

FLORIDA Police Chief

The official publication for the Florida Police Chiefs Association



Table of Contents

3	Board of Directors	
5	Message from the President	
6	73 rd Annual Summer Conference Opening Ceremonies	
7	Congressman Byron Donalds Shares His Vision for Florida	
9	Honoring the Badge: A Lesson on Ethics with Director Jim Dugan	
10	FPCA Annual Partnerships	
11	Cannabis Legalization Updates	
15	Chief Charlie Vazquez's President's Reception	
17	Data-Driven Policing; A Look into New Technology within Policing	
19	Florida Highway Safety Committee Advances Legislative Efforts for Safer Roads	
21	Enforceable and Unenforceable Legal Updates on Immigration in Florida: A Briefing for Law Enforcement	
23	Host Chiefs Night	
25	Crisis, Candor, and Communication: Public Communication Lessons from the L.A. Wildfires	
27	Preparing for an Attack on the Homeland: Understanding Evolving Terrorist Objectives and Methods	
29	Featured Article: Virtue Ethics in Police Leadership	
30	Upcoming Trainings	
32	Featured Article: DrAlfting Ahead: Large Language Models in Law Enforcement	
41	New Chiefs Training	
42	FPCA Installation Ceremony	
45	Annual Award Winners	
54	2026 Mid-Winter Conference	
55	2026 Summer Conference	

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Message from the President





Hello, I'm Robert Bage, Chief of Police for the City of Fort Walton Beach and President of the Florida Police Chiefs Association. With over two decades of experience in South Florida and the last six years here in the Panhandle, I've seen firsthand the challenges and triumphs that define our profession. What has always guided me through my career are three core principles: authenticity, accountability, and action. Which will also guide me through my presidency.

As your President, I've set three priorities for our association.

First, marketing our brand, our promise to our community.

It's time we tell our own story about the positive impact we make, how we shape the future of our communities, and the integrity we bring to this profession. We can no longer be passive. We must take an active role in shaping our image and push back against narratives of convenience and political expedience. As law enforcement leaders, we must become creative disruptors challenging the status quo while advancing bold, authentic stories that reflect the real impact we make in our communities.

Second, advocating for our profession.

Our voice matters in Tallahassee and beyond. We will work to drive legislation that supports both our profession and our communities. And whether you serve in a small town or a major city, you deserve to feel the full strength of the FPCA standing with you on critical issues. We defend against legislation that will harm and vigorously fight for legislation that will improve. We also communicate loudly issues which affect our profession.

And third, engaging our membership.

This Association is only as strong as the connections we build. We want to hear from you. We're committed to making sure every member sees value in being a part of FPCA, that your voices are heard, and that we continue investing in your professional growth. Programs like New Chiefs and Future Chiefs are just the beginning we'll keep growing, together and strength our common bonds.

This is our moment to lead with clarity, courage, and conviction. I'm proud to serve you, and I look forward to what we will accomplish together.

Thank you for your support and I am looking forward to a great year.

Pt Bye

73rd Annual Summer Conference Opening Ceremonies



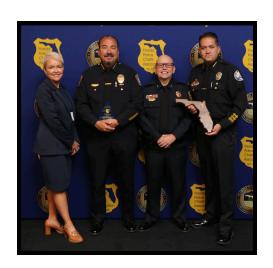


The Florida Police Chiefs Association (FPCA) opened its 73rd Annual Summer Training Conference and Exposition on June 16, 2025, with a ceremony rich in tradition, recognition, and appreciation. FPCA President Chief Charles Vazquez, Tampa International Airport Police Department, welcomed attendees and highlighted the association's accomplishments in supporting law enforcement across the state. He introduced the FPCA Executive Board and Foundation Chair, setting the stage for a week of professional development and networking.

The morning began with the presentation of colors by the Miami-Dade County Association of Chiefs of Police Honor Guard, followed by an invocation from Chief Melanie Bevan, Bradenton Police Department. Deputy Chief Danny Morgalo, Miami Beach Police Department, performed the National Anthem, and Chief Robert Bage, Fort Walton Beach Police Deapartment, led the Pledge of Allegiance, marking a dignified start to the conference.

The ceremony recognized FPCA past presidents, district directors, committee chairs, and first-time attendees. Art Contest: Student artist Yerelin, from The Motivational Edge, was honored for her winning design, featured on the conference program guide. Local leaders, including Chiefs Ed Hudak, Coral Gables Police Department; Pete Delgado, West Miami Police Department; and Mike Bentolila, Aventura Police Department were recognized for their exceptional efforts in hosting the conference.

Woody Spencer, Chair of the FPCA Education and Research Foundation, underscored the Foundation's role in funding scholarships and officer wellness initiatives, as he encouraged continued support for the Officer Wellness Campaign. Chiefs Jamey King and Jennifer Coley were recognized as scholarship recipients.







Standing with Law Enforcement: Congressman Byron Donalds Shares His Vision for Florida

By: Lillianna Vitale





L - R: Chief Lawrence Revell, Chief David Currey, Chief Melanie Bevan, Executive Director Cookie Pritt, Byron Donalds, President Charlie Vazquez, Chief Charles Broadway, Chief Robert Bage, Chief Jeff Pearson, Foundation Chairman Woody Spencer

In the wake of any natural disaster or controversial policy, the most successful public safety leaders will be those who plan for visibility, practice transparency, and prioritize their communities in both word and deed. Whether facing LA wildfires or Florida hurricanes, the communication lessons remain the same: be human, be clear, and be prepared.

During his remarks, Donalds addressed ongoing national debates about immigration, protests, and the proper application of the law. He raised an essential question about application of the law, asking the question about equal application or allowing it to be applied based on the person. For Donalds, the answer is clear, laws should be enforced fairly and consistently, without bias or favoritism

Drawing inspiration from Rudy Giuliani's leadership in New York City, Donalds described how Giuliani transformed the city by changing policing strategies. "He got officers out of their cars and onto the streets," Donalds said. "What used to be neighborhoods filled with crime and open drug use became safer because the law was applied period, not subjectively." Donalds noted the stark difference he observed between cities that uphold their laws consistently and those that apply them selectively.

When it comes to demonstrations, Donalds expressed strong support for the right to protest peacefully. "I have no problem with protests," he stated. "But the question is, are we going to allow peaceful protests, or allow riots, fires, and mobs taking over the streets?" His stance is firm: peaceful assembly is a constitutional right, but lawlessness cannot be tolerated.

Donalds affirmed that, in Florida, the standard is clear, "We back the blue. Everyone in Florida will know what is acceptable and what will not be tolerated. When you have a society with those basic principles, you build a place where everyone can be respected."

As he campaigns for governor, Donalds has secured the endorsement of President Donald Trump, a reflection of his strong support within the Republican Party. He promised that law enforcement leaders will always have an open line of communication with him: "You may not always agree with me, but you will always be heard."

In addition to public safety, Donalds highlighted the importance of addressing mental health concerns. "Mental health is an issue that affects every law enforcement agency. Helping those with mental health challenges will ease the burden on law enforcement officers and allow them to focus on their primary duties," he said.

Donalds concluded his remarks making his firm commitment supporting law enforcement. "When it comes to you doing your job, you will have full support from me. Our country needs law enforcement, and Florida will show the nation how it's done. You can't have a free state of Florida without having a safe Florida."





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Honoring the Badge: A Lesson on Ethics with Director Jim Dugan

By: Ali Popsuj

Jim Dugan, Director of the Josephson Exemplary Policing Initiative at Drake University, addressed the Summer 2025 Florida Police Chiefs Conference on the role of ethics in policing. Drawing from his own career, Dugan provided a candid account of how ethical lapses can undermine both individual officers and entire departments. Dugan served 13 years as a New Jersey police officer, earning commendations and promotions throughout his tenure. His career ended in 1997 after pleading guilty to misconduct for omitting key information from a drug investigation report at the direction of his Chief and a District Attorney. Years later, when the case was retried, he disclosed the omission during testimony. He explained that the decision to compromise his integrity led to the loss of his position, his professional relationships, and his sense of purpose. Since then, Dugan has dedicated his work to helping police agencies prevent similar failures by promoting strong ethical standards.

