

ANALYSIS

Item 15: Department of Public Safety Standards and Training Basic Police Course Pilot Program

Analyst: John Terpening

Request: Acknowledge receipt of a report on a safety plan and recruitment update for the 60-student Basic Police Course pilot program operated by the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training.

Analysis: The Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) has submitted a report pursuant to a budget note approved in SB 5533 (2023):

Basic Police Course Pilot Program: *The Department is directed to report back to the first meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Ways and Means with a detailed safety plan for the successful operation of the 60-student course and an update on recruitment and staffing for the necessary positions to safely operate the pilot. The Department is further directed to provide a status report on the implementation of the 60-student course pilot during the February 2024 session, with a final report on the pilot program at the first meeting of the Emergency Board after February 2024 session. The status report and the final report should include information on the number of students who completed the course, any safety incidents that occurred and corresponding agency actions, the impact of the pilot on the basic police course enrollment backlog, and an updated basic police course forecast.*

The pilot program includes three 60-student courses that are in addition to, and will run concurrently with, the 40-student Basic Police Courses that are already operating at DPSST, as well as other courses offered at the academy. These three courses would operate in November 2023, December 2023, and January 2024 and would follow the same 16-week timeframe of other basic police courses. With the addition of these three larger cohorts, assuming full capacity for each class, the Department would train 1,110 students over the 2023-25 biennium.

As outlined in the budget note above, this is the first of three planned reports related to the program and includes a safety plan for the pilot program. DPSST's current training curriculum includes strict safety protocols that are routinely reviewed by staff to assess risk, although some degree of risk is inherent in the nature of the training being provided. Higher-risk training activities, like the firearms range or the emergency vehicle operations track have more safety controls in place and few safety incidents. Training sessions that involve higher-intensity and physicality, like defensive tactics or use of force, tend to generate more injuries. Training staff maintain higher staff-to-student ratios, review safety rules prior to instruction, and have specific staff assigned to monitoring safety protocols during training.

DPSST reports that the key to safe operation, especially with increased enrollment, is maintaining proper student-to-instructor ratios. As of this report, 13 of the 17 new positions provided for training staff have been filled, with the remaining positions in recruitment. Each of these new instructors will have instructor development training, which includes emphasis on the Department's safety protocols and procedures. The Department is committed to maintaining, or increasing as needed, the instructor ratios based on enrollment and will subdivide classes into cohorts that match the training model for a specific training module. Most skills training venues are setup for cadres of 10 or 20 students. To accommodate the increased enrollment in a 60-student class, additional training sessions will be held to ensure proper

student-to-instructor ratios. As an example, for the firing range DPSST will reduce the 60-student class into cohorts of 30, which will be further reduced to include 15 students per firing range to maintain proper safety.

Finally, the Department intends to utilize a dedicated safety specialist position to audit the safety practices and update and revise safety protocols as needed and is working with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to finalize an agreement where OHA would provide medical direction for DPSST's agency operations.

Recommendation: The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends that the Joint Interim Committee on Ways and Means acknowledge receipt of the report.

Request: Report on safety protocols for new, larger classes of students and update on recruitment and staffing as required by budget note in Senate Bill 5533 (2023).

Recommendation: Acknowledge receipt of the report.

Discussion: The Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) submitted a report detailing the department's planned safety protocols for the larger basic law enforcement training courses funded in Senate Bill 5533 and will begin in 2024.

All law enforcement officers in Oregon are required to complete a basic law enforcement training course offered by DPSST within 90 days of hire and to be certified by DPSST within 18 months. However, following the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, including high turnover and retirement rates among law enforcement officers, DPSST has a backlog of new hires waiting for a space at the training academy.

Historically, DPSST's basic law enforcement training courses have a maximum of 40 students per class. To address the backlog, the department has increased the number of courses offered. Senate Bill 5533 provided funding for four additional courses above the Department's current service level budget (from 16 to 20) and provided funding for a pilot program that would test larger class sizes of 60 students. To alleviate concerns about the safety of larger courses, the Budget Note directed the department to present a plan for structuring student course work to maintain safe and appropriate student-teacher ratios and protocols.

The report notes that the department has hired additional instructors and staff necessary to maintain a low student-staff ratio, particularly during high-risk activities like firearms training. The additional staff will allow DPSST to divide the new, larger classes into smaller cohorts to ensure higher-risk trainings still occur with very low student-staff ratios, sometimes as low as 1:1.

DPSST has reviewed and standardized safety protocols and instituted a regular audit process to ensure the protocols are being followed; they have created a new safety specialist position for this purpose. The Department is also implementing an interagency agreement with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), under which OHA would provide DPSST with additional direction and review of all safety protocols and procedures.



