

InForce

A publication of the Berks County Sheriff's Office

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August 2015

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A Message from Sheriff Eric J. Weaknecht

The new school year has begun, and the Berks County Sheriff's Office would like to remind parents and children to be extra careful when walking to and from school.

Reports of alleged perpetrators approaching children as they walked to and from school last year died down over the summer, but that person (or persons) approaching children has not been apprehended. It's a very real possibility that attempts to entice children walking to and from school may resume with the start of the new school year.

Parents, please talk with your children.

Arm them with information they can use to protect themselves. Tell your children:

- that a stranger is ANYONE they don't know. Even someone who looks like a parent, a teacher or a neighbor

- that they (your children) should not walk alone and to walk to and from school in groups whenever possible
- that if your child must walk alone, that you will practice walking the route with your child; that you will point out safe places to go if he or she needs help
- that your children have your permission to NOT LISTEN to an adult they don't know and that IT'S OK to be RUDE and IGNORE anyone they don't know or who makes them feel uncomfortable
- that your children HAVE YOUR PERMISSION to do whatever it takes to get away from a dangerous situation (run, scream, pull away, hit, yell -- "I DON'T KNOW THIS PERSON!!! HELP!!")
- that your children should NEVER get into someone's car, and if they believe they are being followed by someone in a car, to TURN AND RUN IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children reports 83% of attempted abductions were unsuccessful because the child did something proactive to escape the would-be abductor.



Phil Bentz

Deputy Phil Bentz, assigned to the Fugitive Warrants Division in the Berks County Sheriff's Office, is also a member of the US Marshals Task Force and a tactical operator and explosive breaching team leader of the Berks County Emergency Response Team (BCERT). He is being recognized for his involvement with the Hometown Heroes soccer fundraiser which raises money to benefit the charitable funds of fallen officers. The annual Hometown Heroes soccer event completed its 5th

year this past June and raised more than \$2,000 to benefit charitable funds in the names of Kyle Pagerly; two Reading Police Officers, Michael Wise, II and Scott Wertz; and National Guard pilot Jarett Yoder. The organization also donates in support of emergency-service canines.

Deputy Bentz holds a degree in political science from East Stroudsburg and graduated from the Reading Police Academy. He retired from the Reading Police Department where he worked as an officer and an FBI certified bomb technician. He's been a deputy sheriff with the Berks County Sheriff's Office since October, 2011.

Bentz enjoys hunting, fishing, soccer, crossfit training, and is a frequent soccer referee. He and his wife of 22 years also enjoy attending their teenage sons' sporting events.



Features

BCERT

A look inside the Berks County Specialized Law Enforcement Team Page 2



Annual Renewal Membership Form Inside. Gold Members Receive Two Free Tickets to K-9 Picnic Held This Year on Saturday, September 26!



BCSO Honor Guard Takes First Place in PSA First Annual Competition Page 6

KYLE PAGERLY MEMORIAL 5K RUN



Sunday, October 11th, 2015 • 9AM
Shillington, PA

To register, go to: www.kylepagerly5k.com

Berks County Sheriff's Office Deputies Part of Specialized Team of Law Enforcement

The familiar term "SWAT" is an acronym rarely used today in law enforcement. Rather, individual special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams create acronyms that identify a team of specialized training officers with the department or agency which establishes such a unit. Berks County, for example, identifies its "SWAT" team as BCERT (Berks County Emergency Response Team). A handful of Berks County Sheriff's Deputies are also members of this elite law enforcement unit made up of approximately 40 law enforcement officers from various Berks County law enforcement agencies.

A story about BCERT was published in the *Reading Eagle* on June 10. Information published here will expand on that story as told by BCERT team members of the Berks County Sheriff's Office.

All law enforcement must qualify on their weapons twice a year, but BCERT team officers are also required to train together and perform training exercises two days a month and two full weeks each year in order to maintain the highly specialized skills needed in high risk situations.

BCERT is made up of three units: tactical, command and negotiation. Specialized training throughout the year focuses on all units conducting drilling and team building exercises in escalated situations of danger requiring use of aggressive defense tactics, exchange of firepower, hostage rescue, terrorist attacks, and subduing and detaining armed suspects. Actual firearms loaded with "pellet" bullets are used during training. Pellet contact with any surface leaves behind a blue residue and is powerful enough to penetrate those surfaces, including human skin.



