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Police Administrator Attitudes Toward the Concealed Handgun Law

In 1995, Texas Governor George W. Bush signed into law a bill which allows private citizens to carry concealed handguns on their persons for the first time since 1871. Historically, this privilege has been extended only to eligible peace officers who are both licensed by the state and commissioned by a law enforcement agency. As a result of this dramatic shift in state law, Texas is now among an increasing number of states in the nation which have similar statutory provisions.

Despite the growing popularity of concealed handgun laws nationwide, there appears to exist a fair degree of variation between the actions of state legislatures and the views of the general public regarding such laws. This variation becomes manifest upon close examination of the issue within the state of Texas. Interestingly, however, there exists only one large-scale empirical study of members of the general public on this important social issue. This study, conducted by the Office of Survey Research for the University of Texas at Austin in August of 1995, surveyed the attitudes of 1,001 adult Texas citizens by telephone. Surprisingly, the results of this study revealed that while many members of the general public reported support for the law (44%), a larger number actually reported *opposition* to it (55%) (Scott 1995).¹

As evidenced by the results of this study, there appears to exist a greater degree of opposition to the concealed handgun law among members of the general public than there exists support. In an attempt to assess the beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of law enforcement officers toward this important

issue, as well as to identify the future implications posed by the concealed handgun law for the profession, Thompson (1996) surveyed 327 commissioned police personnel from four Texas law enforcement agencies. The study yielded several interesting results, the most notable of which was the general finding that most peace officers in the sample did not view the law with the high degree of cynicism and fear that one might expect to occur. While this general conclusion and other more specific findings regarding law enforcement officers' attitudes are interesting, there remains the question of assessing the effects of the concealed handgun statute as it is perceived by law enforcement administrators. Based upon this paucity of information, this bulletin summarizes the beliefs, perceptions, attitudes and predictions of law enforcement administrators within the state of Texas regarding a variety of issues posed for the profession by the concealed handgun law.

Method

Data for this bulletin were gathered from 26 Texas law enforcement agencies representing various organizational sizes and missions. Where possible, the chief of police or sheriff was requested to complete the survey instrument in order to assess the views of the agency. Understandably, there occurred instances where it was not possible for the agency's top executive to fulfill this request. In the limited number of cases where this occurred, the instrument was completed by another agency administrator who, either by virtue of his/her position or professional experience, was qualified to do so. As a result of this limited occurrence, it must be noted that the results reported below are, in the most narrow sense, generalizable to only those agency administrators who completed the survey and not necessarily to all top law enforcement executives in the state.

1. The remaining 1 percent of respondents either failed to answer the question or were unsure whether they supported or opposed the law.

Instrument

The data-gathering instrument utilized was a variation of the Law Enforcement and Concealed Weapons Survey (LECWS) developed by the author for use in a previous study (Thompson 1996). The survey consisted of 20 questions which were divided into seven specific areas of inquiry. These areas of inquiry included: (1) perceived deterrent effects of concealed weapon ownership for various types of crime; (2) perceived adequacy of state-mandated licensing requirements; (3) perceived implications for officer safety; (4) expected changes in overall U.C.W. arrest rates; (5) reported personal involvement in political initiatives associated with the law; (6) reported effects of the law upon both policy and training initiatives within each respective agency; and (7) recommendations for future modifications to the law. The survey was administered in March of 1996, three months after the law went into effect.

Results

Perceived deterrent effects for various types of crime.

The first area of focus by the LECWS was deterrent effect. With regard to serious offenses such as carjackings, sexual assaults, burglaries, and armed robberies, 30.8 percent (8) of the administrators indicated the belief that concealed handgun ownership would have no deterrent effect whatsoever. Slightly less than two-thirds (65.4%; 17) reported the belief that concealed handgun ownership would have only a mild to moderate deterrent effect for these types of offenses. Only one administrator (3.8%) reported that concealed handgun ownership would have a large deterrent effect for such offenses. With regard to non-serious crimes, this trend continues with slightly greater than one-fourth (26.9%; 7) of the administrators reporting the belief that concealed handgun ownership would have no deterrent effect whatsoever for crimes such as misdemeanor theft, simple assault, and criminal mischief. For this same item, the largest percentage of administrators (69.2%; 18) again reported the belief that concealed handgun ownership would have only a mild to moderate deterrent effect for these types of offenses. Again, only one administrator (3.8%) reported that the law would have a large deterrent effect for non-serious crimes. These results are presented in Table 1.