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Public Safety Standards and Training

4190 Aumsville Hwy SE

Salem, OR 97317

503-378-2100

www.oregon.gov/dpsst

August 15, 2023

Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair
Representative Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
900 Court Street NE
H-178 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs:

Nature of the Request

The Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) respectfully requests to submit a safety plan for the successful operation of the 60-student pilot training program for the Basic Police Course and an update on recruitment and staffing for the necessary positions to safely operate the pilot training program.

Agency Action

Senate Bill 5533 included a budget note directing DPSST to return to the first meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Ways and Means with a detailed safety plan for the successful operation of the 60-student course and an update on recruitment and staffing for the necessary positions to safely operate the pilot. The Department is further directed to provide a status report on the implementation of the 60-student course pilot during the February 2024 session, with a final report on the pilot program at the first meeting of the Emergency Board after February 2024 session. The status report and the final report should include information on the number of students who completed the course, any safety incidents that occurred and corresponding agency actions, the impact of the pilot on the basic police course enrollment backlog, and an updated basic police course forecast.

The attached report details DPSST's safety plan for the pilot program. The report includes details about our current practices and the status of our training safety program; the adaption to current practices for increased enrollment; areas of immediate adaption; and the implementation process. The report also includes information on recruitment and staffing for filling of the positions necessary to run the 60-person course.

Action Requested

DPSST requests the Interim Joint Committee on Ways and Means accept the safety plan report for the pilot program.



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Legislation Affected

Senate Bill 5533 and House Bill 5029, 2023 Legislative Session. SB 5533 provided DPSST with a \$6,417,983 Other Funds expenditure limitation and nineteen permanent positions (19.00 FTE) to support the pilot program. HB 5029 provided the allocation from the Criminal Fine Account.

Sincerely,

Philip Castle
Agency Director
Department of Public Safety Standards and Training

Attachment A – DPSST Academy Training Safety Plan

Department of Public Safety Standards and Training

Academy Training Safety Plan

Current Status & Immediate Actions

August 2023

Scope

The Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) provides mandated basic training for nearly 1,000 students every year at the Oregon Public Safety Academy in Salem. Almost all academy students participate in high-risk training, which results in a relatively small number of injuries or safety incidents.

This report is intended to inform the legislature regarding DPSST's training safety plan for the successful operation of the 60-student course and provide an update on the recruitment and staffing of necessary positions to safely operate the pilot.

The guiding principles of DPSST are to provide high-quality training while ensuring the safety and well-being of students and staff.

Current Practices & Status

Safety procedures within the Academy are governed by three core fundamentals:

1. The nature of academy training will always involve some degree of risk.
2. Training venues are free of weapons and live ammunition unless required for training curriculum.
3. Training is conducted at a pace that facilitates learning while mitigating risk.

DPSST's solid safety record is a result of strict adherence to these fundamentals.

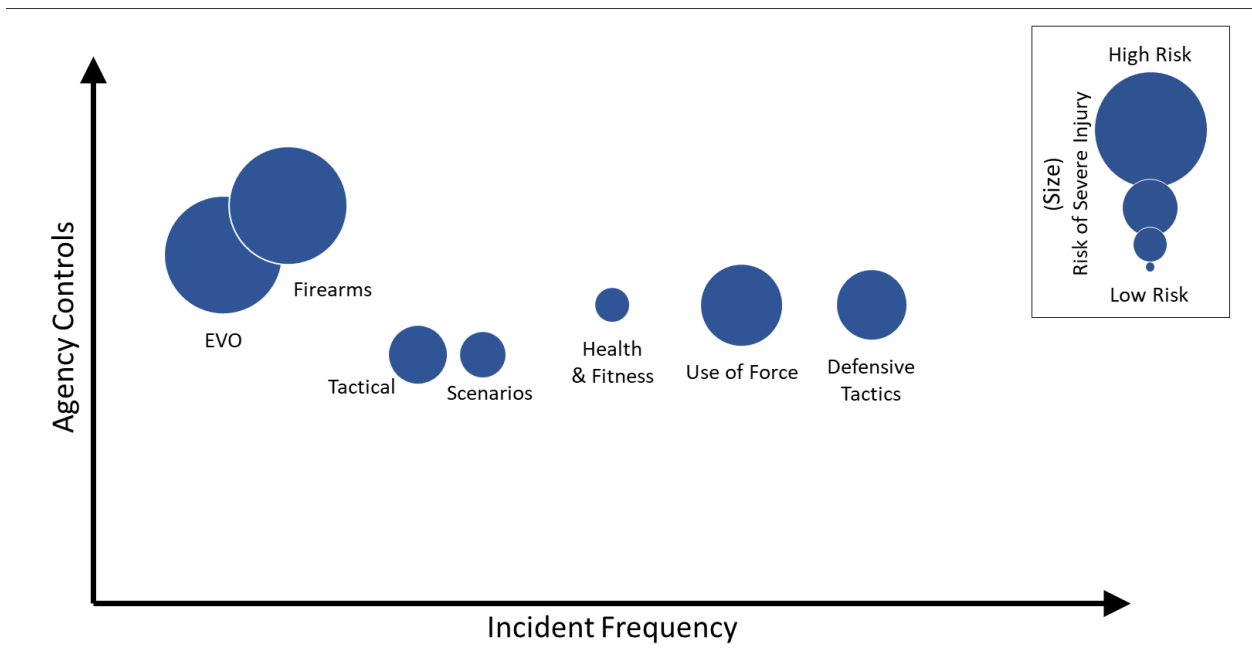
Safety is a shared responsibility between staff and students at DPSST. All training venues have processes in place to ensure anyone can pause training and call out an unsafe practice or situation. Training coordinators play an enhanced role in ensuring safety and have the authority to amend, adjust, or cancel training over safety concerns. Additionally, DPSST maintains one position with a primary focus specifically on the operation and updating of its safety protocols.

