

MORE THAN A RIDE TO THE FIGHT – PART 2

THE NEED FOR ONGOING DRIVER TRAINING AND SKILL MAINTENANCE

AUTHORED BY: Anthony J Shepherd, CPP / www.PFCtraining.com

Part 2 of this article picks up where Part 1 left off – You can read Part 1 in the October 2017 PFC Newsletter found here:

<http://www.pfctraining.com/pfc-training-october-2017-newsletter/>

Just as we have come to learn with firearms and use of force training, initial training is just the first step in becoming proficient while the more pressing issue becomes how to maintain individual levels of proficiency. Once again, keep in mind that we are discussing driving skills that far exceed the norm needed to safely operate a vehicle under normal conditions or circumstances and, as such, these skills are just as specialized and perishable as the skills needed to effectively engage a moving target from behind cover with a firearm. Make no mistake about it; refresher training for drivers can be resource intensive, though there are viable solutions available to the creative training administrator or program coordinator. One such solution, if supported by the layout/design of the training facility, is to set up driving exercises in close proximity to the firing range during re-qualifications, albeit in a safe area free from the hazard of stray rounds, and fill the individuals down time at the range with some driver training. An interesting by-product of this sort of program is the fact that, if you can get the timing right, you will introduce a higher degree of realism into the firearms training provided it takes place while the body is still recovering from the physiological and psychological stress induced by the driving exercises. For the more forward-thinking administrator or instructor this represents the first step toward integrating driver and firearms training into a seamless tactics and techniques program that maximizes the potential of all of the tools in the individual officers' tactical toolbox. As is always the case, safety is paramount and this sort of integrated training requires capable instructors and range safety personnel as well as a comprehensive risk management plan.

While the primary focus of refresher training has always been maintaining proficiency or refreshing critical skills an additional benefit is that deficiencies in drivers or, for that matter, the initial training program itself can be identified and corrected preemptively, as opposed to identifying and correcting the fault or deficiency after some tragic event occurs. The ability to identify such deficiencies, take corrective action and measure the effectiveness of those corrections or revisions hinges upon accurate record keeping. In light of the fact that a civil or criminal action against a law enforcement entity and/or individual officer/agent can have consequences that are as far reaching and catastrophic as those associated with a violent physical confrontation, the importance of accurate record keeping can not be overstated. Driver training records should encompass overall program and individual exercise development, vehicle baseline performance data (referred to as "vehicle norming" by Scotti certified instructors) student evaluations and the like. Liability concerns also drive the need for written testing in conjunction with practical skills or demonstrative testing. A properly designed written test will allow the instructor to evaluate how well the student grasps some of the fundamental concepts associated with defensive driving such as braking distance, the interrelationship between time and distance and the impact the environment and vehicle may have on driver proficiency and potential.

MORE THAN A RIDE TO THE FIGHT – PART 2

THE NEED FOR ONGOING DRIVER TRAINING AND SKILL MAINTENANCE

AUTHORED BY: Anthony J Shepherd, CPP / www.PFCtraining.com



If refresher training or re-qualification is required the next logical question is how often should it be done? The answer to this particular question is not set in stone but is, in fact, driven by the specific needs of the department or unit in question. Those units or personnel that spend a considerable amount of time behind the wheel or who may, by virtue of their respective mission profile or assignment, be more likely to encounter a situation that demands finely honed driving skills should retrain or re-qualify more often

than those that face a lesser likelihood of mayhem on the road. Likewise, while the content of a refresher course may be fairly straightforward and reflective of the initial training program, there are occasions when assignments, circumstances or events dictate a need for a more narrowly focused refresher or recertification program.

Developing refresher programs, be it a generic program or a more specialized mission or task specific program, requires the application of the very same fundamentals common to the most effective initial training programs. Exercises must be designed within the parameters of the laws of physics and vehicle capabilities. Instructors must perform certain driving exercises multiple times with each individual training vehicle to establish the performance baseline for that specific vehicle, once again referred to as vehicle norming. Objective performance standards and goals must be established based on the capacity of a given vehicle to perform under the conditions created by the exercise and documentation of the entire process, from course and exercise design to student performance, must be compiled and maintained.

But what about the officer or agent, the operator if you will, that not unlike the shooter who wants more range time, wants more time on the driving track to develop their skills behind the wheel to the highest degree possible? We have already acknowledged that defensive/evasive driving training is a resource intensive undertaking. And while it may be easy enough for the motivated individual to find a nearby range to improve their marksmanship and firearms tactics, in many areas even the most devoted driver might have a hard time finding a suitable location for honing defensive or evasive driving skills. The answer to this challenge may actually lie outside the normal frame of reference for many driving instructors or devoted students, but the solution is out there and it is a practical one.