He identified six common causes of unethical behavior in law enforcement: noble cause corruption, moral development, conflicting values, social learning, cognitive rationalization, and organizational culture. According to Dugan, corruption typically begins with small compromises justified as serving the greater good. When such actions are overlooked or excused, they create conditions for more serious misconduct. He stressed that leaders must set clear expectations for ethical behavior and ensure accountability at all levels.

He further described corruption as a progression through four stages. The first, the fog of indifference, arises when ethics fade into the background of daily policing. The second, the shadows of neglect, occurs when minor violations are overlooked. The third, the chasm of hypocrisy and fear, emerges when more serious violations are ignored and a culture of silence takes root. The final stage, the abyss of survival of the fittest, represents complete systemic corruption, where self-interest overrides integrity and ethical misconduct becomes widespread. While acknowledging the strength of the "thin blue line," Dugan stressed that it must not become a shield for unethical behavior. With strong, principled leadership, he argued, corruption can be both prevented and eliminated.

He noted while loyalty among officers can be strong, it must not override accountability or professional standards. With consistent leadership grounded in integrity, departments can prevent corruption from taking root. Dugan recommended several strategies for chiefs to strengthen ethical culture within their agencies. These include recognizing and rewarding positive behavior, supporting professional development, ensuring fairness



Jim Dugan

in policies, and regularly evaluating their departments for signs of ethical compromise. He emphasized that the foundation of ethical policing rests on six core values: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. Recruitment and mentorship, he advised, should prioritize candidates and leaders who exemplify these qualities.

Dugan concluded by underscoring that the culture of any police department is shaped by its leadership. Chiefs, he said, must set and enforce clear ethical standards, address misconduct directly, and create an environment where integrity is the expectation. His remarks served as both a warning and a call to action for law enforcement leaders to maintain ethical practices as central to their mission.



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Cannabis Legalization Updates

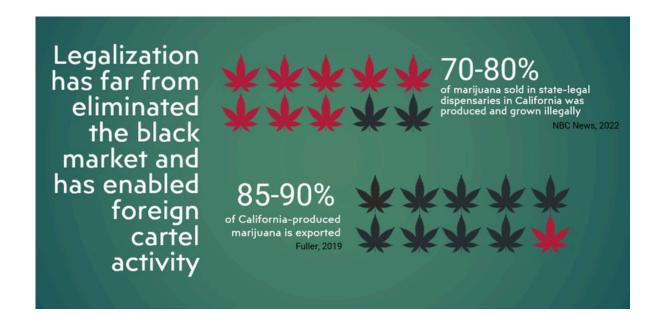
By: Ali Popsuj

Dr. Jessica Spencer Figueroa, who holds a Master's degree in Substance Abuse Counseling and a Doctorate in Education from Nova Southeastern University, addressed the conference to discuss the potential consequences of marijuana legalization in Florida. Representing the "Vote No on Three" campaign, Dr. Figueroa underscored legislative loopholes, concerning sales practices within the cannabis industry, and the health risks associated with chronic marijuana use. She emphasized marijuana today is more potent and accessible than ever before, making it critical for policymakers to fully understand its impact on Florida's communities.

Cannabis, a psychoactive drug derived from the cannabinoid family, is widely known for its relaxing, euphoric, and occasionally hallucinogenic effects. While it has been used for centuries in both medicinal and religious contexts, recreational use has increased sharply in recent decades. Dr. Figueroa cautioned that, although recreational marijuana remains illegal in Florida, loopholes in existing law still allow for cannabis-related products to be sold. Of particular concern is Delta-8, a synthetic marijuana compound that is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Researchers warn that Delta-8 carries significant health risks, with long-term effects still unknown. The widespread availability of this product in convenience stores across the state, coupled with how it is marketed, remains a pressing concern.

Dr. Figueroa pointed to troubling packaging practices mimicking popular snacks, use of bright colors, or feature cartoon characters — tactics she argued are designed to appeal to children. This creates the risk of accidental ingestion when cannabis products are mistaken for ordinary candy treats. Several cases have already been documented in which children consumed THC-laced products, resulting in harmful physical effects such as nausea, dizziness, and difficulty breathing, along with severe emotional distress. Dr. Figueroa stressed the importance of preventing youth access to cannabis products and urged law enforcement, community leaders, and policymakers to support the removal of Delta-8 products from retail outlets outside of licensed dispensaries. She also called for stricter regulations on packaging to ensure it is not attractive to minors.

According to the 2024 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey, fewer than 10 percent of high school students reported regular marijuana use—a decline in recent years. However, Dr. Figueroa cautioned, even with declining use, underage marijuana consumption remains a serious concern. Early and consistent cannabis use, particularly before age 18, can interfere with brain development and significantly increase the likelihood of developing Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD) and schizophrenia. CUD, a psychological addiction to marijuana, can leave users dependent on the drug despite its detrimental



Cannabis Legalization Updates

continued from previous page

impact on daily life. Withdrawal symptoms may include restlessness, irritability, anxiety, depression, aggression, and, in some cases, violence. Data indicates individuals under 18 are seven times more likely to develop CUD, while chronic cannabis users are five times more likely to develop schizophrenia compared to their peers.

Dr. Figueroa encouraged attendees to remain vigilant in recognizing signs of cannabis misuse within their communities and to prioritize preventing the sale of these products to minors. She reiterated the risks associated with underage marijuana use are both significant and far-reaching, requiring a coordinated response from law enforcement and community leaders.

In closing, Dr. Figueroa highlighted the central role of education in addressing these challenges. As marijuana use becomes increasingly normalized in society, she stressed the importance of science-based public awareness campaigns that communicate the real risks of cannabis use—particularly among young people. She recommended 25 percent of drug demand reduction funds be dedicated to education, prevention, and policy initiatives. Ultimately, she urged law enforcement officials and community leaders to remain informed, proactive, and engaged in protecting the health and safety of Florida's most vulnerable populations.



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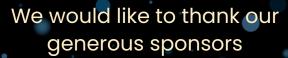
















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Data-Driven Policing: A Look into New Technology within Policing

By: Tanna-Leigh Wesson



L - R Detective Thomas Meyer, Miami PD; Assistant Commissioner Mike Phillips, FDLE; Lieutenant Melissa Buhrmaster, Miami PD; Chief Ed Hudak, Coral Gables, Chief Adam Geissenberger, Pinellas Park PD; Matt Melton, Peregrine

As law enforcement agencies increasingly turn to technology to improve operations and public safety, data-driven platforms like Peregrine are revolutionizing how information is gathered, analyzed, and shared across jurisdictions. These systems allow agencies to access flexible and accessible tools that help agencies modernize operations and improve investigative outcomes.

Chief Adam Geissenberger, Pinellas Park Police Department and Chief Ed Hudak, Coral Gables Police Department, discussed the historical difficulties within the departments. highlighted issues with isolated systems, where valuable information remained inaccessible across iurisdictional boundaries. fragmented databases. The traditional methods sharing information, including in-person conversations, phone calls, or by radio, often created delays that could impact investigations and community safety. Designed to overcome these challenges, data platforms offer real-time updates through a unified system, empowering agencies to collaboratively search, analyze, and visualize data.

These platforms incorporate a data integration system that interprets entries across multiple formats, including those with errors in spelling or structure, noted by Miami Police Department Lieutenant Melissa Buhrmaster. Tools like this enable tagging and aggregating data related to individuals, vehicles, and locations, making it easier to identify connections that might otherwise go unnoticed. It allows departments to incorporate external sources of information, including bodyworn camera footage, drone feeds, and Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) notes, providing a comprehensive insight into each case.

