



SHOOT-N-IRON Academy



TRAINING vs. GIMMICKS

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During the past few years, I've seen Law Enforcement training, especially in firearms, regress to a great degree. A few years ago most agencies had firearms training programs requiring the officers to shoot on the range monthly or at least every other month. Now, most departments are shooting once or maybe twice per year and limiting the amount of ammunition that each officer expends while training to somewhere around one hundred or less rounds. A lot of the training is still punching holes in a paper target that is stationary and most assuredly does not represent real encounters that the officers are subjected to on the street. Some agencies do now use some computer-based shooting programs that are very good, but are too expensive for most of the smaller departments.

The Governing Fathers seem to be more interested in saving a buck or two than seeing that their officers are going to go home in one piece at the end of their shift. I know that funding for training is in short supply in almost every agency in the state of Oklahoma. One fact that none of the people holding the purse strings want to look at is that not only are the cities and counties liable if one of these poorly trained officers should (heaven forbid!) shoot some innocent person intentionally or by accident. They are equally responsible if an officer gets hurt because of lack of training. It amounts to the old adage "Pay Now or Pay More Later".

One money-saving gimmick now being used is cutting the amount of ammunition being fired for qualification from somewhere around fifty to sixty rounds, down to twenty. A very few years ago more rounds than that were fired from fifty yards alone. Now days on some the twenty round courses only two shots are fired from that distance. This distance is only one half of a city block. This policy saves ammo money now but can surely cost a lot more later. Two shots cannot give a good indication of anyone's ability.

Agencies are supplying firearms and ammunition for duty use by the officers without taking into consideration the officer's hand size or ability to handle that particular firearm. Officers are required to all shoot the same weapon and ammo regardless. Holsters are also picked out for the officer. Retention of the weapon is so much the focus it has arrived to the point that the officer can hardly get his weapon out in less than two seconds. If someone is trying to kill you or someone else that is an awful long time. I carried an open top holster for many, many years and no one was able to take the gun from me. I was trained as to how to retain the weapon without jeopardizing my ability to draw and use the gun.

I have read where the single-action feature should be removed from all police-issue firearms. This is more gimmicky. I say give the trained officer the choice as to the handgun mode he or she wishes to use according to the circumstances that the situation dictates.

I read the September 2001 issue of Gun & Weapons for Law Enforcement magazine; in it I see where Mossberg has come out with a new wrinkle on one of their shotguns. These folks for years have produced a reasonably priced, reliable shotgun. They have now come out with their Model 590DA which features a long trigger pull, much like that on a double action revolver or semi-automatic pistol. They say,

and truthfully so, that this feature will make it harder for an officer to accidentally discharge the weapon. The trouble is, it will also make it harder to discharge in a hurry if the officer needs to-another gimmick to replace proper training.

New gimmicks sell, but I contend that training is the answer. New equipment is necessary and new ideas are desirable. I believe that the money being spent for gimmicks could be applied to good and realistic training, thus making as surely as possible that today's officers are able to go home at the end of the shift.