Five of the seven Berks County Sheriff's Office BCERT team members standing in front of a garage door demolished by the BearCat as part of a breaching training exercise.



Members of BCERT prepare for explosives breaching (inside and outside of structures)

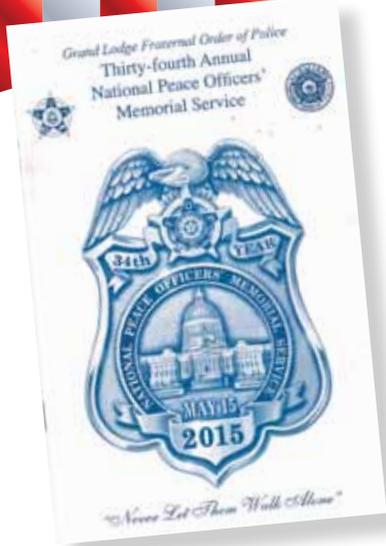


Although specialties in sniper shooting and explosives breaching exist, all operators (or non-command staff) are trained in all areas using all equipment, including an 8 ton armored vehicle (BearCat). See pg. 4 for details on BCERT's BearCat.

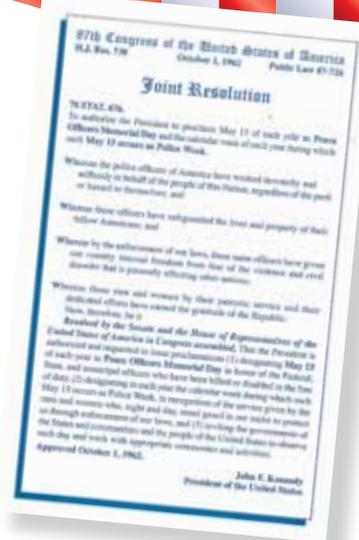
Training is as realistic as training officers can simulate – in buildings, in wooded areas, and areas designed specifically for training of law enforcement. Fort Indiantown Gap training facility, for example, provides opportunities for law enforcement to reinforce exercises such as breaking through the front door of a house in search of a wanted person. Officers enter rooms in the on-site "raid" house and spread out. Auditory stressors are factored into training as a variety of sounds are likely what officers will encounter in a real search. Music blaring, dogs barking, baby crying, kids screaming . . . Smells such as soiled baby diapers, rotting garbage, and marijuana plants can all be combined to overwhelm the senses as officers begin to move from room to room (sometimes in complete darkness, or heavy with stale cigarette smoke), never knowing what awaits them around the corner, behind furniture, or inside a closet.

Two of the Sheriff's Office BCERT team members, both retired Reading police officers, jumped at the opportunity to be part of this elite team of law enforcement that was not made available to them when they worked for Reading. A Berks County law enforcement agency must first

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**NATIONAL
POLICE
WEEK 2015**
HONORING COURAGE, SALUTING SACRIFICE



Explorers Travel to Washington, DC to Attend 34th Annual National Peace Officers' Memorial Service

Explorers joined hundreds of others to pay tribute to the thousands of officers who have been killed in the line of duty and whose names are inscribed on the Police Officers' Memorial Wall in Washington, DC. President Barack Obama, keynote speaker at the 34th Annual National Peace Officers' Memorial, spoke about the sacrifice of law enforcement. An additional 131 names were added to the Wall in 2014.



Explorer uses stone rubbing technique to copy names from the Memorial Wall.



President Barack Obama, Keynote Speaker

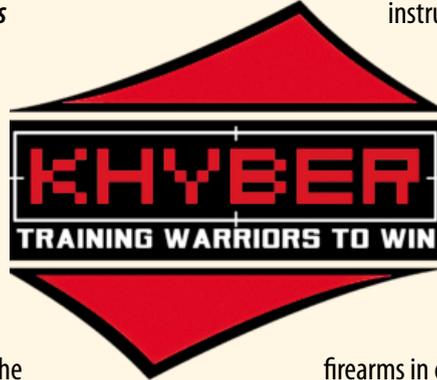


BCSO Firearms Instructors Attend Diminished Light Instructor Program

By: John Parsons, Sergeant and Certified Firearms Training Instructor, Berks County Sheriff's Office

Handgun, patrol rifle and shotgun qualifications are conducted twice a year for deputies in the Berks County Sheriff's Office. Each deputy is also required to qualify and train in a diminished light training course once a year. Seven of the Berks County Sheriff's Office deputies are certified firearms instructors who facilitate and ensure each deputy completes the weapons qualifications mandated by office policy. Each firearms instructor must complete recertification every two years to maintain his status as a firearms instructor.