The agency's safety practices are codified in its Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs). These SOPs ensure that all high-risk training is conducted with appropriate personal protective equipment and under the observation of both instructional staff and authorized safety officers. The SOPs provide the main structure for DPSST's safety program and incident management and are attached as an addendum to this report.

In the event of an incident or injury, staff are expected to manage the initial scene and focus on accessing emergency responders to provide care.

DPSST training staff routinely review agency safety protocols and training curriculum to assess risk. The agency visualizes the risk of training on a matrix that considers both the inherent danger of a high-risk training topic and the relative frequency of a safety incident.

Figure 1: Training Risk and Mitigation



Using this view of training, staff can measure the three concepts against one another to manage risk. The Risk of Severe Injury measure is driven by the intrinsic hazards of some training topics. Academy courses in firearms use and emergency driving hold the most immediate risk of a serious or catastrophic injury. Incident Frequency measures the rate at which incidents occur despite control protocols. Relatively minor incidents occur frequently in Defensive Tactics and Use of Force programs. Agency Controls is a subjective measure of DPSST’s internal ability to contain both risk and frequency of incident.

Safety controls are typically effective at mitigating risk. Higher-risk training activities have more instituted controls in place than those with lower risk. Defensive Tactics instruction is a prime example of training in which increased controls can mitigate incident frequency. Staff develop individualized incident response plans for each training session, review safety rules with students before beginning instruction, and screen students for weapons, dangerous objects, and previously unreported injuries. Sessions that involve higher-intensity drilling are staffed at a higher ratio of staff to students, and with select staff tasked with the single role of monitoring safety. Some factors within

training are harder to control. Varying skill levels between students, inconsistencies in how students respond to high-intensity training, and the speed at which training transpires all contribute to instances in which safety controls falter and incidents or minor injuries occur. DPSST defines a minor injury as any occurrence that requires a student to pause training and receive non-emergency care, including something as minor as scratch requiring an adhesive bandage.

During the 2021-2023 biennium, DPSST saw approximately 24 incidents in which emergency medical services responded to campus to evaluate, care for, or transport a patient. Of these incidents, approximately 20 were directly related to an incident or injury that was training-related, while the remainder were incidents stemming from non-training activities.

DPSST has enjoyed a strong safety record since the establishment of the academy in 2006. Reviewing the data around instances of major injuries is the best measure of agency safety practices. Internal data shows a remarkably low number of major injuries, which DPSST defines as one that either requires a student to be evaluated by emergency medical services or restricted from training for more than a momentary removal. Agency safety protocols require evaluation by emergency medical services in all instances when a concussion is suspected. Despite most evaluations resulting in no recommended care, this precautionary protocol is responsible for nearly half of the agency's recorded major injuries. DPSST conducts frequent evaluations of training safety programs and protocols, and makes improvements based on operational analysis or evidence-based practices.

Adapting Current Practices for Increased Enrollment

Safe training procedures and practices require adequate staffing. DPSST maintains purposeful student-to-instructor ratios to provide high-quality, safe instruction, and the agency is committed to maintaining or selectively increasing instructor ratios to facilitate increased enrollment. The legislatively approved budget for the 2023-2025 biennium increased the number of training staff by 18 full-time employees. As of August 10, 2023, the agency has successfully hired 13 of these positions and is actively recruiting to fill the remaining positions. All DPSST instructors will participate in a dedicated instructor development course in early September prior to the start of the first 60-student course. A significant portion of the development course is dedicated to ensuring instructors' ability to operate and support DPSST's safety protocols and procedures.

In most cases, DPSST will maintain instructional ratios by sub-dividing classes into cohorts that match the current training model. In most skills-training venues, students attend training in cadres of 10 or 20 students. They often receive instruction in smaller groups, sometimes at a ratio of 1:1. DPSST will instruct classes of 60 students using the same model, and will hold additional training sessions to accommodate the increase in students.

