If you need something . . . I mean really need it, do you wait for the government to get it for you?

What if something needs to be done . . . do you wait for the government to do it?

I hope the answer is no.

So, why do we law enforcement officers expect the government to do everything for us? When I say government I am not talking about the federal government. I am referring to the governments that we work for, our own departments.

Since I've become involved with training I've noticed a disturbing trend among fellow officers. Men and women who were once independent and self-reliant seem to be unable or unwilling to do things for themselves. They become dependent upon their departments for everything. They place their well being, even their very lives, in the hands of their departments . . . this has got to stop!

**The Department's Role**

Of course we all want our departments to equip us with every new high-speed, low drag gadget that hits the tactical market. Then if we are lucky enough to get the new gadgets, we want to be trained to use them with the latest tactics.

Oh yeah, then we expect the department to retrain us often enough to allow us to stay proficient in the tactics they originally taught us.

Guess what? It isn't going to happen!

Now, I'm not saying that none of those things will happen. To be completely fair many departments do try to equip their officers with the best equipment their budgets will allow. And some departments even go the extra mile and train certain officers to very high levels.

However I do not personally know of any department that trains all of its officers to a high level and then retrain them often enough to maintain that same high level of proficiency.

**Why not?**

The reason most departments don't do more training is because they can't. For either logistical or budgetary reasons, it is simply not possible.

Should some departments do more than they do at present? YES, they most certainly should. However, departmental responsibility is a completely separate issue - this is about you!
Excuses, Excuses!

As a trainer, I have heard a variety of comments from officers as to what the department should do. I have also heard several excuses of why they don't "just do it" themselves.

Have you ever heard or said any of the following?

“Our department needs to practice shooting more often." "I can't afford to shoot." "I don't have time to practice."

Not only have I heard those things, I have said them at one time or another. Then I came to the realization: The department is not going to be in that dark alley at 2 am checking on a suspicious person. Nor will the department be on that lonely rural road pulling over a reported stolen car. It will be me. Guess what? You need to realize it too and do something about it.

What Can I Do?

Make a vow today, right now! Make a promise to yourself that you will do something to improve your professional skills everyday.

I know that time is a precious commodity and the default excuse is "I don't have time." Well I don't buy it.

How many times during the day do you have 10 empty minutes?

How many times during your shift do you have time to park next to each other and talk?

How many times during the week do you sit around and watch a rerun or play a video game?

Get the idea?

The time is there; you just have to use it wisely.

Still say you don't have time? How many dry fire draws, slide lock reloads and tactical reloads can you do in 10 minutes? A lot! When you think of training, remember. You don't have to pack up all of your gear and spend half a day at the range to improve your shooting.

Another example is defensive tactics. Don't get bogged down with the idea that you have to go to the gym, get the mat and the simulation gear out to practice defensive tactics.

I'm not saying that you shouldn't go to the range as often as possible, you should. I'm not suggesting that you don't get geared up for some dynamic defensive tactics training either. I am just telling you that you don't have to do those things to improve your skills.

Decide what you need or what is important to you and work on it. If you are unsure of how to practice in order to improve a particular skill, seek instruction.
When you begin looking for knowledgeable instruction take the time to look within your own department. Chances are there is an instructor in your department, or a neighboring department, that would gladly assist you. If not, find some officers in your department that are interested in improving in the same areas and figure out a way to get the help you need.

While personal instruction is without a doubt the best way to learn a physical skill, it is not the only option. Countless Instructional DVD’s are available for a variety of topics and are a practical alternative.

**Take Full Advantage**

If you are fortunate enough to attend a good course and receive quality instruction, don't squander away the skills and lessons that you are taught. Take full advantage of any opportunity you have to learn a new technique or tactic.

By full advantage I mean practice. There are very few skills you will master or even become proficient at by attending a course for a few days. You must possess the self-motivation to practice techniques even after the course is finished.

Please don't forget about all the officers on your shift or in your department who did not attend the same training as you. If you are competent in a skill, pass it on to others who may benefit from your knowledge.

**Calling All Instructors**

While on this subject, I'm calling out all instructors who read this. There are men and women in your department that need your help. If you are really an instructor, prove it!

You know they are there, you see them at qualification, during force on force training and even on the streets. You see them make mistakes that you know you could fix "If only the department would give you some time to teach a class".

Sometimes you can't wait for the department to do something about it.

What can you do? You can offer to teach a class on your own time, volunteer to help your fellow officers. Some officers would never ask for help, but if you offer a class many would jump at the chance to attend. If they won't ask for your help, then I am asking for them.

Finally let me say that I do not stand in judgment of anyone. I am one of you. I have had the same thoughts of what the department should be doing for me. However, I finally realized what I should be doing for myself. Have You?

**About the Author**

Stephen Dukes is a Corporal with the Troy (Alabama) Police Department. He is currently assigned to the Special Operations Division. Cpl. Dukes holds a B.S. from Troy University along
Personal Responsibility in Training

Written by Stephen Dukes

with a variety of Law Enforcement related instructor certifications.

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