Several members of the panel discussed their experiences with data integration platforms, including Peregrine, explaining how it has improved the speed and quality of their investigative work. Departments that often face a high volume of crime reported having a significant amount of time saved when

working with complex cases. Pinellas Park Police Department Lieutenant John Shea demonstrated features such as Algenerated summaries, customizable dashboards, and saved searches, which have significantly enhanced case management and resolution.

Data integration platforms also support broader strategic efforts, in which agencies can use heat maps to track incidents like vehicle accidents and determine the optimal locations for patrol or enforcement. Officer productivity and deployment statistics can be monitored to assess resource allocation and ensure officer readiness. The discussed tools free up valuable time for community policing and proactive initiatives for departments that are operating with limited personnel.

The panelists discussed the adaptability of platforms that can be configured to meet the specific needs of each department, ensuring the data is accessible to both field officers and command staff. Lieutenant John Shea noted that the system runs continuously in the background, updating every 15 seconds to provide the most accurate and up-to-date information. Officers are not required to manually enter data into multiple systems; instead, the platform captures and organizes data automatically. Interagency collaboration was a major theme discussed by the panelists. This technology enables information to be shared across jurisdictions in real-time, allowing departments to identify trends and connections that span multiple jurisdictions, as noted by Florida Department of Law Enforcement Assistant Commissioner Mike Philips. Several panelists discussed datasharing agreements to expand their network and increase situational awareness, allowing law enforcement teams to respond faster and more effectively to emerging threats.

The panel acknowledged the integration of Al into policing technologies requires oversight. While Al features enhance efficiency, panelists emphasized the continued importance of human judgment in case reporting and decision-The technology is not intended to replace an officer's judgment,

Data-Driven Policing: A Look into New Technology within Policing

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but it is intended to support it with relevant data.

Chief Ed Hudak highlighted the importance of creating strong relationships with IT departments. Departments successfully adopted platforms like Peregrine often did so by involving both command staff and IT personnel. The collaborative approach ensures the technical and operational needs are aligned, ensuring sustainability of the platform.

As law enforcement agencies continue to adapt the evolving technology tools to their departments, platforms like Peregrine

offer a faster and more connected way to policing. These systems consolidate multiple forms of data into a single, accessible format and enable departments to share information, uncover trends, and enhance their investigative capabilities. The discussion concluded with a shared view that effective policing in the future will depend on collaboration, adaptability, and the utilization of technology to serve communities more effectively.



Florida Highway Safety Committee Advances Legislative Efforts for Safer Roads

By: Ali Popsuj

The Florida Highway Safety Committee met to address key issues in highway safety and explore legislative measures aimed at improving roadway security. Lead by Chief Art Bodenheimer of Lake Alfred PD, the meeting focused on three major areas of concern: extended semi-trucks, micromobility devices, and squatted trucks. The discussions underscored the committee's ongoing commitment to protecting all users of Florida's roadways.

One of the primary topics centered on the push from transportation organizations to increase the permissible length of tractor-trailers, in some cases up to 33 feet. The committee, working closely with the Coalition Against Bigger Trucks, continues to raise awareness among lawmakers and the public about the risks associated with these oversized vehicles. In addition to excessive roadway damage, extended trucks reduce visibility, increase stopping distance, and present greater maneuverability challenges. While the coalition has received significant public and legislative support, committee members emphasized the need to continue strong advocacy efforts on this issue.

The committee also examined the growing concerns surrounding micromobility devices, newly defined in legislation as motorized transportation devices designed for individual use, weighing under a specified limit, and operating at speeds between 15 and 28 mph. Retired Chief Brett Railey highlighted the public safety challenges posed by these devices, including electric scooters, bicycles, and hoverboards, which currently do not require driver licenses or registration. This regulatory gap allows potentially unqualified operators on public roadways, contributing to collisions and other safety hazards. Railey also noted an emerging trend of criminals exploiting the devices' mobility across jurisdictions to evade law enforcement. While he continues to advocate for statewide legislation, Chief Railey reminded attendees that local ordinances remain a tool for addressing these challenges in the interim.

The final area of discussion focused on squatted trucks, a modification that raises the front bumper higher than the rear. This trend has sparked serious safety concerns due to reduced forward visibility. Tragically, a recent incident in Tavares, where a two-year-old boy was struck and killed by a squatted truck while riding his tricycle, underscored the urgency of action. Drawing from regulations in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia, the committee discussed language for a bill to prohibit trucks squatted more than four inches. Although the measure did not pass in its initial submission, the committee is



working to strengthen the proposal by incorporating expert research on visibility loss. Members also expressed their intent to honor the young victim by naming the bill after him. Despite disappointment over the bill's initial setback, the committee remains resolute in pursuing stronger protections for Florida communities.

As Florida's transportation landscape continues to evolve, the Highway Safety Committee reaffirms its role in shaping policies that safeguard the public. Through collaborative advocacy, education, and legislative action, Florida's law enforcement leaders continue to demonstrate an unwavering commitment to roadway safety, locally, statewide, and nationally.

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Enforceable and Unenforceable Legal Updates on Immigration in Florida: A Briefing for Law Enforcement

By: Madison Young



Overview of Chapter 908, Florida Statutes: Sanctuary Policy Compliance

Recent developments in Florida Immigration law have reinforced the obligations of state and local law enforcement agencies to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement. Chapter 908 of the Florida Statutes defines the boundaries of lawful conduct related to sanctuary policies and outlines enforceable expectations.

Specifically, Section 908.102(6) prohibits any state or local government policy, practice, or custom that impedes a law enforcement agency from complying with federal immigration law. This includes obstructing communication or cooperation with federal immigration agencies. The law requires full compliance with immigration detainers and mandates agencies notify federal authorities before releasing an inmate upon request. Additionally, agencies are expected to provide access for interviews and participate in authorized federal immigration programs. Failure to comply has enforceable consequences. Under Chapter 908.107, the Florida Attorney General is empowered to file suit against non-compliant agencies, including local governments and individual law enforcement officers. Courts are required to issue injunctions against violations, and agencies or individuals may face legal proceedings, including contempt findings, if violations persist. Notably, this includes potential consent decrees outlining the existence and terms of

unlawful sanctuary policies.

Legal Ambiguity and Guidance for Law Enforcement

A key challenge addressed by David Marsey, FPCA General Counsel, was the ambiguity in legislative language, such as the requirement for law enforcement to use their "best efforts" to enforce immigration law. If you have any questions, please contact FPCA's General Counsel David Marsey.

Currently Unenforceable Statutes: Chapters 811.102 and 811.103

Two Florida statutes aimed at unauthorized aliens are currently under a preliminary injunction and cannot be enforced:

- Chapter 811.102 criminalizes unauthorized entry into Florida by individuals over 18 who have already entered the U.S. It mandates a 9-month minimum jail sentence for first-time convictions and felony penalties for repeat offenses. However, it is not enforceable due to ongoing litigation and an active injunction.
- Chapter 811.103 proposes harsher penalties for individuals with prior deportations or removal orders who reenter or are found in the state. Although similarly unenforceable, statutory interpretation suggests that the legislature intentionally excluded the phrase "are found in" from the earlier statute, further contributing to confusion. Law enforcement officers should not act on these provisions until judicial review is complete. Violations of the injunction could result in contempt sanctions. As noted during the session, "Don't be the test case."

Florida Immigration Council and Policy Resolutions

Chief Robert Bage, Fort Walton Beach Police Department, provided insight into the Florida Immigration Council, which serves as a liaison between law enforcement and the state. The Council is composed of representatives from across the state, appointed by the Governor, Senate President, House Speaker, Attorney General, and other top officials.

