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10-43: Be Advised...

with Doug Wyllie, PoliceOne Editor in Chief

PoliceOne Roundtable: Using simulators in law enforcement training

We connected with four of the top industry experts in the area of police simulators, and got their thoughts on the challenges, solutions, and future prospects for this continually-developing technology

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Even as police agencies continue to work with diminishing training budgets, many are choosing to make fairly hefty investments in computer-driven simulators for use-of-force and emergency driving training.

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While this this has led to grumbling among a certain few, it's possible that critics of this strategy may not be fully aware of the potential long-term benefits agencies might enjoy. When simulators are properly integrated into a complete curriculum of use-of-force/live-fire and behind-the-wheel EVOC training, they do benefit officers in their jobs.

We connected with four of the top industry experts in the area of police simulators, and got their thoughts on the challenges, solutions, and future prospects for this continually-developing technology. Here, in part one of this two-part series (*part two will post in this space one week from today, on May 23*) we begin the discussion with some of the training issues this amazing technology can solve for law enforcement.

What are the biggest issues facing police agencies that simulators can solve?

Chuck Deakins: Simulators can significantly reduce officer risk and agency liability. Simulators are not games; they are full training systems that can save lives! Used properly, they can change an agency's "culture" toward high-liability, high-risk encounters such as use-of-force, pursuit, and emergency response driving.

James Peters: The four biggest issues facing all law enforcement agencies — no matter the size or what part of the country they're in — is budget cuts, ammo shortages, lack of live-fire ranges and the lawsuits that follow.

Today's world is very different than it was even 14 years ago when I started my career in law enforcement, and so is technology. Although the initial cost can be significant to a department, simulators can significantly cut the overall costs for training long term.

From both my personal experiences and what I've seen training wise, as long as officers are using realistic weapons, getting realistic recoil from those weapons and increasing their stress levels significantly while making critical use of force decisions, then departments will lower their liability while enhancing their officers abilities to come home safe.

Robert McCue: Time management for training and trainee throughput: the systems are available 24/7, are not affected by weather, never need rest, and are always available for training day or night. Further,

Meet the Experts



Chuck Deakins is Public Safety Specialist for [FAAC](#). Deakins is a retired officer from Santa Ana (Calif.) whose knowledge of simulator training strategies, tactics, and techniques, has led to his success in all applications of simulation instruction.



James Peters is the Law Enforcement Subject Matter Expert and Trainer for [VirTra Systems](#). Peters is a retired officer from an Arizona Law Enforcement Agency. He had a distinguished career in Patrol, Street Crimes, SWAT, and holds numerous training certifications.



Rob McCue is General Manager for [IES Interactive Training](#). McCue has been in the simulation and training industry since 1990. Prior to that, he served as a weapons and tactics instructor as an NCO with the U.S. Army's elite 1st Ranger Battalion.



Jimmie McCoy is Manager of Courseware Development for [Meggitt Training Systems](#). McCoy leads a team of dedicated professionals producing simulation training courseware intended to save the lives of officers and innocent bystanders.



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they provide a very standardized objective baseline to measure trainee performance against.

... and innocent bystanders.

Unlike role-play exercises with live participants, the systems project the same stimulus in the same manner every time it is conducted, with no role-player performance deviations — like fatigue — to consider or deal with.

Jimmie McCoy: Budget. Training time, resources, travel, and range operations are expensive and often are only accomplished to satisfy minimum required training standards. Simulators can be used at any time, offer integration of each level of force as well as maintenance, testing and remediation of firearm — marksmanship and judgmental — skills, and provide a platform for the evaluation of Risk Assessment and Risk Management Objectives.

Essential training, especially marksmanship training, is only conducted a few times a year resulting in diminished shooting skills. Simulators can fill that gap by allowing departments year-round access to realistic shooting programs that keep their officers sharp and proficient.

What are the key things departments need to consider when buying simulators?

Chuck Deakins: First and foremost, an agency needs professional instructors that are strongly committed to improving officer safety and survival through simulation training programs. Simulators work, but not without dedicated instructors.

