# Risks to First Responders in Oregon

The Oregon Task Force on Community Safety and Firearm Suicide tasked the OHSU Gun Violence Prevention Research Center with synthesizing the available data and existing literature on firearm-related risks faced by first responders in Oregon. The following report provides key insights from the literature and data on firearm-related risks to first responders in Oregon and nationwide, including risks of firearm assault and homicide while on duty and risks of firearm suicide. The report primarily focuses on law enforcement officers (LEOs) but also includes data on other first responders such as firefighters and emergency medical services (EMS).

## Firearm Homicide and Assault

- Though violence against police is relatively rare, and deaths of LEOs in the line of duty have drastically decreased over the past several decades, the frequency of police contact with the public still results in a high number of violent incidents against police.[1]
- Compared to those in other occupations, LEOs are exposed to high levels of gun violence and account for a disproportionate number of workplace firearm injuries and homicides.[2]
- According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, in 2024, 148 Officers were killed in the line of duty, a 25% increase compared to the year prior, which saw 118 Officer deaths. Of these, 52 were firearm-related fatalities.[3]
- In 2023, 118 Officers were killed in the line of duty, including 1 Officer in Oregon.[4]
- Greater state-level firearm ownership has been associated with increased odds of firearm assaults on LEOs in states without universal background check laws.[5]


1. White MD, Dario LM, & Shjarback JA (2019). Assessing dangerousness in policing: An analysis of officer deaths in the United States, 1970–2016. Criminology & Public Policy, 18(1), 11–35. 10.1111/1745-9133.12408
2. Sierra-Arévalo, M., Nix, J., & O'Guinn, B. (2022). A national analysis of trauma care proximity and firearm assault survival among U.S. police. Police Practice and Research, 23(3), 388–396
3. National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund. (2025). 2024 Law Enforcement Officers Fatalities Report. Washington, DC.
4. National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund. (2024). 2023 Law Enforcement Officers Fatalities Report. Washington, DC.
5. Gobaud et al. (2022). Firearm assaults against US law enforcement officers in the line-of-duty: Associations with firearm ownership and state firearm laws. *Preventive Medicine Reports, 30,* 102002.



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# Firearm Homicide and Assault

## Between 2018 and 2023, 22 incidents resulted in the injury or death of 26 Officers in Oregon[1]

In 50% of incidents, Officers were **responding to a call** (responding to report of a violent or erratic individual, burglary, domestic disturbance, or welfare check)

In 50% of incidents, Officers were **initiating contact** (traffic stop, contacting due to involvement in crime, serving an eviction or warrant)

### Oregon-Specific Data Sources

- **Gun Violence Archive (GVA)** is an independent data collection and research group that hosts an online archive of data on gun violence incidents collected daily from 6,500 media, law enforcement, government, and commercial sources to provide near real-time data about the results of gun violence. This fact sheet includes GVA data involving law enforcement officers shot or killed in Oregon from 2018 to 2023. [1]



**24** Officers were injured; **2** were killed



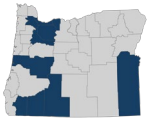
**14%** of incidents resulted in multiple Officers' injuries or deaths



In **36%** of incidents, suspects **fled** the initial scene



**36%** of incidents occurred at a **private residence**



**54%** occurred in **3 of Oregon's 36 counties***

*Marion, Clackamas, and Multnomah Counties



**14%** of incidents involved a suspect blindly **shooting at Officers from inside a residence**



**18%** of incidents involved a suspect **barricaded in a residence or vehicle**

1. Gun Violence Archive. General Methodology. May 31, 2023. https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/methodology

# Firearm Suicide

- LEOs and firefighters who die by suicide are more likely to use firearms than the general population.[1-2]
- LEOs and other first responders are exposed to occupational stressors that contribute to suicide risk, including easy access to firearms, repeated involvement in life-threatening situations, exposure to violence, and sleep pattern disturbance and relationship strain resulting from shift work.[3-6]
- In a study of LEO wellness, only 65% of LEO respondents felt that their agency supported its officers' mental wellness.[7] Those who reported a supportive agency reported lower stress and improved well-being.[7]

### Oregon-Specific Data Sources

- **The Oregon Violent Death Reporting System (ORVDRS)** captures details on all violent deaths in Oregon using data from death certificates, medical examiner reports, law enforcement reports, and toxicology reports.[8] It was used to report firearm suicide deaths among first responders (including LEOs, firefighters, and EMS) from 2013 to 2022.

## Between 2013 and 2022, 70 first responders in Oregon died by firearm suicide[8]



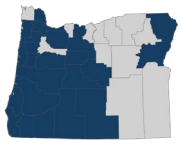
**39 deaths** occurred among LEOs



**31 deaths** occurred among firefighters and EMS



**76%** of suicide deaths **occurred in a house or apartment**



Firearm suicide deaths occurred in **24 of Oregon's 36 counties**



Those who died were primarily **men** (96%), **white** (96%), and **ages 65+** (47%)



**46%** of those who died had a known mental health diagnosis



**79%** of these firearm suicide deaths involved the use of a handgun


1. Zimmerman et al. (2024). Examining differences in the individual and contextual risk factors for police officer, correctional officer, and non-protective service suicides. *Justice Quarterly, 41*(2), 190–217.
2. Pennington et al. (2021). An epidemiologic study of suicide among firefighters: Findings from the National Violent Death Reporting System, 2003-2017. *Psychiatry Research, 295,* 113594.
3. Rouse et al. (2015). Law enforcement suicide: Discerning etiology through psychological autopsy. *Police Quarterly, 18*(1), 79–108.
4. Lawrence et al. (2024). Law enforcement deaths by suicide (No. RM-2024-U-037860-Final). https://www.cna.org/reports/2024/03/law-enforcement-deaths-by-suicide.
5. Dixon, S.S. (2021). Law enforcement suicide: The depth of the problem and best practices for suicide prevention strategies. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 61,* 101649.
6. Baumert et al. (2014). Adverse conditions at the workplace are associated with increased suicide risk. *Journal of Psychiatric Research, 57, 90-95.*
7. Thoen et al. (2020). Agency-offered and officer-utilized suicide prevention and wellness programs: A national study. *Psychological Services, 17*(2), 129–140.
8. Oregon Health Authority. (n.d.). Oregon Violent Death Reporting System. Data for years 2013-2022.