When asked whether concealed handgun ownership would serve to increase or decrease citizens' overall fear of crime, one-half of the administrators (50%; 13) reported the expectation that such concerns will not change at all. The second largest percentage (42.3%; 11) reported that citizens' overall fear of crime will likely decrease only slightly as a result of the new law. Interestingly, 7.7 percent (2) of the administrators reported the belief that citizens' overall fear of crime

Table 1

Perceived Deterrent Effects of Concealed Handgun Ownership for Serious and Non-serious Crimes

	Serious Crimes	Non-serious Crimes
Large deterrent effect	3.8% (1)	3.8% (1)
Moderate deterrent effect	19.2% (5)	15.4% (4)
Mild deterrent effect	46.2%(12)	53.8%(14)
No deterrent effect	30.8% (8)	26.9% (7)

***Due to rounding error, some percentages reported may not total 100 percent.**

would increase slightly, while there were no administrators who reported the expectation that it would either increase or decrease dramatically. These results are presented in Figure 1.

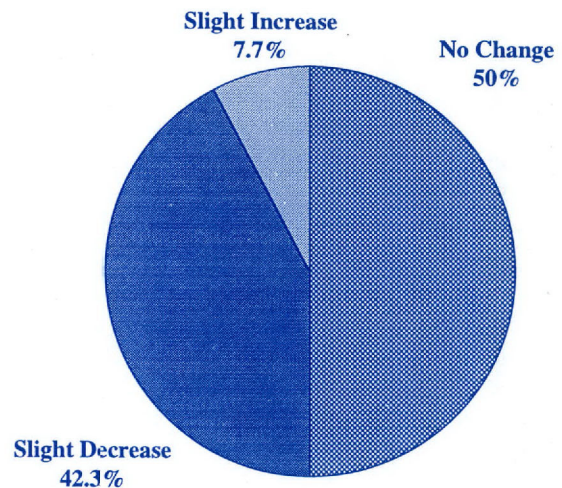


Figure 1. Perceived Effects of Concealed Handgun Ownership Upon Citizens' Fear of Being Criminally Victimized

Perceived adequacy of state-mandated licensing requirements. The second area of focus was state-mandated training and licensing requirements. With specific regard to the issue of training, administrators were asked two questions. The first question dealt with the adequacy of the required amount of training for purposes of teaching citizens how to legally use their firearms as deadly force. Not surprisingly, the clear majority of administrators (80.8%; 21) indicated that the state-mandated training requirements are inadequate for such purposes. The second related item asked administrators if they believed the required amount of training was adequate for purposes of teaching citizens how to safely handle a firearm. Again, the majority of administrators (61.5%; 16) indicated that the state-mandated training requirements are inadequate for this purpose. These results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Perceived Adequacy of State-mandated Training Requirements

	Training Adequate for Teaching Legal Use of Deadly Force?	Training Adequate for Teaching Firearms Safety?
Yes	19.2% (5)	38.5% (10)
No	80.8% (21)	61.5% (16)

The remaining three items in this section assessed administrators' perceptions regarding the difficulty associated with the ability of certain types of individuals to fraudulently obtain a concealed handgun license in violation of established guidelines. The first of these three items asked administrators how difficult they believed it would be for a convicted criminal to fraudulently obtain a license. In response, greater than three-fourths (77%; 20) of the administrators reported that it would be moderately to very difficult for such an individual to do so, while just less than one-fourth (23%; 6) reported that it would be only slightly difficult. The second of the three items asked administrators the same question as it pertained to mentally unstable individuals. Administrators were clearly less confident in the adequacy of the licensing requirements as evidenced by the fact that 80.8 percent (21) reported that there would be no difficulty at all or only slight difficulty associated with a mentally unstable person fraudulently obtaining a license. Only 19.2 percent (5) of the administrators reported that it would be moderately to very difficult for such an individual to do so. The third and final item asked administrators the same question as it pertained to drug abusers. Again, the overwhelming majority of administrators expressed a diminished level of confidence in the licensing requirements. Specifically, 84.6 percent (22)

reported that it would not be difficult at all or only slightly difficult for a drug abuser to fraudulently obtain a license. In contrast, only 15.3 percent (4) of the administrators reported that it would be moderately to very difficult for such an individual to do so. These results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Perceived Difficulty Associated with Ability to Fraudulently Obtain a Concealed Handgun License

