroner and a law enforcement agency.

Under KRS 72.020, the coroner “shall take possession of any objects, medical specimens, or articles which, in his opinion, may help establish the cause of death, and he can make or cause to be made such tests and examinations of said objects as may be necessary or useful in determining the cause of death.” All evidence collected by a coroner and a copy of all examinations made shall be retained by the coroner and turned over to the appropriate prosecutor unless otherwise ordered by a trial court.

For death investigations, KRS 72.415 provides that “coroners and deputy coroners shall have the full power and authority of peace officers in this state, including the power to arrest and the authority to bear arms.”

Accordingly, coroners are strongly encouraged to review the laws of arrest as established in KRS 431.005 and KRS 431.015. Coroners and deputy coroners also have the power and authority to administer oaths, enter public or private premises to make investigations, seize evidence, interrogate persons, require the production of medical records, books, papers, documents or other evidence, impound vehicles involved in vehicular deaths, employ special investigators and photographers and expend funds necessary for carrying out the investigations of coroner’s cases.

“**BECAUSE CORONERS POSSESS THE “FULL POWER AND AUTHORITY OF PEACE OFFICERS,” CORONERS ARE ADVISED TO STAY ABEAST OF CURRENT LAW CONCERNING THE USE OF FORCE, SEARCH AND SEIZURE, INTERROGATIONS, OPEN RECORDS, AND LAWS OF ARREST TO AID IN THE FULFILLMENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY DUTIES.**”

Concerning training, the General Assembly expressed its intent in KRS 72.400 “to encourage the coroner to participate in approved training sessions to improve” skills and to cooperate with the Office of the Kentucky Medical Examiner.

KRS 72.415(2)(a) further requires deputy coroners to hold a high school diploma or its equivalent, complete a 40-hour basic training course after the first year of employment, and complete a training course of at least 18 hours each calendar year.

Basic and in-service training for coroners is offered through the Department of Criminal Justice Training. Investigative information, crime scene investigation, photography, record keeping, search and seizure, open records laws and use of force law are topics included during these trainings.

The office of the coroner is a significant component of governmental service. Because coroners possess the “full power and authority of peace officers,” coroners are advised to stay abreast of current law concerning the use of force, search and seizure, interrogations, open records, and laws of arrest to aid in the fulfillment of constitutional and statutory duties. 🐾

Written By  
**DOUG BARNETT**  
STAFF ATTORNEY

# APB: SROs NEED TO BE AWARE OF APP TRENDS



## NEW TECHNOLOGY COULD LURE STUDENTS INTO TROUBLE

**T**he world of apps is an ever-changing door of, “out with the old and in with the new.”

Because of it, law enforcement, especially school resource officers, must be aware of the latest trends school-aged children are utilizing, Department of Criminal Justice Training Instructor Bill Eckler said.

“Facebook used to be a kid thing,” Eckler said. “Then parents became involved, so kids don’t do it much anymore. It’s kind of the same thing we’re seeing with Snapchat (where kids are using it less because parents understand it better).”

Presently, Eckler said apps such as Tik Tok, Kik, WhatsApp, and Houseparty are reeling in children, and potentially opening up doors for pedophiles to hunt and other less than desirable activity.

Apps such as Houseparty allow up to eight video chats at one time, DOCJT Instructor Cody Shepherd said.

You can drop in on conversations,” Shepherd said. “So, if you and I were talking, one of my friends could drop in on the conversation. The person dropping in only has to have permission from the person who initiates the video chat. This one person and I might not like the other person (on the call), so we could team up and bully that person.

“Hazing and harassing are the biggest things at the schools,” he continued. “There is also another avenue of sexting – trying to get pictures of the girls. Houseparty is

real big about that. (Boys) will get a girl in there, and three or four guys will join in to view (and the girl may not be aware of it). It could make her feel defeated and weak.”

A significant problem with many of the messenger or video chat platforms is they are untraceable, Eckler said.

