

Dragon[®] Law Enforcement

2019 Role of Technology in Law Enforcement Paperwork annual report

Key issues facing law enforcement professionals specific to incident reporting and other essential documentation tasks.



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Introduction

The strategy of adopting new technology in policing is not new. Recently, however, there is a growing shift among law enforcement agencies, both large and small, to address increasing documentation demands. Most recently, the City of Los Angeles endorsed a multi-million-dollar plan to reduce the time officers spend on administrative tasks such as paperwork through IT upgrades and new technology.

If not addressed, the burden of paperwork in law enforcement and inefficient reporting processes can have a negative impact. According to a survey deployed to more than 11,000 police chiefs across the country, an officer may spend more than 3 hours on reporting per shift. Also, mandates like NIBRS compliance create the need for greater detail and specificity in incident reporting, which also increases report time.

Heavy documentation demands create ripple effects across departments. They can limit community visibility, contribute to the inaccuracy and incompleteness of reports, contribute to officer burnout, or, worse, impact safety with officers remaining heads-down in the patrol vehicle to complete reports or enter data into CAD/RMS systems.

Key findings

Heavy documentation demands take officers away from mission-critical tasks

- 56% of law enforcement professionals say they spend three hours or more on reporting and other paperwork per shift
- Of these respondents, over 90% say the time spent on administrative work takes them out of the field and can diminish their visibility within the community

56% say they spend at least three hours or more on reporting per shift

Time spent on reporting is a drain on productivity and creates burnout

- Nearly 74% of respondents indicate that their reporting demands have increased over the past 12 months
- And writing and filing incident reports was considered the most significant drain on productivity, according to approximately 53% of survey respondents
- Officer morale is also a recurring theme within departments, with 81% of survey respondents who say cumbersome reporting creates officer burnout

81% say that heavy reporting demands creates officer burnout

Incident reporting and the negative impact on officer safety

- When it comes to safety concerns, 86% of officers responding to our survey say they are concerned that in-car documentation can impact their safety.
- And 71% say they are reporting in less than ideal situations, spending one hour or more in the patrol vehicle completing incident reports

86% say in-car documentation can impact their safety

56%

say they spend at least three hours or more on reporting per shift

81%

say that heavy reporting demands creates officer burnout

86%

say in-car documentation can impact their safety

Manual, disconnected reporting processes can impact the immediacy and quality of reports

- Timely and accurate filing of incident reports is also a concern, with 94% of respondents saying inaccurate reporting impacts report quality
- These respondents also say that they are concerned that inaccurate and incomplete incident reporting could result in their having to revisit reports within the chain of the judicial process
- When it comes to improving relationships with prosecutors and district attorneys' offices, it's not surprising that 55% agree that technology can help

94% say they are concerned with filing complete and timely reports

94%

say they are concerned with filing complete and timely reports

2019 survey implications

The **Role of Technology in Law Enforcement Paperwork Report** reaffirms what we hear most often: officers spend a significant portion of their workday completing incident reports and on other police paperwork, resulting in an inefficient, less productive, and safe documentation process.

These high reporting demands, while a necessary part of police work, are impeding several critical elements of law enforcement, with high stakes: report quality, community service, and officer safety, and even can create burnout. And with officers spending a significant amount of their time back at the station completing reports, the impact on community visibility and active police work cannot be minimized.

Documentation workflow platforms, such as CAD and RMS systems, although in extensive use, create their own set of challenges for law enforcement. They are designed to capture and organize information to comply with mandated documentation requirements. Respondents cite issues with interacting with these systems, from the time required to enter a record (likely due to "hunt and peck" keyboard entry), to the ergonomic constraints of manually typing a report while in the patrol vehicle. Nearly 65% of respondents say technology can help them improve data entry within these systems.

Finally, the potential for distractions created by technology-packed vehicles is nearly universally acknowledged by our survey respondents.

Officers want smarter, more automated solutions to help with incident reporting

Most respondents (98%) to our survey say they need to adopt new technologies to improve the quality of reporting, officer safety, and community visibility. Departments across the U.S. are beginning to push for new technologies such as speech recognition to help break down barriers, championing solutions that are both cost-effective and easy to integrate into existing administrative processes, such as incident reporting, and compatible with communication systems. Finally, these solutions help eliminate the tension between reporting efficiency (completing reports quickly and on-time) and report quality (ensuring reports are accurate and complete). As increasing numbers of departments become connected online to the DA's office and records requests from the public increase, the compressed window between report completion and report availability underscores the need for both efficiency and quality in police paperwork.

Methodology

The **Role of Technology in Law Enforcement Paperwork Report** is a national survey to Police Chiefs and their Command Staff, including Patrol Officers, Detectives, Commanders, Sergeants, Lieutenants, as well as those responsible for IT and Records Management (RMS) systems within the department.

The survey respondents include over 11,000 law enforcement professionals in our national database. They are current customers, interested parties we have met with from law enforcement trade shows and other industry events, or those who have responded to our marketing campaigns, such as webinars.

Survey questions were selected to solicit the role technology plays in completing incident reporting and other documentation in the day-to-day life of law enforcement professionals. The survey is issued via a leading commercial software platform.

98%

of respondents say they need to adopt new technologies to improve the quality of reporting, officer safety, and community visibility

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