

BLUE LIVES MATTER

Over 158 Police Officers Killed Themselves In 2018



by **Sandy Malone** 19 hrs - edited

More police and firefighters are dying by their own hands than are being killed in the line of duty.

Chicago, IL – More first responders died from suicide than were killed in the line of duty in 2018.

WGN reported that at least 158 police officers died by their own hand in the United States in 2018, and experts estimate that suicides by other first responders are largely under-reported.

A recent study of first responder deaths in 2017 by the Ruderman Family Foundation found that the rate of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression is five times higher in police, firefighters, and EMTs than that of the civilian population.

➡ The study found that “public discourse seldom acknowledges the fact that first responders witness tragedy and horror regularly, if not daily.”

“Constant exposure to death and destruction exerts a toll on the mental health of first responders, and yet many do not disclose mental health issues nor do they access treatment,” the study determined.

In 2017, at least 243 police officers, deputies, and firefighters committed suicide – 21 more first responders than were killed in the line of duty during the same year, according to WTVT.

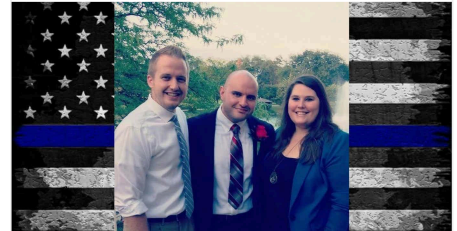
“First responders are even more vulnerable to things like PTSD, substance use, depression, anxiety. Unfortunately, there's so much stigma to get help,” Crisis Center of Tampa CEO Claire Reynolds explained.

➡ Reynolds told WTVT that the stigma of mental health issues – and fear of losing their jobs as a result of admitting to them - is usually what keeps first responders from coming forward to seek help.

2019

Suicides started New Year's Day

Hero Down: Chicago Police Officer Dane Smith Found With Self-Inflicted Gunshot



by **Holly Matkin** 10 hrs - edited

Off-duty Chicago Police Officer Anthony Smith died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound on New Year's Day.

Chicago, IL – Chicago Police Department Officer Dane Anthony Smith died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound at his residence on New Year's Day, police said.

The body of Officer Smith, 36, was discovered at his Jefferson Park residence on Tuesday morning, WBBM reported.

Hero Down: Pinellas County Deputy Carlos Felipez Dies Of Self-Inflicted Gunshot



by **Holly Matkin** 10 hrs

Pinellas County Sheriff's Office Deputy Carlos Felipez served as a law enforcement officer for 15 years.

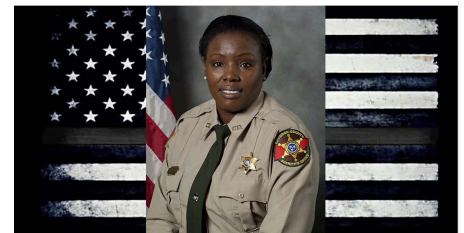
Clearwater, FL – Pinellas County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) Deputy Carlos Felipez died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in the backyard of his home on Saturday morning.

PCSO deputies were called to the residence for a welfare check at approximately 1:07 a.m., after someone reported hearing the sound of a gunshot, WFLA reported.

2019

December

Hero Down: Davidson County CO Lawanda Steele-Williams Killed In Murder/Suicide



by **Holly Matkin** 1 day

Davidson County Sheriff's Office Corrections Officer Lawanda Steele Williams was killed by her husband on Sunday.

Nashville, TN – Davidson County Sheriff's Office Corrections Officer Lawanda Steele-Williams was murdered on Sunday, after her husband shot her in their kitchen and turned the weapon on himself.

Corrections Officer Steele-Williams, 53, had been married to her husband, Kirk Williams, 49, for just 18 months, the Tennessean reported.

But while that may have been true in the past, she said that's not the current situation.

"There's the mindset of if I ask for help, that there's some sort of weakness, I might be judged, I might lose my job, and that's just not the reality anymore," Reynolds said.

But critics cited the lack of resources available to police officers and said that data told another story.

Less than 10 percent of police departments in the country actually have suicide prevention programs, WGN reported.

The Ruderman study found that not much has been done to address the rates of suicide by first responders nationwide, and said part of that might be because the mainstream media frequently failed to report on first responders who killed themselves.

"It's really shocking, and part of what's interesting is that line-of-duty deaths are covered so widely by the press but suicides are not, and it's because of the level of secrecy around these deaths, which really shows the stigmas," Ruderman study co-author Miriam Heyman told [USA Today](#).

Heyman said departments are frequently not forthcoming about suicides as if they are ashamed of those deaths, and she said that shame is having a "deadly result."

Blue Lives Matter can confirm Heyman's assessment because it has frequently run into roadblocks from within police departments when trying to gather information about fallen officers for "Hero Down" articles.

Many departments never issue any sort of public statement about officers who have died by their own hand, as if the shame from the tragedy put a cloud over the fallen officer's contributions to the community during their career in public service.

Officers who commit suicide are not buried with police honors, USA Today reported.

"There is not enough conversation about mental health within police and fire departments," the Ruderman study showed. "Silence can be deadly, because it is interpreted as a lack of acceptance and thus morphs into a barrier that prevents first responders from accessing potentially life-saving mental health services."

The International Association of Chiefs of Police put out a report in 2018 that noted it was nearly impossible to track first responder suicides because they're frequently not reported, according to USA Today.

"It is a departmental issue that should be addressed globally. Departments must break the silence on law enforcement suicides by building up effective and continuing suicide-prevention programs," the associations report noted.

Florida deputy kills 3 family members, confesses on police radio before killing himself

By: Crystal Bonvillian, Cox Media Group National Content Desk
Updated: Dec 19, 2018 - 2:18 PM



PLANT CITY, Fla. - A Florida sheriff's deputy killed himself in front of several colleagues Wednesday morning after going on his police radio and reporting that he had killed three of his family members -- including a child.

Hillsborough County Sheriff Chad Chronister offered details of the still-evolving investigation at a Wednesday morning news conference.

"I'm here today, I'm saddened, but I'm also disheartened," Chronister said. "Disheartened that a deputy sheriff, a Hillsborough County deputy sheriff, would ever, ever cause harm to another individual."