A number of resolutions were discussed, including Resolution 1, which provides structured reimbursement for training, equipment, software, and housing of unauthorized aliens under the Local Law Enforcement Immigration Grant Program. Funding scales based on agency size:

- Large (over 75 sworn): up to 20%
- Medium (31-75): up to 30%
- Small (30 or fewer): up to 50% (especially in fiscally constrained counties)

Enforceable and Unenforceable Legal Updates on Immigration in Florida: A Briefing for Law Enforcement

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Agencies can also receive \$1,000 bonuses per local officer designated and credentialed as an immigration officer who has participated in federal operations.

In addition to statutory updates, a reminder was issued regarding Form 1 financial disclosures and Form 9 gift disclosures under the Florida Commission on Ethics. Law enforcement leaders are required to file timely and accurate disclosures to avoid ethical violations, with July 1 being the annual deadline. All information can be found here: ethics.state.fl.us/FinancialDisclosure/DownloadAForm.aspx

The session concluded with a reminder that although federal and state expectations continue to evolve, adherence to clear documentation, ethical practice, and statutory compliance remains paramount for every agency in Florida. Please refer to the FPCA Members Only Immigration Information page for the most recent information.



The FPCA would like to thank Dr. Marshall Jones and the Florida Institute of Technology for their partnership. Dr. Jones and his team of interns provided operational assistance during the Summer Conference and authored many of the articles in our magazine.



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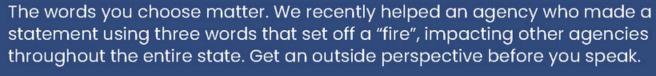


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Crisis, Candor, and Communication: Public Communication Lessons from the L.A. Wildfires

By: Madison Young

When disaster strikes, the media spotlight is quick to follow, and public officials are often left navigating a minefield of communication, politics, and public emotion. Drawing parallels between the 2023 Los Angeles wildfires and Florida's hurricane responses, media experts Laura Cole and Stacy Ford Bingham, of Cole Pro Media, offered strategies for law enforcement and public safety leaders to shape narratives, strike the right tone, and preserve institutional credibility under pressure.

The Role of Media Strategy in Public Safety

Laura Cole, a former journalist turned media consultant, launched her firm to help law enforcement agencies tell their stories before others define them. She described how the LA mayor's silence during a high-profile media confrontation became the story itself. The Mayor's lack of an empathetic, well-prepared response allowed the narrative to spiral beyond local politics and into national headlines. By contrast, Cole emphasized the importance of proactive storytelling. "Before and after" visibility (e.g., showing police helping communities before disaster and when helping recover from a disaster) is where agencies can build community trust and media buy-in. In LA, police were praised for on-the-ground response, yet their efforts were quickly overshadowed by political missteps at the leadership level.

Walking the Line: Truth vs. Timing in Crisis Communication

A particularly controversial moment occurred when LA Fire Chief Kristin Crowley publicly criticized the city's leadership for underfunding and poor preparation. While some praised her candor, others argued it undermined the unified response and diverted focus from the overall goal of saving lives. Her comments sparked intense media coverage and ultimately led to her dismissal. Cole used this incident to highlight a key principle: if you're going to be candid, control the narrative. That means framing your message thoughtfully, focusing on the needs of the moment, and avoiding public discord between agencies. The people watching the news are often the ones most affected, those who have lost homes or loved ones. For them, public infighting can feel like betrayal.

The Empathy-Competence Balance

Cole outlined a checklist for disaster communication that includes:

- · Stating facts clearly and concisely
- · Addressing real-time dangers with reassurance
- Offering tangible next steps and sharing resources
- Repeating key messages and coordinating with agencies
- · Translating messages into multiple languages
- Building your social media credibility before disaster strikes

Tone matters. Even the best information can fall flat, or even backfire, if delivered without empathy, composure, and clarity.

Custom Messaging for Diverse Communities

Stacy Ford Bingham drew on her background in healthcare and social services to underscore the importance of tailoring communication to the needs of local communities. She referenced a Florida community in which 70% of residents identified as Latino. Fear of deportation or misunderstanding of local roles led to underreporting of crimes, leaving both residents and officers more vulnerable.



Laura Cole, Cole Pro Media



Stacy Ford Bingham, Cole Pro Media

Crisis, Candor, and Communication: Public Communication Lessons from the L.A. Wildfires

continued from previous page

In polarized contexts such as immigration, law enforcement leaders may feel caught between policy and public perception. Bingham recommended crafting statements that reaffirm both legal obligations and community safety roles, such as: "Florida law reinforces our duty to cooperate with federal immigration authorities. Our role remains focused on protecting our communities and keeping violent criminals off the streets." She stressed the importance of explaining what your department does and does not do, helping communities understand public safety is the top priority.

In the wake of any natural disaster or controversial policy, the most successful public safety leaders will be those who plan for visibility, practice transparency, and prioritize their communities in both word and deed. Whether facing LA wildfires or Florida hurricanes, the communication lessons remain the same: be human, be clear, and be prepared.

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Preparing for an Attack on the Homeland: Understanding Evolving Terrorist Objectives and Methods

By: Tanna-Leigh Wesson

Terrorism has left a significant mark on American history, fundamentally altering the nation's sense of security. One of the most devastating attacks the United States faced occurred on September 11, 2001, when coordinated hijackings of airlines led to the collapse of the World Trade Center towers, the attack on the Pentagon, and the death of thousands of people.

In a recent presentation among law enforcement officers, Sarah Adams, a former Central Intelligence Agency analyst, outlined a growing threat posed by a developing terror plot coordinated by Al-Qaeda and affiliated extremist groups. The training highlighted a multi-phase strategy designed to attack multiple fronts within the United States. The evolving threat emphasizes the urgency of law enforcement to remain alert and informed.

The presentation began with confirmation Al-Qaeda has initiated their strategy by moving suicide vests across the border. On December 16, 2024, Al-Qaeda moved 27 of their 77 suicide vests into the United States in preparation for their attack. These 'invisible' bombs can evade metal detectors and be concealed within puffer jackets. Intelligence reports confirm the bombs are equipped with plastic materials and chemical agents that can cause respiratory failure within minutes of exposure.

The objective of this homeland plot is both symbolic and strategic. The attacks are believed to occur in three phases, with the core objectives of Al-Qaeda being to honor Osama bin Laden, seek justice for captured terrorists, and restore a fractured jihadist image. Al-Farooq is believed to be the command-and-control center for their operation. This site was previously bombed by the U.S. for its role in planning the U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, as well as 9/11. Rebuilt in 2022, the camp now functions as Al-Qaeda's central headquarters.

Sarah Adams detailed a structured three-phase plan. The first phase involves targeted assassinations focused on eliminating individuals deemed a threat to the plot's success. Targets include both public figures and civilians, using tactics such as home invasions and street-level assaults. Intelligence officers believe similar attacks in the U.K. and Sweden may represent early examples of this phase.

The second phase is largely driven by ISIS operatives, involving mass casualty events intended to destabilize communities and overwhelm local response systems. Tactics include mass shootings, coordinated bombings, vehicle-ramming attacks, and knife assaults. The states currently at the highest risk include Arizona, New Jersey, New York, Louisiana, and Virginia.

The third phase escalates to a national security and institutional level. These plans include suicide bombings, hostage situations, and active shooter assaults targeting federal agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency, and Department of Defense. Aviation remains a key target, stating the failed 'underwear bomber' incident. Extremists aim to succeed using updated 'invisible bombs' that can bypass TSA security, as shown in now-removed videos comparing the devices to TSA protocols.

The training for these operations is ongoing in Middle Eastern camps. Adams reported trainees are using modified drugs, including a version of fentanyl, to suppress hunger, pain, and emotion. These drugs impair communication and extend fighting capabilities, turning them into "killing machines." Intelligence suggests Al-Qaeda is using diversionary tactics by drawing attention to lone-wolf actors and fake recruits to divert attention from their major plot. These tactics complicate threat assessment and underscore the need for heightened local vigilance.