	Convicted Criminal	Mentally Unstable Person	Drug Abuser
Very difficult	30.8% (8)	7.7% (2)	3.8% (1)
Moderately difficult	46.2% (12)	11.5% (3)	11.5% (3)
Slightly difficult	23.0% (6)	15.4% (4)	7.7% (2)
No difficulty	0.0% (0)	65.4% (17)	76.9% (20)

Perceived implications for officer safety. The third area of focus was the concealed handgun law's effect on officers' personal safety. The first item in this section asked administrators how strongly they believed that law enforcement officers should be the only individuals in the state allowed to legally carry concealed handguns on their persons. One-half (50%; 13) of the administrators agreed with this proposition on a continuum of somewhat strongly to very strongly. Perhaps even more interesting, however, was the finding that the remaining one-half reported that it did not matter one way or the other. These results are presented in Figure 2.

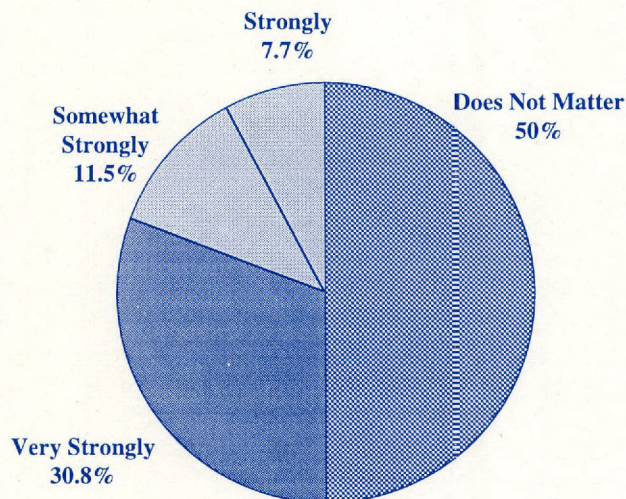


Figure 2. Agreement that Only Law Enforcement Officers Should be Allowed to Carry Concealed Handguns



Administrators were also asked to predict the effects of the concealed handgun law upon the number of Texas peace officers who are feloniously shot and/or killed on an annual basis. Slightly greater than three-fourths of the administrators (80.8%; 21) predicted that the law would have no effect on this number. Only 15.4 percent (4) reported the expectation that the law would cause the number of officers shot and/or killed annually to increase slightly, while one (3.8%) administrator predicted that the law would serve to slightly decrease this number. These results are presented in Figure 3.

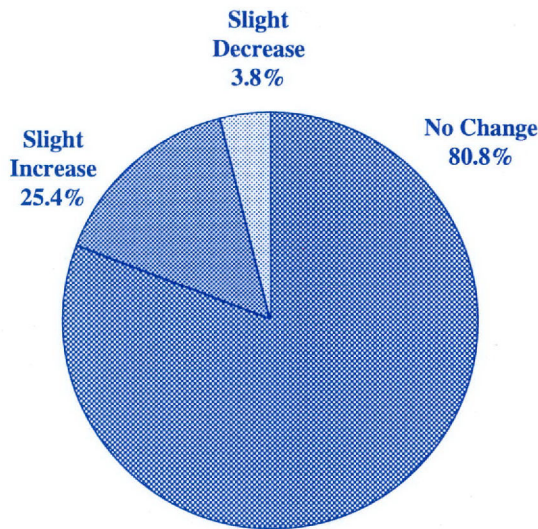


Figure 3. Predicted Changes in Number of Law Enforcement Officers Feloniously Shot and/or Killed Due to Concealed Handgun Law

In a related sense, two questions were included to assess the anticipated effects of the law upon their officers' on-duty safety tactics. A smaller percentage (38.4%; 10) indicated the belief that the law will have no effect to only a slight effect on such behavior. Only 11.5 percent (3) of the administrators expect the law to pose a dramatic effect for their officers' on-duty safety tactics. Less concern was reported by administrators regarding effects of the law for officer safety tactics while off-duty. In this regard, roughly one-third (34.6%; 9) of the administrators indicated the belief that the law would have a moderate effect on officers' off-duty safety tactics. Slightly greater than one-half of the administrators (53.8%; 14) reported the expectation that the law will have either no effect or only a slight effect upon such behavior. Again, only 11.5 percent (3) of the administrators indicated a belief that the law would pose dramatic effects for officers' off-duty safety tactics. These results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Anticipated Effect upon Officers' Safety Tactics