Secondly, purchasers must conduct their due diligence on the company they are purchasing from. These simulators are a significant expense and the high-tech industry is always changing, so they have to make sure they can continue a relationship with the company well into the future.

James Peters: Departments can sometimes get hung up on numbers provided by a simulator company for the sole purpose of selling a simulator. A company might have 1,000 scenarios but if your trainers will only use 10 of them because the same training objectives are just repeated 100 times each, then the simulator will sit in a closet/storage container somewhere after the first year.

The fact is that quality content and being under stress while making critical use of force decisions is what better prepares officers. This is potentially-lifesaving equipment and warrants a good investigation into what is the best training tool for your department.

Find out what companies are out there and before buying, visit the companies or bring the company out and have a wide range of your personnel, to include brand new officers, seasoned tactical officers, trainers, and administrators run through a couple of scenarios. This will help assure that you are getting opinions from personnel with no ulterior motives.

The company is going to be showing what they believe to be their best content. When it's over, ask questions like "Did you feel like you learned something?" and "Did you feel that the scenario/s helped actually prepare you to make better critical use-of-force decisions in real life situations?"

Listen to the answers these officers that will be training inside the system and the trainers who you have entrusted to train your personal.

Robert McCue: Key considerations should include whether or not the system is to be static or mobile — this will affect the choice of system hardware, mounting choices, and accessories used — and what

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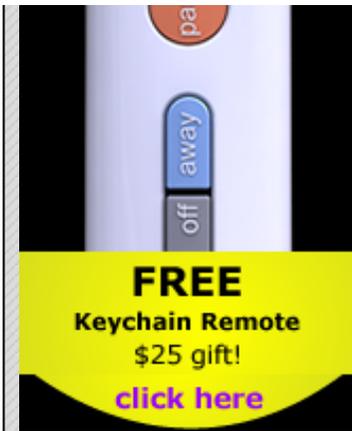
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their key objectives are for the system. Is it for basic and advanced firearms training, practice qualifications, force options decision making and judgmental reactions, situational awareness and confidence building?

The end goals for training should be the starting point for evaluating what system and features help to attain those goals through technology.

Jimmie McCoy: Trust and reliability is primary. How long has the supplier been in business? Are their products known and used worldwide and by multiple agencies and disciplines? Will the company be there if I need them? Does the company provide system training?

Equally as important is the technology itself. Will it provide your agency with the training tools necessary to prepare your officers? What are the technical elements of the system? Is it easy to use and does it support the department's training objectives?

Does the system address the human elements — integrated training abilities that support escalation and de-escalation of use-of-force scenarios — officer presence, verbal commands, empty-handed techniques, as well as intermediate tools such as baton, [TASER](#), OC spray, and the ultimate use of deadly force with firearms?

Weapons quality and availability is critical. The system itself should operate effectively and serve the needs of the department. However, weapons that are true to fit, form and function that wirelessly communicate with the system allow officers to engage in a more true to life scenario. Who has the best quality realistic firearms and less lethal weapons that perform exactly like the issued weapons of your department? Are they wireless and fully-sensored?

About the author

Doug Wyllie is Editor in Chief of PoliceOne, responsible for setting the editorial direction of the website and managing the planned editorial features by our roster of expert writers. In addition to his editorial and managerial responsibilities, Doug has authored more than 650 feature articles and tactical tips on a wide range of topics and trends that affect the law enforcement community. Doug is a member of International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association (ILEETA), and an Associate Member of the California Peace Officers' Association. He is also a member of the Public Safety Writers Association, and is a two-time (2011 and 2012) Western Publishing Association "Maggie Award" Finalist in the category of Best Regularly Featured Digital Edition Column. Even in his "spare" time, he is active in his support for the law enforcement community, contributing his time and talents toward police-related charitable events as well as participating in force-on-force training, search-and-rescue training, and other scenario-based training designed to prepare cops for the fight they face every day on the street.

Read more articles by PoliceOne Editor in Chief Doug Wyllie by [clicking here](#).

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