Despite credible threats, Adams noted a lack of federal urgency to investigate, pointing instead to local law enforcement to take the lead in prevention and response. To respond effectively, local law enforcement must invest in developing intelligence networks, training analysts, and recruiting informants. It's vital to conduct drills for complex attacks and update chemical and biological incident protocols. If hospitals become overwhelmed, pre-identified alternative care sites must be stocked and staffed accordingly.

Adams concluded by emphasizing the evolving threat, marked by increasing complexity, coordination, and concealment, requires operational readiness and heightened community vigilance. As extremist groups exploit emerging vulnerabilities, local agency preparedness and response will remain the nation's critical first line of defense.

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Virtue Ethics in Police Leadership

By: Captain David Ennis, Marco Island Police Department

Leaders face some of the toughest decisions and challenges in public service. The decisions they make not only have an impact on one's officers and department, but also on the communities they serve as well. While making quick decisions is often crucial, leaders need to think through the ethical side of those decisions. While leaders usually rely on different ethical approaches, such as focusing on rules (regularianism), focusing on outcomes(consequentialism), or focusing on a sense of duty (deontology), there's another vital ethical approach that requires leaders must consider, that is virtue ethics.

Virtue ethics comes from Aristotle's philosophy of virtue, which is about developing good human character.¹ Unlike other ethical theories that focus solely on following rules, achieving specific outcomes, or acting out of a sense of duty, Aristotle's emphasizes one's good moral character, in lieu of having to ask themselves, "What kind of person should I be? "This is about making decisions based on who they are, rather than just what they do or what the rules say.

It has been said, "You are what you repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit." This idea connects one's ethics to their habits. The word "ethics" itself comes from the Greek word ethos, meaning habitual. So, for a leader, the idea is that leadership isn't about one perfect decision; it is about the habits one builds over time that define who they are as a leader.

Why Character Matters in Leadership

The character of a leader is especially important. A leader is expected to set the tone for the department and lead by example, especially when rules or policies don't give them clear answers. In those moments, it's not just about following the rules; it's about the moral character of the person making the decision.

Virtue ethics teach us that character isn't something that mysteriously appears; it's something that is developed through habitual repetition. Leaders must choose to do the right thing even if it is difficult, yet they must know they are right versus guessing that they are right. Over time, leader's choices become their habits that shape decisions and make them feel more natural.

Therefore, leaders won't need to second-guess every choice, because they will have developed the moral character to act without hesitation.

Finding Balance: The Golden Mean

One of Aristotle's key theories is the Golden Mean, which suggests that virtue often lies between two extremes.¹ For instance, courage is the balance between recklessness and cowardice. Leaders constantly face situations that require them to find that balance between being firm and flexible, between enforcing rules and offering second chances, between acting quickly and taking time to think.

For example, consider how they might deal with an officer who makes a mistake. If they are guided by virtue ethics, they will not just go to the extreme of harsh punishment or overlook the behavior entirely. Instead, they will take the time to assess the situation and respond appropriately, balancing fairness with discipline. Over time, this balance becomes a natural part of how they will lead.

Long-Term Impact: Leading with Integrity

Virtue ethics also pushes leaders to think beyond the immediate moment. Every decision made by a leader has a long-term impact; not just on the individuals involved, but on their department and community. It is easy for leaders to focus on short-term outcomes, but virtue ethics encourages them to think about what kind of department and culture they want to build for the future.

For instance, when a leader consistently demonstrates integrity and fairness, it sets the tone for the entire department. This is not about just one decision; it is about creating a culture of trust and accountability. Leaders who focus on developing good character will help build a department that values ethics just as much as performance.

Community and Mentorship: Shaping Values Together

Aristotle also understood that one doesn't develop character alone. It happens within communities: families, workplaces, and cities. This is where values are taught, practiced, and reinforced.

Leaders have the responsibility to mentor others, promote ethical conversations, and hold themselves to the same high standards that they expect from their teams. It's about creating an environment where character matters as much as performance.

If they lead with virtue, it will encourage others to reflect on their own ethical choices and be able to discuss with their teams what it means to lead with integrity. This creates a culture where their officers don't just follow rules, they think critically about their actions and learn to develop their ethical habits. This isn't just about setting a good example; it's about actively shaping the values of your team and the department.

Virtue Ethics in Police Leadership

continued from previous page

Conclusion

In conclusion, virtue ethics offers you a practical and grounded approach to leadership in law enforcement. It encourages you, as a leader, to think about the kind of person you are becoming, not just the decisions you are making in the moment. By focusing on developing a strong character, forming good habits, and striving for excellence, you can lead with integrity, make sound decisions under pressure, and earn the trust of the people you serve. In a profession where leadership and ethics are so deeply intertwined, Aristotle's insights are just as valuable today as they were 2,000 years ago.

¹ Dreisbach, Christopher. (2009). Ethics in Criminal Justice. McGraw-Hill

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22%

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21%

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DrAlfting Ahead: Large Language Models in Law Enforcement

By: Dr. Brandon May and Dr. Marshall Jones

Since their introduction in 2022, large language models (LLMs – most famously, ChatGPT) have drawn significant attention in schools, businesses, and government agencies. But while much of the national conversation has focused on education or ethics, police departments are already facing a more immediate question: not if these tools will shape policing, but how to adopt them safely, responsibly, compliant with rules, regulations, and statutes, and in line with core policing values (e.g., Peelian Principles).

For law enforcement, the potential of LLMs goes well beyond answering questions or generating text. These AI systems can summarize reports (Adams, 2024), simulate interviews (IACP, 2025), transcribe and summarize body camera video and assist with legal phrasing (Axon, 2024), and even recreate complex real-world scenarios for training (Future Policing, 2024).

In training, for instance, officers can engage with these models in dynamic role-play exercises, allowing them to interview a suspect, handle a domestic dispute, or practice courtroom testimony, all within a responsive, adaptive environment. Done right, this can help departments scale high-quality training and reduce administrative burdens. These practices are also content with training preferences from GenX members.

Law enforcement agencies across the country are already beginning to explore the potential of AI in day-to-day operations. With the ongoing workforce in policing (PERF, 2023) challenges, agencies are desperate for force multipliers to use the workload burden of working shorthanded. For instance, Oklahoma City, officers using Axon's Draft One tool have reported a significant reduction in time spent writing reports, allowing them to shift their focus back to proactive fieldwork (VOA, 2024). In Las Vegas, Chief Jason Potts has highlighted the same potential for timesaving, but importantly with a clear warning: any gains in efficiency must be matched by strong oversight. Without clear protocols and proper training, he cautions, agencies risk eroding evidentiary integrity and damaging public trust. Importantly, this concern is not hypothetical (Future Policing, 2024). In Seattle, a police sergeant used ChatGPT to help generate a case report, triggering an internal review. Although no misconduct was found, the situation revealed a larger issue where there were no formal policies in place governing how AI should be used. In the absence of clear guidance, questions about transparency, accountability, validity, and the legal status of AI-generated content remain unresolved (Axios, 2024).

In another example of leveraging AI to ease workforce challenges, Austin (TX) PD launched an AI non-emergency reporting system in 2023 to report crimes no longer in progress and present no immediate threat to anyone. The list of offenses eligible for online AI reporting, for those 18 and over that possess a valid email address are shown in Figure 1 below (Austin PD, 2025).