	On-duty Safety	Off-duty Safety
Dramatic effect	11.5% (3)	11.5% (3)
Moderate effect	50.0% (13)	34.6% (9)
Slight effect	26.9% (7)	26.9% (7)
No effect	11.5% (3)	26.9% (7)

The final item in this section asked administrators to predict the effect of the law upon the level of danger which is present in the job of a law enforcement officer. Only one (3.8%) administrator reported the expectation that the law will make the job of a police officer dramatically more dangerous. A larger percentage (42.3%; 11) predicted that the law will make the job slightly more dangerous. A clear majority of administrators (50%; 13), however, predicted that the law will have no effect whatsoever upon the level of danger which is present in the job of a law enforcement officer. The remaining one (3.8%) administrator predicted that the law will make the job slightly less dangerous. These results are presented in Figure 4.

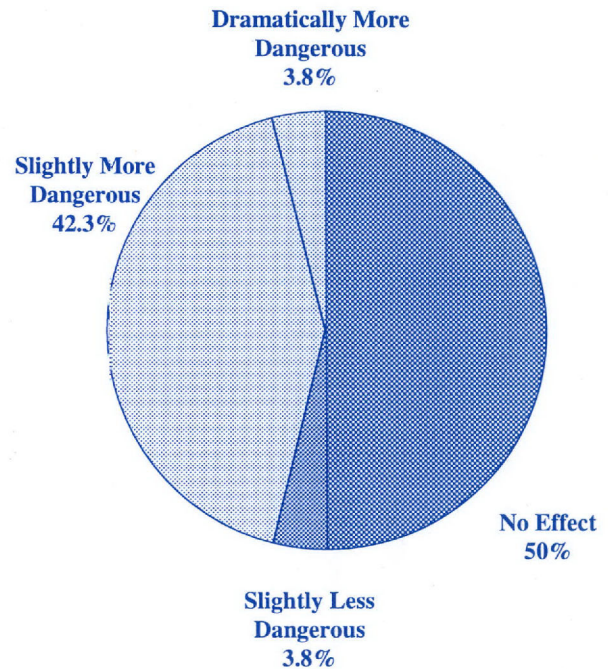


Figure 4. Predicted Changes in Danger Level Associated with Law Enforcement Officers

Expected changes in overall U.C.W. arrest rates. The fourth area of focus was the perceived effect upon arrest rates for U.C.W. (Unlawful Carrying of a Weapon) offenses. Analysis of the results reveals that the majority of administrators do not expect any changes in this number. Specifically, 50 percent (13) expect no change whatsoever, while the second largest percentage of administrators (26.9%; 7) expect arrest rates to increase slightly. Of those remaining, 11.5 percent (3) expect overall U.C.W. arrest rates to decrease slightly, and an even smaller percentage (7.7%; 2) expect them to increase dramatically. These results are presented in Figure 5.