This past July, the seven certified firearms instructors in the Berks County Sheriff's Office attended a three day diminished light



instructor program to become certified instructors in diminished light training. The limited-seated program was offered to local law enforcement firearms instructors by Khyber Training of Fort Mohave, Arizona and hosted by the Berks County Sheriff's Office.

Those enrolled received enhanced knowledge of the application of diminished light tactics in conjunction with the use of firearms in critical, real world situations. Attendees also participated in simulated situations and demanding initiative based drills designed to develop and enhance reactionary competence. Those who successfully completed the three day training program are now certified to train and provide diminished light instruction to law enforcement in their respective offices, departments and agencies.

BCERT's BEARCAT...

The name "BearCat" stands for Ballistic Engineered Armored Response Counter Attack Truck. It is based on a Ford F-550 Super Duty Chassis with a 6.7L Turbo Diesel, six-speed automatic transmission commercial truck chassis. The .5 inch thick mil spec steel armored bodywork is completed with .50 caliber rated ballistic glass capable of multi-hits, blast-resistant floors, specially designed gun ports, roof hatches/turret and is equipped with lights/sirens/battering ram/winchers/thermal cameras, spot lights and ballistic curtains. With its standard

NIJ IV armor and 4WD system, it can carry up to 10 people through varying terrain.

BearCats are typically used to transport tactical "SWAT" team law enforcement to and from hostile situations and to assist with the recovery and protection of civilians in harm's way during terrorist threats, hostage incidents, or encounters with large gatherings of aggressors. It provides a safe platform for negotiations and is designed to provide full ballistic protection from a variety of small arms, explosives and IED (improvised explosive device) threats.

(Source: Lencoarmor.com and wikipedia.org/LencoBearCat)



Safety Tips

School Bus Safety Tips



The start of school is right around the corner, and the familiar sight of bright yellow school busses will soon share our roads. Studies show that although thousands of cars illegally pass school busses each day, children are more likely to be injured by the school bus itself, as reported by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Even though school bus drivers are trained to follow procedures to prevent school bus accidents, it's never a bad idea to rehearse with children the following basic safety rules when in and around busses:

- Stay at least 10 feet away from a bus until it's time to get on.
- Wait your turn and get on one at a time.
- Remain in your seat the entire ride to and from school.
- Do not distract the bus driver unless it's an emergency.

- Kicking the seat, yelling, or other inappropriate behavior can distract the bus driver.
- Before stepping off the bus, look to be sure a car isn't coming.
- Don't linger or play near the bus after you leave it.
- Take 5 giant steps on the same side of the bus before you cross the street.
- Never cross the street behind a bus. Other cars may not see you.
- Be sure the bus driver signals to you that it's OK to cross in front of the bus.
- Before crossing the street, make sure all cars on the road are stopped.

Although bus accidents do happen and children can be hurt while riding in a bus (there is currently no law in Pennsylvania requiring school busses to be equipped with safety belts), statistics show that taking a bus to school is the safest way to go. When it comes to getting kids safely to and from school, it's always a good idea to reinforce with children the safety rules in and around busses.

ON PATROL

WITH BERKS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Did you know... School bus laws...

That when a school bus is stopped on a highway or trafficway with its red lights flashing and side arm extended, a driver following or approaching must stop at least 10 feet from reaching the bus and remain stationary until the lights on the bus are turned out or the children who may have exited have reached a place of safety. The driver of a vehicle approaching an intersection at which a school bus is stopped shall stop his or her vehicle at that intersection until the flashing red signal lights on the school bus are no longer activated.