Figure 1. Austin Police Department List of Accepted Offenses Reportable Online

- Assault (minor or no injury, excluding domestic violence)
- Assault with Injury
- Assault by Contact
- Threats (excluding domestic violence)
- Burglary that does not involve fire/arson
- Theft (excluding prescriptions, firearms, explosives, vehicle license plates, and motor vehicles of any kind)
- Lost or missing property (excluding narcotic prescription medication, vehicle license plates, and firearms)
- Damaged property or Graffiti
- Fraud
- Harassment
- Counterfeiting or Forgery

DrAlfting Ahead: Large Language Models in Law Enforcement

continued from previous page

Workforce challenges in law enforcement and public safety are not limited to sworn positions. Dispatch centers often have vacancies equal, or greater, than those of their agency sworn positions. Agencies, such as San Jose, CA, Portland, OR, and Austin, TX are deploying Al-based virtual agents to triage calls by gathering on non-emergency calls (Pierce, 2025). While the potential to work smarter exists, errors from the caller's ability to readily discern and engage with a human versus an Al-Assistants in a time of crisis, issues with platform and infrastructure stability, and accuracy and completeness of Al-assisted information are challenges.

A Global Policing Issue

Globally, similar concerns are beginning to emerge. Europol's Innovation Lab recently released a forward-looking report on the role of AI in policing, recognizing its operational benefits (e.g., faster data processing, enhanced analytics, and greater scalability). However, the report also issues strong cautions about the risks of AI integration in policing.

Among the most concerning are algorithmic bias, breaches of data privacy, and the potential weakening of human accountability in decision-making. Importantly, Europol must also consider these challenges within the broader context of the European Union's forthcoming Artificial Intelligence Act, which calls for strict requirements around transparency, human oversight, and ethical safeguards when AI tools are used in high-risk domains like law enforcement.

As Deputy Chief Nicholas McGowan of the Petaluma (CA) Police Department put it: All must enhance, not replace, human reasoning. When used without clear boundaries, LLMs do not only change how officers write reports, but they can start to shape how officers think, investigate, and make decisions. In short, it is not that Al starts thinking like a cop, rather it is that cops might start thinking like Al. As *Dr. lan Malcolm* warned in *Jurassic Park: Your scientists were so preoccupied with whether they could, they didn't stop to think if they should.*

This drift - what we call *DrAlfting* (May, 2025), poses a serious challenge to law enforcement leadership. It signals a move toward over-reliance on algorithmic tools without sufficient training, policy, accountability processes, or awareness of the risks. For law enforcement, sound judgment, wise discretion, and pragmatic processes build public trust, Al is not a path we can afford to walk blindly.

The promise of AI in policing is real, but so are the risks. Police leaders must take the lead in shaping how these technologies are introduced, governed, and used. That means more than just adopting the latest tools; it requires building clear policies, investing in officer training, rigorously evaluating system performance, holding supervisors and managers accountable for review and oversight, and working hand-in-hand with legal experts to anticipate evidentiary and ethical challenges before they emerge. AI can undoubtedly strengthen modern policing, but only if we treat it as exactly what it is: an aid to police judgment and discretion, not a substitute for it.

However, before we can responsibly harness the benefits of AI, we need to step back and clarify the basics. What exactly is AI, and just as importantly, what is it not?

Talking Like a Cop, Thinking Like a Machine

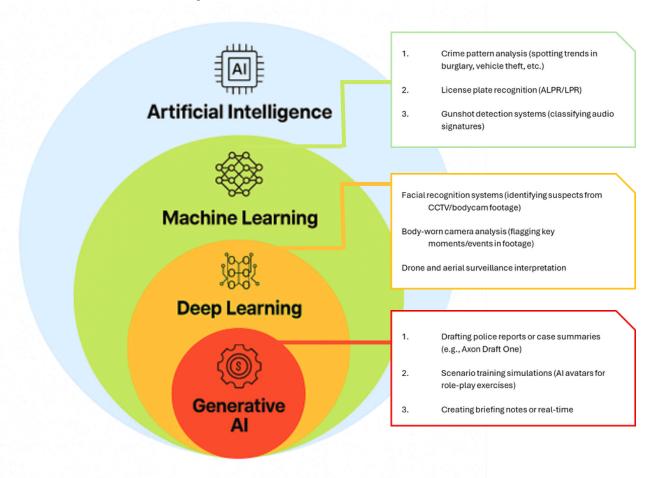
Although Al is now a fixture in law enforcement conversations, the lack of clear operational definitions and training creates confusion. Misunderstandings around Al often arise from a common but misleading assumption, that if a system can generate human-like responses, it must possess some form of human-like understanding. It simply does not. For example, if a model like ChatGPT produces a well-phrased interview question or an incident summary, it is tempting to assume it has grasped the context. But this assumption is wrong and the basis of the challenge for law enforcement practitioners and policy makers.

Large language models do not comprehend. They do not reason. They do not infer. They do not problem solve. They do not reason. What they do is predict the most likely next word or phrase based on vast patterns learned from billions of words (OpenAI, 2025). In other words, their outputs are grounded in probability of the next word, and not insight (Hammond & Leake, 2023; Leivada et al., 2023). What appears to be a coherent, intelligent response is in fact the result of a process called statistical mimicry: identifying patterns and generating text that sounds right, even if it has no factual or contextual grounding (see Figure 2).

DrAlfting Ahead: Large Language Models in Law Enforcement

continued from previous page

Figure 2. Hierarchical Structure of Al Technologies



This statistical mimicry produces plausible, fluent responses without regard for truth or accuracy. A good example is from Harry Frankfurt's (2005) classic analysis in On Bullshit. Frankfurt argues that the defining feature of bullshit is not deliberate deception, but a disregard for whether statements are true or false. The liar seeks to mislead but does so by manipulating known facts. The bullshitter, by contrast, operates with indifference to truth, concerned only with whether their words sound convincing. In this light, LLMs do not simply hallucinate (a term that misleadingly suggests an involuntary or accidental mistake). Rather, they generate content with no anchor at all. They do not know what is true or false because they do not know anything in the human sense. Instead, they produce outputs that are statistically plausible and linguistically polished - in effect, algorithmic bullshit. And while this may seem innocuous in casual use, its implications are serious in law enforcement contexts.

When applied to tasks such as report writing, case summaries, or even suspect interviews, the risk is not just factual error but confusion. In the absence of safeguards, such as systems that force the author to proof the report as well as systems to ensure a supervisor also reads it, institutionalizing systems that produce plausible nonsense threatens to corrode the very foundations of evidentiary reliability, operational integrity, and public trust on which policing depends. As Venkatasubramanian (2024) describes, GenAl is not thinking, it is simulating plausibility. It does not know what it is saying. It is just very good at sounding like it does.

There is an irony in all this - consider this in the context of law enforcement, where decisions affect liberty, justice, and public trust. These systems may produce readable summaries or well-structured prompts, but they do not, and cannot, evaluate credibility, detect nuance, or understand legal standards. They cannot assess whether an interviewee is confused or deceptive, nor can they determine

DrAlfting Ahead: Large Language Models in Law Enforcement

continued from previous page

the evidentiary value of a statement. For police leaders, then, the key takeaway is this: LLMs do not think like humans. They do not reason, reflect, or judge. They simulate language in sophisticated ways, but their outputs are only as sound as the patterns they have been trained on, and those patterns are not always accurate, unbiased, or complete. Understanding this distinction is the first step in making informed, ethical, and operationally sound decisions about how (and where) these tools should be deployed in policing.

Ensuring Responsible Use of Language Models in Policing

Integrating LLMs into policing requires more than just technical capability (a threshold that typically defines the rollout of any new technology). With LLMs, the core requirement is professional foresight. In this regard, this changes the question we must ask ourselves: how can we deploy LLM's to enhance human judgment without compromising accountability, discretion, or ethical integrity (see Table 1 for an exemplar).

Within Europol, Al applications are now foundational to its investigative and analytical workflows. Through platforms like the European Clearing Board for Innovation and the Tool Repository, Member States collaborate to develop advanced systems in natural language processing, geolocation, and computer vision. The result is a growing suite of Al-powered tools made freely available to national forces across the EU. These resources signal technological progress, and, more importantly, a cultural shift toward shared innovation in policing. The EU examples are important advancements for policing, where police forces are more centralized, and resources can be leveraged for broader deployment. These technological evolutions related to law enforcement Al will be of value in the US, particularly for small and medium sized agencies that will benefit from the Al tools and systems being developed, tested and deployed.