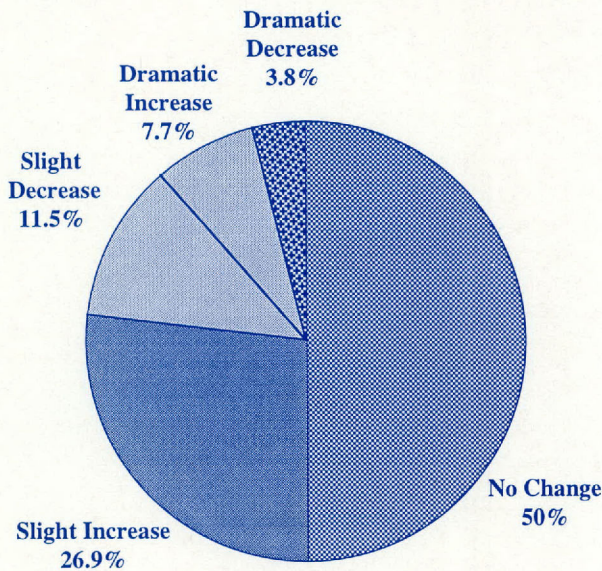


Figure 5. Predicted Overall Arrest Rate Changes for U.C.W. Offenses

Reported personal involvement in political initiatives. The fifth area of focus was agency administrator engagement in political efforts to support/oppose the law. The item designed for this purpose asked administrators whether they actively participated in efforts which supported the law, actively participated in efforts which opposed the law, or did not participate in any lobbying efforts whatsoever. The largest percentage of administrators (53.8%; 14) reported that they did not engage whatsoever in any lobbying efforts related to the law. Only 11.5 percent of the administrators (3) reported that they actively participated in efforts which supported the law, while the remaining 26.9 percent (7) reported actively participating in efforts which opposed the law. These results are presented in Figure 6.

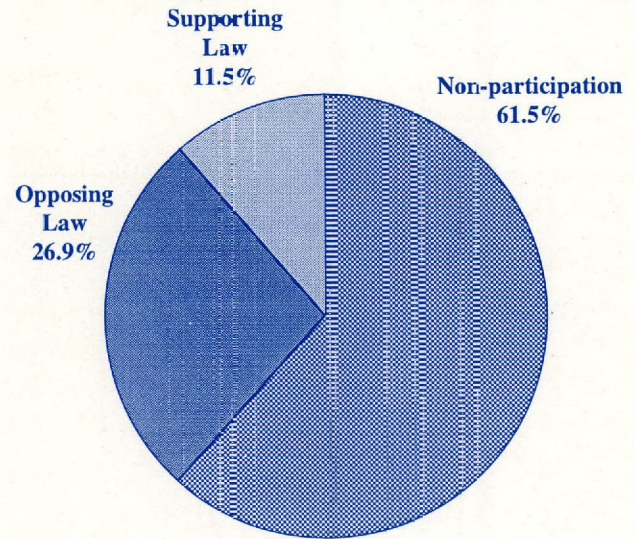


Figure 6. Extent of Lobbying Efforts

Policy and training responses to the law. The sixth area of focus was the effect of the concealed handgun law on law enforcement policies and training practices. In this regard, administrators were asked four questions—two related to policy responses and two related to training responses. The first question sought to determine the extent to which agencies had adopted official positions in the form of written policies to guide enforcement of the law within their respective jurisdictions. Analysis of responses to this item indicated that slightly greater than one-half (53.8%; 14) of the agencies had officially adopted such a position in the form of written policy. Agencies were asked to provide copies of such policies. A content analysis of the written policy statements revealed two noticeable trends. First was the frequent presence of a statement within the policy clearly indicating the intent of the agency to avoid unnecessary hindrance of persons who are legally licensed by the state to carry a concealed weapon. Second was the frequent presence of a statement which encouraged officers to exercise reasonable judgment in determining whether or not an offense, such as failure to conceal the weapon, has occurred. With respect to these two issues, the policy directive adopted by the Richardson Police Department serves as a general example (see Table 5).

The second policy-related question sought to determine the number of agencies that had adopted policies aimed at guiding officer behavior in responding to situations where a private citizen is thought or determined to be legally armed

**Table 5****Policy Directive Stating Enforcement Policy and Encouraged Use of Discretion**

Richardson Police Department General Order 1.00.37-95, Section II

It is the policy of this Department that persons licensed to carry a concealed handgun under Texas law will not be unnecessarily hindered in the exercise of that privilege. At the same time, Officers will continue to be vigilant toward threats to their safety and to the safety of the public during contacts with persons who are found to be armed and who may or may not be committing a criminal offense. Officers encountering License Holders carrying a concealed handgun under circumstances that are grounds for suspension or revocation of a Concealed Handgun License will properly document such circumstances for reporting to the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Richardson Police Department General Order 1.00.37-95, Section III C. In the event that officers are called in regards to a person with a handgun and during the call it is determined that the person is a License Holder, an evaluation of the circumstances will be conducted and a decision made as to whether the actions of the License Holder constitutes a violation of the requirement to conceal the handgun.