The evolution of defensive and evasive driving techniques is clearly rooted in automobile racing. The laws of physics and mathematic formulas that Tony Scotti applied in developing the first scientific methodology for driver training some thirty years ago were (and still are) the same principles and formulas that engineers and crew chiefs have applied to race car development and tuning for several decades. Now, we're not suggesting that you go out and buy a racecar. While it sounds like a great idea the reality is that the cost of running an organized refresher or re-qualification program pales significantly when compared to the cost of running a competitive racing operation. There is, however, a grassroots (Cheap) form of automotive competition that will allow you to develop, keep sharp and maintain the skills that make the individual driver more capable of getting the most out their vehicle when needed, while maintaining the highest degree of control possible.

MORE THAN A RIDE TO THE FIGHT – PART 2

THE NEED FOR ONGOING DRIVER TRAINING AND SKILL MAINTENANCE

AUTHORED BY: Anthony J Shepherd, CPP / www.PFCtraining.com



Nearly every weekend across the United States the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA), the PORCHE/BMW Car Clubs of America as well as various other brand specific and independent clubs, through networks of local and regional chapters, sponsor what are known as autocross (SOLO II) events. Entry fees for these all-day events are within 25-50 dollars per person, about the same amount of money spent at the firing range. The emphasis in these events is

driver skill which is demonstrated by maximizing a given vehicles performance potential while accelerating, steering, turning and braking...sometimes all at the same instant. As is the case with nearly every law enforcement, military or security related driving programs, an autocross course is created using traffic cones to delineate turns, corners and hazards. Driver performance is measured by the amount of time it takes that driver to navigate the entire course in his or her vehicle. Penalties are assessed if the driver hits cones or drives off the designated course. There are typically numerous classes of vehicles within which one could compete; vehicle size, weight and modifications are what determine these classes.

It is commonplace to see daily driven street vehicles compete without any modification. A safety check (Technical inspection) is required, a DOT approved helmet and you are good to go. Only one vehicle is allowed on the course at any given time and therefore, given the fact that most of these courses are conducted at airports, racetracks or in huge parking lots, the risk of a collision or catastrophic accident is so minimal as to be almost non-existent. The internet is a great resource for finding information regarding what types of events are available to you locally, who organizes the events and where they are run. As is often the case, a little bit of effort can lead to a wealth of information and some tremendous opportunities for effective skill development and maintenance. And who knows, you might just have a good time while you're at it!

Regardless of whether you are the training administrator for a large agency or the training officer for a small department, given the amount of time that the individual agent or officer spends behind the wheel of a vehicle coupled with the circumstance under which those individuals may be required to operate those vehicles, the need for comprehensive driver training programs can not be ignored. In fact, in the landmark case that established the constitutional standard for deliberate indifference to inadequate training, *City of Canton v. Harris*, 109 S. Ct. 1197 (1989) the Supreme Court referred to both firearms *and* driving when commenting in it's opinion that "it may seem contrary to common sense to assert that a municipality will actually have a policy of not taking reasonable steps to train its employees". Effective risk management in terms of driver training begins with the administration of a comprehensive program that consists of initial training to include written testing coupled with objective performance standards and qualification, documentation of course development, execution and participation and periodic refresher training and re-qualification. Responsibility for effective application of the skills developed in these courses rests squarely with the vehicle operator – which should drive the desire to enhance individual skills beyond the confines of the formal training program through activities such as autocross competition.

MORE THAN A RIDE TO THE FIGHT – PART 2

THE NEED FOR ONGOING DRIVER TRAINING AND SKILL MAINTENANCE

AUTHORED BY: Anthony J Shepherd, CPP / www.PFCtraining.com

About the Author:

Anthony J Shepherd, CPP is an expert security strategist specializing in high-end commercial, federal and government protective services. He has progressive, diversified experience in both the business and day-to-day operational aspects of providing protective services through his roles as a CEO, COO, and GM, over a career spanning 35+ years. Currently Mr. Shepherd has direct oversight and responsibility for the operations of PFC Safeguards.

Beyond security, Mr. Shepherd provides select training modules through PFC Training. Driver training has been a mainstay of the PFC Group of Companies over the years. Mr. Shepherd has been training professional drivers and amateur race car drivers since 1994. A graduate of several elite driver training academies, two Law Enforcement and Federal training academies, Mr. Shepherd provides a valuable cross section of defensive and offensive driver training to meet our client's needs. As a prior avid amateur race car driver and a lifetime member of the Sports Car Club of America, Mr. Shepherd maintains his driving skills on a regular basis.

LICENSES & CERTIFICATIONS

Board Certified Protection Professional (CPP) – ASIS International, VA
Smith System Certified Defensive Driving Instructor – Smith Systems, TX
Certified Protective Vehicle & Motorcade Operations Instructor
Certified Surveillance Detection & High Risk Training Instructor
Certified Instructor – Federal Agency
Certified Emergency Vehicle Operator Course (EVOC) Instructor – Federal Agency