A particularly notable development has been the creation of a Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) system. This prototype blends open-source LLMs (e.g., ChatGPT) with targeted document retrieval to generate tailored answers to operational prompts, essentially acting as a knowledge co-pilot. Evaluated through structured exercises (the RAGathon), this tool demonstrated significant promise for streamlining research, analysis, and evidence synthesis across non-sensitive data. It is easy to imagine how such systems could support organized crime investigations, incident report triage, or open-source intelligence tasks such as pre-interview preparations, cold case investigation research, organized crime mapping, or known associate social media searches.

But, beyond analytical support, LLMs show potential utility in accelerating document-heavy processes that are becoming more available, such as body camera transcriptions, document retrievals, report drafting (e.g., Stoykova et al., 2024). For example, integrating speech-to-text tools with LLMs enables the classification and prioritization of video evidence by transcribing, tagging, and analyzing linguistic patterns. Similarly, copilots could identify relationships in large data sets to highlight threat actors, fraud networks, or extremist narratives with greater speed and fewer human bottlenecks. These opportunities must, however, be accompanied by meaningful safeguards. Europol's work on the AP4AI framework and the Compliance Checker for AI (CC4AI) represents a serious effort to embed accountability and legal compliance at the core of AI adoption. Rather than treating regulation as an obstacle, these initiatives recognize that trust, transparency, and explainability are the foundations of a defensible and democratic policing approach. The EU's proposed Artificial Intelligence Act (AIA) further supports this by ensuring AI systems respect fundamental rights while delivering operational gains. The tools and processes developed in the EU are likely to inform US agencies on the current legal, policy, and process requirement issues under review.

But while the EU has embraced regulatory mechanisms as the foundation for ethical integration, the United States has taken a complementary (but distinct) approach. The America's AI Action Plan (2025) reflects a national commitment to AI innovation underpinned by security, sovereignty, and public-sector leadership. For law enforcement, this direction appeakey; signal increased access to cutting-edge tools with fewer bureaucratic barriers, but - and this is key - a corresponding need for internal governance and training. The main threat in this approach is the lack of operational definitions, model policies, and standardized required training to ensure agencies are using AI correctly. Many agencies are reliant on self-taught members to figure it out on the fly, which has the potential to jeopardize case integrity in the absence of standards. This puts police executives in a tough spot, needing both the force multiplier AI offers to meet growing demands and short staffing, while trying to keep pace with evolving dialogue and legal issues around proper and legal use.

DrAlfting Ahead: Large Language Models in Law Enforcement

continued from previous page

Table 1: An example of what the evidence currently recommends for AI in Policing

	Supported / Appropriate Uses	Not Supported / Inappropriate Uses
Report Support	Al can help with drafting routine reports, summaries, or transcribing body-worn videos. But officers must verify, edit, and approve the outputs.	Current evidence shows risks of errors, omissions, and even fabricated details for automated reports. Courts have flagged this as unacceptable if not human-checked.
Back-Office Support	Tools like Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) show promise for sorting large volumes of documents, OSINT, or organized crime mapping. Evidence supports this with clear human oversight.	There is no evidence AI can judge truthfulness, reliability, or evidentiary weight – particularly for charging decisions. This would not stand up under Daubert or Frye standards.
Training Simulations	Controlled AI avatars/VR can help officers rehearse scenarios, practice questioning structures, and build confidence. Research supports this as a supplement, not a replacement.	There is no evidence that AI can build real-world judgment or ethical reasoning. There is a risk of mechanistic routines instead of adaptive decision-making.
Operational Support (Human-in-the-Loop)	Al can highlight patterns in data, give situational summaries, and improve awareness in real-time crime centers. But evidence is still developing.	No evidence supports letting AI drive patrol deployment, interrogations, or investigative interviews. This undermines rapport, trauma-informed practice, and discretion.
Transparency and Auditing	Al can be useful for data checks, chain- of-custody tracking, or spotting errors. These uses are low risk if properly supervised.	Evidence suggests uncontrolled use of AI creates legal, privacy, and evidentiary risks. Without auditability, these tools should not be used.

Specifically, the America's Al Action Plan supports the adoption of generative Al in public institutions through initiatives that promote domestic model development, streamlined federal procurement, and investment in agency-level Al infrastructure. This has practical implications for police departments. Under the Plan, federal funding is being channeled into local and state law enforcement bodies to pilot Al-powered tools for report generation, evidence summarization, digital forensics, and predictive analysis, often working in collaboration with trusted technology developers and applied researchers to co-design tools that meet the real-world demands of frontline policing.

For example, the integration of LLMs with 911 call systems and real-time crime centers is already being explored under federal demonstration grants. In these applications, AI copilots can provide frontline officers with instant summaries, triage threat assessments, and extract high-salience features from incoming data streams. When combined with speech analytics or pattern-matching algorithms, this can create a near-real-time operational intelligence layer, allowing officers to respond faster, safer, and with a clearer picture of situational dynamics.

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DrAlfting Ahead: Large Language Models in Law Enforcement

continued from previous page

Yet, despite its innovation-forward posture, the U.S. plan does not dismiss accountability. It specifically calls for the need for agency-specific standards, including internal AI literacy, bias auditing, and data protection protocols. Agencies adopting LLMs must be prepared to answer questions around evidentiary admissibility, model transparency, and chain of custody, especially in cases where automated tools influence investigation outcomes. The Plan calls for these tools to remain ideologically neutral, legally sound, and rooted in constitutional values, ensuring that efficiency gains do not come at the cost of civil liberties or public confidence.

Perhaps the biggest challenge to competent use of AI in policing is the same challenge we have always faced; accountability of officers to proof and for supervisors to carefully read reports (Jones & Blackledge, 2021). The difference between pre-AI assisted report and "old school" is that old school errors were human errors where the officer knew the situation and could remedy an error in a manner explainable, and likely believable to prosecutors or juries. AI errors, not caught by the author or supervisors, can cause a huge shadow over a case and competence of the officers that may be insurmountable. Simply put; the cost of being lazy or overworked goes from problematic to critical failure.

In this sense, both the EU and U.S. trajectories converge - the promise of LLMs must be matched by professional responsibility. Whether through enforceable regulation (as in Europe) or strategic federal incentives (as in the U.S.), the future of AI in policing hinges on how well agencies can balance innovation with accountability and integrity. Police leaders must take an active role not only in selecting and deploying these systems but in shaping the cultural and procedural conditions that ensure their use remains grounded in justice, law, and service.

The U.S. Al Action Plan: What Police Chiefs Need to Know

For police chiefs, the AI Action Plan sets the tone for how AI systems will enter the operational fabric of policing, through dispatch centers, digital evidence workflows, patrol briefings, and real-time analytics. One of the most notable features of the Plan is its emphasis on open-source and open-weight AI models. These systems are designed to be transparent and accessible, allowing public agencies to deploy advanced tools without being locked into costly proprietary contracts. For law enforcement, this could mean access to copilots for drafting reports, summarizing interviews, organizing intelligence briefings, or flagging patterns in open-source data. But with openness comes legal and operational complexity. These tools may carry obligations under licensing agreements (e.g., governing how the models are used, shared, or modified) that could expose agencies to risk if misunderstood or ignored. Chiefs will need to ensure their legal and procurement teams understand these terms, particularly when integrating such tools into platforms that deal with sensitive or evidentiary data.