- a. Enforcement action will not be taken if it is the decision of the Officer that the License Holder did not intentionally fail to conceal the handgun. Examples of unintended display include:
 - (1) The License Holder's jacket or coat falling open and exposing the handgun;
 - (2) The handgun accidentally falling out of a holster; or
 - (3) The placing of the handgun in the trunk of a vehicle to secure it while the License Holder goes into a premise where carrying a handgun is prohibited.

with a concealed handgun. Analysis revealed that 76 percent (19) of the agencies which responded to this item had adopted such official measures, while 24 percent (6) had not. Those agencies which had adopted such measures were asked to provide either a brief description or copy of their policy. A content analysis of the 12 policy or training statements provided revealed three general approaches to this issue. These approaches include policy directives or training bulletins which either: (1) suggest that an officer "should" ask persons whom they encounter in an enforcement capacity if they are in possession of a concealed weapon and, if so, request that they surrender their license for verification; (2) state that the officer "will" or "shall" ask all persons whom they come into official contact with if they are carrying a concealed handgun, even in the absence of a clear indication that such may be the case; or, (3) state that

officers "shall not" ask or "should refrain from" asking persons whom they come into contact with if they are in possession of a concealed handgun. While these three types of policies generally pertain to traffic stops and investigation of minor offenses, it is important to note that a majority of agencies do not require an officer to determine a person's legal status as a license holder prior to disarming him or her in situations that the officer reasonably believes to be suspicious or potentially volatile in nature. The only policy requirement which is generally set forth by agencies in such situations is that the officer exercise due care and responsible handgun safety when disarming a person. Examples of the three types of policy provisions or training bulletins adopted by agencies for purposes of guiding officer behavior during encounters with potentially armed private citizens are provided (see Tables 6, 7, and 8).

Table 6

Policy Provisions Which Suggest that Officers “Should” Ask Whether or Not a Private Citizen Is Legally Armed with a Concealed Weapon

Abilene Police Department—Concealed Handgun Policy and Procedures,
Section III B, Subsection 3

During traffic stops, contacts with suspicious persons, or calls involving a suspect in an offense, officers asking for identification *should* ask if the person has a Concealed Handgun License. Anyone who says they have a CHL *should* be asked to produce the license (*emphasis added*).

Midland Police Department—Concealed Handgun License Permits, Chapter 3,
Section 20, Subsection III-A

When contacting an individual on a traffic contact, the officer *should* ask for the driver’s license, proof of insurance, and Concealed Handgun License (*emphasis added*).

Given that officers are justified in temporarily seizing the weapon of a private citizen in order to protect themselves or others from harm, the question arises as to how to best return the weapon to its owner once the officer has determined that the person no longer poses a threat. A review of the policies provided yielded a variety of responses to this question (see Table 9).

The first of the two questions related to training responses queried administrators as to whether or not their respective agencies had adopted any new programs aimed at instructing officers in dealing with potentially armed private citizens. Interestingly, only 52 percent (13) of the agencies which responded to this item reported having adopted any new training measures for their officers as compared to the 72 percent noted above which had adopted official policy measures aimed at guiding officer behavior. Those administrators who reported that their agency had adopted a training program designed to instruct officers in dealing with potentially armed private citizens were requested to provide a brief description of the nature and content of that endeavor. Responses revealed that seven (54%) agencies relied largely upon the standardized training video provided by the Texas

Department of Public Safety. The remaining six (46%) agencies had adopted their own training curricula that tended to focus primarily upon issues of officer and licensee safety. Virtually every agency that had undertaken some form of training for officers in dealing with potentially armed citizens also stressed as part of such programs their own policies and procedures for the necessary seizure, handling, and return of private handguns in a variety of enforcement contexts.

The second item related to training asked administrators whether or not their respective agencies had conducted any training aimed at instructing officers about various requirements of the law, such as those regarding license eligibility and enforcement standards. Analysis revealed that 76 percent (19) of the agencies responding to this item had engaged in such efforts. Those agencies which had provided such training for their officers were requested to provide a brief explanation of the nature and content of this endeavor. Again, a majority relied largely upon the instructional D.P.S. video, supplemented by a review of the offenses included under the statute and the procedures required for their reporting.



Table 7

Policy Provisions Which State that Officers “Shall” or “Will” Ask Whether or Not a Citizen is Legally Armed with a Concealed Weapon

Deer Park Police Department—Contact with Concealed Weapon License Holder,
General Order #96-1, Section I

When an officer contacts an individual in an enforcement capacity, the officer will ask **“DO YOU POSSESS A CONCEALED HANDGUN LICENSE?”** (*emphasis original*).

