

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



What a difference a year makes. As I write this, I am thinking back to this same time last year, when I wrote a very different message. Then, I was still hopeful that we would have our conferences, in person, in Kansas City and Phoenix.

Instead, both were adapted to virtual conferences. What's more, all in-person training came to a complete halt for over two and a half months. The impact of the pandemic on our daily lives, both personally and professionally, was once unimaginable. Our lives changed overnight and we were forced to live with uncertainty. Despite all of that, we learned a great deal. The adversity required us to adapt, improvise and overcome, and today we are a better association. Gunny Hightower would be proud!

A year later, we are finally starting to see some light at the end of the tunnel. More and more restrictions are slowly being lifted, and people are beginning to go about their daily lives with less fear. Yet despite this return to "normal," I think it is clear that law enforcement has forever changed as a result of several high-profile national events that coincided with the pandemic. The many criminal justice reform bills that have passed and/or are being considered will require us to re-evaluate how we manage critical incidents safely and effectively. This will be a daunting challenge and will demand our best efforts to ensure we are capable of accomplishing our mission. We will need to rededicate ourselves to training appropriately to adopt these new tactics and techniques. It will be imperative that we identify, test and evaluate new technology to fill gaps in our capabilities because of these new reforms. Emerging virtual reality (VR) technology will go a long way

toward accelerating the learning curve and improving our service delivery. I have no doubt that our future success will be directly tied to our training efforts.

Here at the NTOA we have been fortunate that phones are ringing off the hook and our staff is busy scheduling in-person courses around the country. I am very excited to report that we are equally busy filling virtual classes. This capability has allowed us to offer our first-class training to many who were unable to attend in person. We continue to evaluate new and existing classes to add to our virtual curriculum to meet the growing demand. Please feel free to share your ideas and suggestions on topics that you believe would be helpful to you and your agency.

We are excited to return to an in-person conference Sept. 12-17, 2021, with our annual Law Enforcement Operations Conference and Trade Show in Kansas City, Missouri. This event will offer more than 100 seminars and incident debriefs on a variety of topics focusing on leadership, decision-making, tactics, negotiations and EMS. I am very pleased with the courses we have lined up and look forward to seeing you all there!

While 2020 was a challenging year, the NTOA is strong and resilient. I believe that we demonstrated our strength and adaptability by hosting both of our annual conferences virtually, introducing online training courses, and delivering live and on-demand training through our exclusive TacTalks webinar series.

In these uncertain times, please know that the NTOA is committed to continuing to build upon our efforts to provide the vital training needed for our profession.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thor Eells". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Thor Eells
Executive Director