

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



As the NTOA Tactical Response and Operations Standards (TROS) committees finalize their work, I thought it would be a good idea to explain the background behind trade associations and the authority they have in establishing industry standards.

Trade associations are organizations created by individuals or groups who share a common interest in a particular trade, industry or profession. These associations were created to protect and promote the interests of their members and their industry. The law enforcement profession has numerous trade associations representing most sub-specialties, at both the state and national levels. The NTOA is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year and was created as an association dedicated to professionalizing the then-new trade within law enforcement of Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT).

Trade associations typically have a specific focus, such as advocating for better working conditions, promoting industry standards, or providing training and certification programs for members. They may also provide networking opportunities, sponsor events and conferences, and lobby government officials to advance the interests of their members. The NTOA actively engages in all these efforts, with one notable exception. The NTOA does not lobby in any manner, as we are prohibited by law from doing so as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity.

The origins of trade associations can be traced back to medieval guilds, which were associations of craftspeople who worked in a particular trade or industry. These guilds set standards for the quality of workmanship, regulated apprenticeships and provided mutual support for their members.

In the United States, trade associations began to emerge in the 19th century as industries such as manufacturing, transportation and agriculture grew and became more complex. These associations played a critical role in organizing and representing the interests of their members in the face of changing economic conditions and government regulations.

Trade associations have had significant impact on their professions. By providing a platform for members to come together and advocate for their interests, trade associations have helped shape industry standards and regulations, promoted innovation and best practices, and provided a sense of community and mutual support for professionals in a given field.

Trade associations such as the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American Bar Association (ABA) have played a significant role in setting standards for education and training in their respective professions.

In the medical profession, the AMA has established guidelines for medical education and training. The association accredits medical schools, residency programs and continuing medical education providers. The AMA also publishes educational resources for physicians, including journals, textbooks and online learning modules. It also works with other organizations to ensure that medical education and training programs meet established standards for quality and excellence.

Similarly, in the legal profession, the ABA has played a critical role in setting standards for legal education and professional development. The ABA has established guidelines for law school accreditation and provides resources and support for continuing legal education and professional development for lawyers.

Unfortunately, the law enforcement profession has not been as successful in using our respective associations to create uniformity and set standards. With over 21,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States, that is somewhat understandable. However, this fragmentation of agencies, policies and procedures creates its own challenges. Arguably the most damaging is the public's perception that all law enforcement agencies perform the same and have the same standards. All agencies are not created equal, nor do they perform the same. It is for this reason that the NTOA has been creating and sharing tactical standards for the law enforcement community.

Recognizing the diversity within the profession, the NTOA actively solicits participation from agencies of all shapes and sizes from all regions of the country. State associations also are invited to participate. Our goal is to be as representative of the law enforcement profession as possible. All input is considered as the Tactical Response and Operations Standards are developed. The TROS is a "living" document and will be updated every two years to ensure that is contemporary with current case law, tactics, training and technology.

This past year, the NTOA also created standards for the "new" Public Order sub-specialty. The same approach was applied to the Public Order Standards as the TROS. National and international expertise was solicited and used to create these standards.

I would encourage all of you to keep an eye out for the forthcoming release of the TROS and the Public Order Standards. Please take time to familiarize yourself with them and look for ways to use them to improve yourselves, your team and your agency.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thor Eells".

Thor Eells
Executive Director