North Richland Hills Police Department—Section 345.04, Subsection C

During a traffic stop, contact with a suspicious person and calls involving a suspect in an offense, Officers asking for identification *will* ask if the person has a Concealed Handgun License. Anyone who says they have a Concealed Handgun License will be asked for their CHL (*emphasis added*).

Plano Police Department—Administrative Directive 112.008, Section IV, Subsection B-2

During traffic stops, contacts with suspicious persons, and contacts with criminal suspects in which officers lawfully request identification of the person(s) involved; the officer(s) *shall* ask if the person has a Concealed Handgun License. If possession of a License is indicated, the person *shall* be asked to present the license (*emphasis added*).

Richardson Police Department—General Order 1.00.37-95, Section III, Subsection B-3

During a traffic stop, contact with a suspicious person and calls involving a suspect in an offense, Officers asking for identification *will* ask if the person has a Concealed Handgun License. Anyone who says they have a Concealed Handgun License *will* be asked for their CHL (*emphasis added*).

Table 8

Policy Provisions Which State that Officers “Shall Not” or “Should Refrain” from Asking Whether or Not a Citizen Is Legally Armed with a Concealed Weapon

Cleburne Police Department—Training Bulletin

Officers *should refrain* from asking all persons they come in contact with whether they have a handgun or whether they are a license holder (*emphasis added*).

Odessa Police Department—Special Order 95-014, Section I-A

Sworn Personnel of the Odessa Police Department *shall not*, as a matter of routine during traffic stops, inquire as to whether or not any occupant(s) of the vehicle are in possession of a concealed handgun and/or permit to carry same (*emphasis added*).

Table 9

Policy Provisions for the Safe Return of a Weapon to a Citizen

Carrollton Police Department—Chapter 6, section 31.008, Subsections A & B

- A. When officers prepare to return a handgun to a disarmed license holder, officers need to ensure that the handgun is returned in such a manner as to minimize a real or perceived threat of harm to any individual.
- B. Some options officers may consider for returning the handgun include, but are not limited to:
1. Placing the handgun in the trunk or back floorboard of a vehicle out of the immediate control of the license holder until the officer has left the scene;
 2. Placing the handgun in the saddlebags of a motorcycle or in the tool box in the back of a pickup truck out of the immediate control of the license holder until the officer has left the scene, and;
 3. If a vehicle is not involved in the incident, unloading the handgun, separating ammunition from the weapon and informing the license holder not to load the weapon in the officer's presence.
- Due to the greater possibility of accidental discharge this method should only be used when absolutely necessary. Officers will be held strictly accountable for any accidental discharge as they are with the handling of any weapon under any circumstance (emphasis original).**

College Station Police Department—Chapter 29, Paragraph 15, Subsection b4

When an officer prepares to return a weapon to a CHL holder after disarming that person, the officer should unload the weapon, and return the weapon and the ammunition or magazine separately to the CHL holder with instructions not to reload until after leaving the scene of contact. If unloading the weapon is not feasible, an officer may use other reasonable means to separate the CHL holder from his weapon.

Plano Police Department—Administrative Directive 112.008, Section IV H, Subsections 4e & 5

- 4e The handgun will be placed in heavy plastic bags provided by the Department for that purpose and secured in the trunk of the License Holder's car, the officer's vehicle, or any place that allows for disarming the License Holder while physically safeguarding the License Holder's property from being handled by a third party.
5. If the officer determines during the contact that the License Holder is not a threat to the Officer, themselves, or other individuals, then the Officer shall return the handgun to the License Holder before discharging them from the scene. It will be the Officer's responsibility to tell the License Holder that they are free to go before returning the handgun. The following guidelines should be followed:
- a. The handgun will be returned while sealed in the plastic bags.
 - b. If plastic bags were not available when the License Holder was disarmed, the Officer may obtain them from the vehicle and seal the handgun in the bags before returning it to the License Holder.
 - c. When returning the handgun to the License Holder, the Officer can ask the License Holder to not open the bag until the License Holder has left the scene. However, the failure to comply with the request does not, standing alone, constitute an offense.
 - d. All instructions given will be done so in a courteous manner emphasizing the issue of safety.

Recommendations for future modifications to the law.