Moreover, while the Plan opens the door to faster deployment, it currently lacks clarity on key implementation details. There is no central agency tasked with certifying tools for use in criminal justice contexts, no universal guidance on how to audit model bias or explainability, no clear standards on evidentiary admissibility, and no policy models or best practices for Al-generated content. This places increased responsibility on police leaders to establish internal governance, define acceptable use cases, and set policies that protect both civil liberties and operational integrity. This in turn introduces new procurement expectations, particularly for agencies seeking federal funding or working with federal partners. There is growing need requiring chiefs to scrutinize the (i) functionality of a tool, (ii) its training data, (iii) content moderation policies, and (iv) vendor affiliations. Any tool that may shape decisions about public safety, enforcement priorities, or community narratives must be evaluated with this in mind, especially in polarized environments where public confidence is fragile. These are issues that state police chief and sheriff associations, the National Sheriffs Association, and the IACP need to lead the way.

Leading with Judgement in an Al-Powered Era

Police chiefs must recognize that AI is not a future challenge. It is a current leadership responsibility. The new generation of sworn and professional staff are digital natives and likely versed in AI use and how to leverage technology. Without structure, policy, and guidance, well intended people may unwittingly use AI to the detriment of victims and the agency. As LLMs increasingly intersect with core policing tasks, their influence will be shaped beyond the technology, with specific emphasis toward the governance, training, and ethical frameworks chiefs put in place. The risks of DrAlfting (i.e., delegating judgment to systems that simulate plausibility rather than reason) can erode institutional integrity if left unchecked. But the potential gains, from streamlined reporting to augmented training and intelligence support, are equally real. Leadership, then, must be both visionary and vigilant. Chiefs must ensure that any adoption of AI is accompanied by clear internal policy, legal scrutiny, officer education, and mechanisms for ongoing oversight. This is therefore a question of shaping innovation, ensuring that AI serves policing's fundamental mission to uphold justice, protect communities, and maintain the trust on which all effective law enforcement depends.

FEATURED ARTICLE

DrAlfting Ahead: Large Language Models in Law Enforcement

continued from previous page

Recommended Readings

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New Chiefs Training

Thanks to the legislative efforts, the FPCA was proud to offer state financial assistance to support delivery of New Chiefs Training during the 2024–2025 membership year. Florida saw a record number of new chiefs, with nearly 40 appointments in 2024 and over 50 already in 2025. This training equipped 48 of those new chiefs with essential tools and insights to successfully lead their agencies through the unique challenges of law enforcement in today's ever changing environment. We sincerely thank the instructors and the many former and current law enforcement leaders who continue to invest in the success of new chiefs, ensuring a strong foundation for the future of leadership in our profession.







FPCA Installation Ceremony



President Charlie Vazquez

The highlight of the 2025 Summer Conference was, as always, the Awards and Installation Banquet — and this year was no exception.

President Vazquez selected the theme "Building Bridges", which became a unifying focus throughout his term. Under his leadership, FPCA and its members worked diligently to strengthen relationships between law enforcement agencies and the communities we serve

During the Installation Banquet, we proudly introduced the newly appointed Board of Directors and Executive Board to our membership. As we bid a fond farewell to President Vazquez, he reflected on the accomplishments of the past year with gratitude and pride.

During his tenure, the FPCA Board of Directors welcomed several new Directors, including Chief Adam Geissenberger (Pinellas Park), Chief Sean McGovern, Chief Sarah Coursey, and Chief Art Bodenheimer, all joining during the 2024–2025 year. The Executive Board also saw changes, with Chief John Barkley moving from District Director to 3rd Vice President.

President Bage was sworn in by U.S. Marshal Bill Berger, former Chief of the North Miami Beach Police Department — where President Bage began his own career with the North Miami Police Department, rising to the rank of Assistant Chief.

During his Installation, President Bage was honored with a Key to the City from North Miami Mayor Alex Desulme, and also recognized by Fort Walton Beach Mayor Nick Allegretto — the two cities where he has proudly served.

In his remarks, President Bage emphasized that policing is not just about laws or enforcement, but about investing in our members, our command staff, and our officers. He declared this the year to focus on the growth, development, and well-being of the entire FPCA membership.



L to R: Chief Jamie Cruse, Chief Greg Vesta, Chief John Barkley, Chief Barry Roberts, Chief Art Bodenheimer, Chief Sarah Coursey, Chief Todd Garrison, Chief Jesse Godfrey, President Charlie Vazquez, Chief Melanie Bevan, Chief Ed Hudak, Executive Director Cookie Pritt, Chief Jennifer Michaux, Chief Robert Bage, Chief Jeff Pearson, Chief Steve Kinsey, Chief Sean Brammer, Chief Lawrence Revell, Chief Antoine Sheppard, Chief Sean McGovern, Chief David Currey.

2025-2026 Board of Directors



2025-2026 FPCA President Robert Bage











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Award Winners for 2024

The William B. Berger Outstanding Chief Executive of the Year and the Outstanding Command Officer of the Year awards recognize individuals for exceptional performance and support and advancement of the law enforcement profession. The recipients were:



Chief Executive of the Year – Chief Kenneth Albano, Temple Terrace Police Department



Command Officer of the Year- Deputy Chief Christopher Morales, North Port Police Department



The Public Private Partnership Committee's (PPPC) Operation Cooperation Award recognizes excellence in private sector partnerships with law enforcement agencies working together to address community needs and enhance public safety. The recipients were: Detective Clint Burns, Davie Police Department; Target, CVS, Publix, Winn Dixie, Wal-Mart, Lowes, Homeland Security and Broward Sheriff's Office.



The PPPC Glen Mowrey Pillars of Success Award recognizes individuals who previously served as law enforcement officers and who have successfully transitioned to the private sector. The recipient was Retired Winter Park Police Chief Brett Railey and The Digital Decision.

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The Lee McGehee Police Officer of the Year Award is designed to recognize police officers who have demonstrated exceptional achievement and shown a genuine commitment to their profession, their agency, and the public they serve.



Officer Robert Bourque Longboat Key Police Department



Officer Anthony Moser Miccosukee Police Department



Detective Robert Padron Sunrise Police Department

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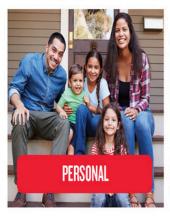
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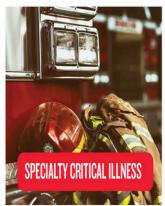
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The Rocky Pomerance Excellence in Policing Awards recognize member agencies that develop and implement innovative approaches to policing. The recipients were:



Santa Fe College Police Department



Naples Police Department



Clermont Police Department

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FPCA recognizes that law enforcement is a team effort, including non-sworn personnel serving in many and sometimes multiple roles. Nominations for these recently created awards surged this year, and the recipients of these awards based on agency size were:



Dispatcher of the Year - Rebecca Lanier, Orange Park Police Department



Dispatcher of the Year - Kathryn Kendall-Jackson, Palm Beach Gardens Police Department



Dispatcher of the Year - Dawnn Kinsey, South Miami Police Department

Special thank you to the following for supporting these awards:











Administrative Assistant of the Year - Stacie Quinn, Oakland Police Department



Administrative Assistant of the Year - Kristin Parks, Punta Gorda Police Department



Administrative Assistant of the Year - Benita Harrison, University of Central Florida Police Department

Special thank you to the following for supporting these awards:





Civilian Employee of the Year -Kelly Sims, Oakland Police Department. Chief Daron Esan accepted on her behalf



Civilian Employee of the Year -Kimberly Allen-Hearn, Stuart Police Department



Civilian Employee of the Year - Shawna Nathman-Deyo, Plantation Police Department



Guardian & Warrior Award - Dr. Marshall Jones, Florida Institute of Technology



Guardian & Warrior Award - Ms. Tammy Agee, FPCA Membership and Conference Manager



The recipient of the FPCA's President's Award for exceptional service to FPCA was Chief Lawrence Revell, Tallahassee Police Department.

The purpose of the FPCA Wall of Honor is to distinguish former/retired members of the FPCA or persons of distinction who have made major contributions to the FPCA. These awards are placed inside FPCA Headquarters to immortalize those persons who contributed so significantly to the FPCA.



Allen Durham, United Badges Insurance



Woody Spencer, USA Software

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56