The increase in enrollment will require more focused adaptations in venues including the Firearms Training Program, in which DPSST currently instruct classes of 40 in subgroups of 20 students. The agency developed this format based on the physical capacity of its ranges, and its curriculum has developed within this structure over the past 20 years. This model will likely not fit for classes of 60, however, so teaching this volume of students requires a more nuanced solution.

Under the provisional template for training 60 students, students will report to the range in subgroups of 30. Staff will then further subdivide these groups, assigning 15 students to a range, and will run two ranges simultaneously to continue matching set instructional ratios on each range. The increase in full-time instructors will allow similar adaptations throughout the training template and across all venues, allowing the agency to use staff more effectively while maintaining safety protocols and instructor-to-staff ratios.

Immediate Enhancements

DPSST recognizes that not all capacity challenges will be solved through adaptation of its current model. Staff have conducted a comprehensive review of training safety practices in preparation for increased enrollment and identified focus areas to mitigate these challenges, all of which will be addressed by November 2023.

These core areas are:

1. Internal auditing of safety practices
2. Updating and revising safety protocols
3. Enhancing internal capacity for incident management and response

Internal Auditing of Safety Practices

The first improvement is the implementation of standardized audits of training safety practices. All training staff share responsibility for operating safety protocols, and designated staff are responsible for ensuring the operation of these practices is consistent and effective. Training coordinators will conduct regular informal reviews of their respective safety practices and evaluate how their assigned staff are operating within these protocols.

The Safety Specialist assigned to academy training is responsible for conducting formal audits of training programs and their safety plans. These audits are to be conducted without prior notice and with an enhanced focus on high-risk training programs. The Safety Specialist will also be tasked with auditing outside entities' adherence to DPSST safety protocols as needed. Formal and informal audit

results are provided to training managers and consolidated for comprehensive review on a quarterly basis.

Updated Protocols

While current safety protocols are effective, they must be adaptable to ongoing structural changes within agency curriculum and training models. All protocols are being adapted to function within a staffing model that includes teams and resource sharing to allow the simultaneous operation of multiple training venues. While there will always been a need for protocols that are specific to a single venue, many protocols are being consolidated into universal safety or injury protocols. DPSST is currently engaged with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to finalize an interagency agreement in which OHA would provide DPSST with medical direction in all agency operations, including oversight of all safety protocols and procedures. This agreement is expected to be in place by October 2023, at which point OHA is prepared to conduct an immediate review of existing DPSST safety protocols and procedures.

Enhanced Internal Capacity

DPSST is exploring opportunities to strengthen its internal ability to manage and control incidents or injuries that occur on campus. The agency will adapt safety protocols to include the full spectrum from mitigating injuries before they happen to controlling incidents and managing response after an injury occurs.

Improvement Implementation Process

These improvements are set to be put into place as the agency simultaneously implements a significant revision to its training model. That challenge is noteworthy, and the success of DPSST's training model hinges on the agency's ability to operate safely. DPSST has established and will maintain an aggressive implementation timeline.

DPSST will have a revised and updated medical direction agreement in place with OHA by the end of October 2023. OHA has committed to meeting this timeline, and staff at DPSST have made the same commitment.

Revision to protocols will be a progressive process, one that is not intended to have a fixed endpoint. The core revisions are targeted for completion before the end of October 2023, with ongoing review to follow.

Recruitment for a full-time Safety Specialist 1 position will begin in August 2023, and that role is

anticipated to be functional by the end of September 2023.

Conclusion

The Department of Public Safety Standards and Training is confident in its ability to provide safe, high-quality training to 60-student classes under the Academy Training Safety Plan.

DPSST is grateful for the legislature's interest in the safety of its training operations, and for the opportunity to review safety practices presented by the directive to complete this, and subsequent, reports. DPSST has a strong safety record and is committed to the ongoing review of its protocols and practices as enrollment increases over the next year. DPSST will adhere to the commitments made in this report and will readily adapt to any direction received from the legislature.

References

1. SOP A2 – Universal Safety Procedures
2. SOP A3 – Universal Injury & Incident Response
3. SOP A7 – Medical Restrictions & Return to Training

4. SOP E1 – Skills Instructor Certification & Expectations
5. SOP E5 – Firearms Use & Operational Storage
6. SOP E7 – Skills Section Emergency Procedures
7. SOP E10 – Secure Training Area - Village
8. SOP E11 – Secure Training Area – D-Building
9. SOP E12 – Defensive Tactics Program Procedures
10. SOP E13 – EVO Program Procedures
11. SOP E14 – Firearms Program Procedures
12. SOP E15 – Health & Fitness Program Procedures
13. SOP E16 – Scenario Program Procedures
14. SOP E17 – Tactical Programs Procedures
15. SOP E18 – Use of Force Program Procedures
16. DPSST Agency Emergency Operations Plan