Pa.C.S. Title 75, §3345(a)
FINE: \$250 + 103.50 (Minimum Costs) = \$353.50



Most Wanted



Name: Carlos Rafael Morales-Javier
DOB: 6/9/1992
Charges: Possession of a Controlled Substance
LKA: 621 Ave. B Reading, Pa 19601



Name: Larry Bell Harges Jr.
DOB: 2/12/1981
Charges: Poss/Sale/Use display documents
LKA: 11 Oxford Dr Morgantown, Pa 19543



Name: Xavier Melendez
DOB: 12/28/1986
Charges: Escape
LKA: 465 Oley St Reading, Pa 19601



Name: Kurtis Dekota Parkhurst
DOB: 10/31/1994
Charges: Criminal Conspiracy to Burglary
LKA: S.R 3004 Meshoppen, Pa 18630

If you have information that can help apprehend any of the fugitives in this publication, call the Berks County Sheriff's Office Fugitive Tip Line at 610-478-6390 or Crime Alert Berks at 1-877-373-9913.

All your information will be kept confidential.

Berks County Sheriff's Honor Guard Receives First Place Recognition at Annual PSA Conference

The Berks County Sheriff's Office Honor Guard participated in the first annual competition among Honor Guards at the Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association annual conference held this year in Pittsburgh. Five Honor Guard teams performed before a panel of four Sheriffs from non-competing counties on the morning of July 24, and the Berks County team learned that they had placed first during the banquet later that same day. Judging was based on overall uniform appearance, uniform inspection, and flag presentation.

Sheriff William Mullen, Allegheny County Sheriff and host of the 93rd annual Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association Conference, presented the winning team with a plaque and medals.

The Berks County Sheriff's Office Honor Guard was established in 2008, the same year Sheriff Weaknecht was sworn into office as Sheriff. Upon request, the Honor Guard will perform ceremonial duties at national monuments and special events and has attended and performed at nearly every funeral of a Pennsylvania law enforcement officer who has died in the line of duty since June 29, 2011, the date Berks County Deputy Sheriff Kyle Pagerly was killed. Kyle Pagerly was also a member of the BCSO Honor Guard.



Members of the Berks County Sheriff's Honor Guard: (L-R) Deputy Ali Angstadt, Deputy Michael Moorman, Deputy Michael Jackson, Captain Matthew Mendenhall, Deputy Ryan Swartz and Deputy Chris Gorel (pictured). Sergeant Frank Cataldi, Deputy Ken Rice, Deputy Mark Vandermartin, Deputy Timothy McFarland, and Sergeant Brian Boyer (not pictured).

Continued from page 2

be willing to allow one or more of its officers to become a member of BCERT. It can be a strain on any law enforcement agency to lose manpower when a BCERT team member trains or is called into action. Although the Berks County Sheriff's Office caps its BCERT team members to just seven, it has the most officers on the BCERT team than any other law enforcement agency in Berks.

Sheriff Weaknecht says any interested deputy can apply to BCERT, but applying is just the first, and most definitely, the easiest step. From there, applicants must survive a "day of misery," as one BCERT team member calls it. Tryouts (a/k/a "day of misery") is a 20+ hour day of physical, mental, and emotional exercises. Those who survive the day are still not guaranteed a slot on the team. Recruits are then ranked through a process of evaluation. The recruit who may have finished number 2 for the day may lose out to the recruit who ranked 6, for example, if number 2 happens to be from the same agency as the number 1 ranked candidate which allows only one from its agency to be on the BCERT team.

Each of the Sheriff's Office BCERT team members who shared his experiences for this article says he will continue to be on the BCERT team as long as each can physically do it. Training days are 8+ hours of physical and mental exertion outfitted in head to toe gear which can weigh 30 pounds. Although training days and weeks certainly tax abilities, each deputy says training has prepared him for those days when a call out can lead to situations lasting well over 8 hours, sometimes in extreme elements. A more recent call out involved a 16 hour standoff with an emotionally disturbed person holding a couple hostage inside the couple's Mohnton home.

The number of call outs vary each year; call outs must meet certain criteria relative to level of risk and weapon reported. "We train so it [situation] goes smoothly," stated a Sheriff's Office BCERT team member. "We are no longer individuals out there; we're a team of brothers."



A Berks County Sheriff's Deputy BCERT unit member reviews a videotaped training segment at the Fort Indiantown Gap "raid" house for purposes of evaluation. Training at the Fort Indiantown Gap is free of charge through the Pennsylvania National Guard for all law enforcement departments and agencies.