This can be used to the criminal’s advantage, whether they’re using it to set up a drug deal, bullying, or attempting to lure a minor into a compromising position.

“The bigger one for criminal activity is going to be the WhatsApp or Facebook, which now has its encryption or secret messaging,” Eckler explained.

These apps can also be used to target children by pedophiles. In the November/December 2018 Kentucky Law Enforcement magazine article, 14% of teens reported in 2014 that friends had invited someone over whom they had only met online, and another 18% of teens had considered meeting someone in person whom they first met online, according to enough.org.

Additionally, just 28% of parents have installed software on computers to prohibit certain websites and app visitations; only 17% have such software on mobile devices, according to the website.

The key for school resource officers is to build rapport with the children in the schools, Shepherd said.

“It’s about having a network with the students,” he explained. “I had students who would come up to me and tell me when they saw certain things posted. They’ll tell you all sorts of things if they respect you. It comes down to having the respect of the students.”

Written By  
**MICHAEL A. MOORE**

# STRANGE STORIES FROM THE BEAT



## Cops Pull Over Wienermobile

Oscar Mayer’s iconic Wienermobile got a grilling from a Wisconsin sheriff’s deputy after the driver failed to give enough room from another coach on the road. Traffic laws in Wisconsin require vehicles to move out of the lane closest to another car that is on the side of the road with emergency lights flashing. The deputy issued the driver a verbal warning for not following the law. The Waukesha Sheriff’s Office posted a tweet showing the deputy’s SUV parked behind the Wienermobile with the hashtags, #MoveOver #SlowDown #Wienermobile. (Photo from Waukesha County Sheriff’s Department)



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## Parrot Fools Neighbors, Police

Police in Florida got quite the surprise when they responded to a call reporting the sounds of a woman in distress, only to discover it was just an extremely vocal parrot. According to police, the parrot’s owner was working on his wife’s car in the driveway when the bird began cries of “Let me out! Let me out! Ohhh! Ohhh! Ohhh! The screams were realistic enough to prompt neighbors to call the police, concerned that a woman was actually in trouble. In a Facebook post, the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office shared, “Our deputies in Lake Worth Beach came to the help of someone screaming for help. Hilarity ensued.”

## Where’s the Beef?

Florida police arrested a man for shoplifting at a local grocery store. When police arrived, they discovered the man wrestling with the store manager and customers who were attempting to detain the suspect. Police used a Taser to gain compliance, and while doing so, packages of ribeye steaks fell out of his pants, according to police. The man was charged with resisting arrest, theft and petty theft.



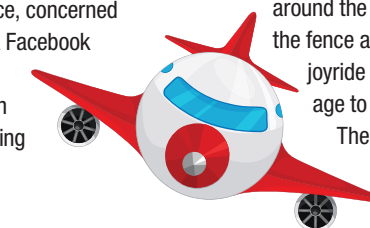
## Nerf Gun Used in Assault

A woman in Louisiana is facing charges after turning Nerf guns on the husband she accused of cheating, according to police. The woman allegedly brandished the plastic toys with foam darts before chasing her husband out of their West Monroe home and down the road. She was still holding the Nerf guns when police arrived and later admitted to the assault, according to an affidavit, which notes the husband suffered minor cuts to his face and arm. The woman is charged with one count of domestic abuse child endangerment, as minors were home at the time of the incident.



## Teen Tries to Take Flight

California police arrested a teenager after her joyride ended after crashing into a fence while operating an airplane. Police say the teen climbed a barbed-wire fence and snuck onto the plane. She allegedly drove the aircraft around the area before going through the fence and hitting a building. The joyride caused substantial damage to the plane and property. The teen was charged with theft of an aircraft.



SEND FUNNY, INTERESTING OR STRANGE STORIES FROM THE BEAT TO [MICHAELA.MOORE@KY.GOV](mailto:MICHAELA.MOORE@KY.GOV)



FUNDERBURK BUILDING  
4449 KIT CARSON DRIVE  
RICHMOND, KY 40475-3102

# Put More On Your Plate!



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