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Two Types of Danger

PIERCE COUNTY SHERIFF PAUL PASTOR

There are two types of danger which attend law enforcement / first responder service.

The first is physical danger. Law enforcement officers, corrections officers, firefighters and paramedics face risks of injury and death in doing their jobs. Traffic accidents, building collapse, chemical exposure and other physical dangers attend emergency responses and efforts to protect lives and property.

For law enforcement and corrections officers, there is also the physical danger of attack: the danger of criminals intentionally seeking to harm or kill officers. Occasionally, as happened in Texas recently, criminals will even seek to harm firefighters and paramedics.

All of these things can impact our sense of safety and security for ourselves and our families.

But there is also another type of danger which accompanies the work of first responders. It is the exposure to the sadness and pain and loss which we experience on a regular basis. We witness and we personally deal with the worst things that can happen to human beings and the worst things that people can do to one another.

This is not a variety of direct physical danger. But it is still a danger. Emotional and even a spiritual risk attends witnessing and dealing with the whole gamut of suffering and loss we see while working in our communities.

There are ways in which this danger is even more insidious than being at risk ourselves. This exposure - - - this direct involvement with damage and suffering of others - - - can eat into your psyche and your soul.

It can erode our sense of who we are; our sense of the value of what we do; our sense of, commitment and compassion. It can cause us to forget why we undertook to do this work and why we should regard it as a calling.

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Recently, over the last four weeks, America saw nine law enforcement officers and one corrections officer murdered in the line of duty. These officers were not the victims of an accident or an inadvertent injury. They were the victims of intentional deadly attacks.

During the same time period locally, we lost two of our brother law enforcement officers who took their own lives.

Physical danger. And emotional danger. We need to appreciate and attend to both types of danger. We need to confront the costs of these dangers and we need to find the resources to reduce the threats they pose.

Because both types of danger confront those who stand up for us and put themselves at risk for us and for our families.