The seventh and final area of focus sought to elicit recommendations from administrators regarding the need for future modifications to the concealed handgun law. A content analysis of the narrative responses provided by 16 (60.8%) of the administrators revealed that the greatest degree of concern centers primarily upon two distinct issues: (1) increased training requirements and (2) efforts aimed at clarification in statutory language. Greater than one-half (56%; 9) of the administrators indicated that the statute should be modified to include an increased amount of training and suitability screening for license applicants. More specifically, it was suggested that license applicants be required to undergo a greater number of hours in firearms proficiency instruction. In addition, a number of administrators suggested that license applicants be more closely screened for drug and mental health problems through the use of accepted medical and psychological testing procedures. Beyond these initial concerns, four (25%) administrators also suggested that the statutory language is in need of greater clarification. For example, a number of respondents expressed concern over the operational ambiguity which apparently exists between the concealed handgun law and several other statutory provisions (e.g., the Alcoholic Beverage Code), although no specific examples of this contradiction were provided. In a more concrete sense, it was noted by at least one respondent that future modifications to the law should limit the ability of city and county governments to establish local ordinances regulating concealed handgun possession within their respective jurisdictions. The enactment of such jurisdiction-specific ordinances, it is argued, inevitably leads to confusion among licensees who travel between the various locales. From an extreme perspective, two (13%) of the remaining 16 administrators suggested that the law be repealed in its entirety. Interestingly, one (6%) administrator indicated that it was too early to make any substantive comments regarding the need for future changes to the law. The same conclusion, it is presumed, may be drawn from the nine (36%) administrators who did not provide a response to this particular item.

Conclusion

Law enforcement administrators express a number and variety of strong, directional perceptions regarding the implications posed by the concealed handgun statute. Because of this broad range of implications, it is important that effects of the law be vigilantly monitored. This study, which has been primarily aimed at identifying areas of present and future concern, has hopefully provided insight into current issues.

References

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- Thompson, R. A. (1996). Perceived Effects of Concealed Handgun Ownership by Private Citizens Among Law Enforcement Officers in Texas. Unpublished Manuscript, Sam Houston State University, College of Criminal Justice, Huntsville, Texas.

Thank you to the following agencies for participating in this month's bulletin.

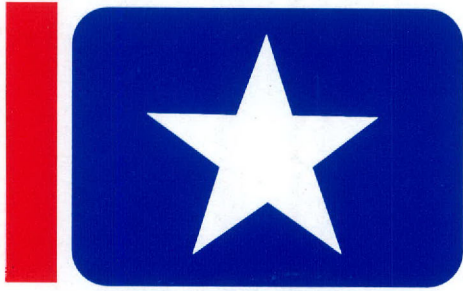
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Parole Violator Warrant Update

In February 1995, the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas and the Correctional Management Institute of Texas co-hosted a conference between law enforcement, county corrections and parole officials on the role of law enforcement in the apprehension of parole violators. The results of this meeting were published in the March, 1995, issue of *TELEMASP*. The conference identified five significant issues affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of law enforcement's role in the apprehension of parole violators. A common theme of these issues is the necessity for improved communication between law enforcement agencies and parole officials.

In April 1996, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) implemented an on-line system to provide information on parolees to law enforcement officials. This system, called FUGINET, includes information on a parolee's prison record, last known residence, employment, known associates and the most recent photograph available to TDCJ. Currently, FUGINET includes information on approximately 3,000 violent offender parolees. By September 1996, the system should include 13,000 offenders. Ultimately, FUGINET will include all 80,000 parolees under supervision. The database can be searched by multiple criteria including the parolee's physical description. According to officials with the TDCJ, the system will help law enforcement officials by expediting the identification of parole absconders and parolees arrested for new offenses. Currently, FUGINET is only available in the Dallas and Houston areas. However, it will soon be available statewide through a dial-up modem. Any agency interested in accessing the system should call Mr. Bob Guard at the TDCJ Internal Affairs Division at 409-294-6710. FUGINET was funded through a \$227,000 grant from the Governor's Criminal Justice Division and through contributions from MCI and the Productivity Center consulting firm.



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This bulletin was prepared by R. Alan Thompson. Mr. Thompson, a doctoral degree candidate at SHSU, conducted the first empirical study of Texas law enforcement officers' perceptions regarding the concealed handgun statute and its resulting implications for the profession. He is a commissioned Texas peace officer whose interests also include legal impacts of law enforcement policies and practices, as well as trends in law enforcement training and professionalization.



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