

ipmba news

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL POLICE MOUNTAIN BIKE ASSOCIATION

IPMBA: PROMOTING AND ADVOCATING EDUCATION AND ORGANIZATION FOR PUBLIC SAFETY BICYCLISTS.

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Self-Care/Buddy-Care

by Maureen Becker
Executive Director

In 2017, more first responders died from suicide than were killed in the line of duty. In 2018, NYPD lost four officers to suicide in as many months, while Chicago lost three in less than three months.

As reported on page 36, IPMBA member Daniel Gagnon of Bowdoin College committed suicide in mid-2018. He was the fourth IPMBA member within the past several years known to have done so. His father made the decision to reveal the cause of his son's death in an effort to raise awareness about the risk of suicide, particularly amongst members of the public safety profession. This courageous act was done with the goal of preventing future such tragedies.

According to a study by the Ruderman Family Foundation, 103 firefighters and 140 police officers took their own lives in 2017, while 93 firefighters and 129 police officers died in the line of duty. Most researchers believe these numbers are understated.

One of the authors, Miriam Heyman, noted there are several reasons for this. One is that unlike line-of-duty deaths, suicides amongst first responders are not widely covered by the press. The secrecy surrounding them reflects the societal stigma still associated with suicide. Not wanting to face the shame, neither departments nor families typically reveal if a death is a suicide. As a result, suicides are often misclassified as accidents or undetermined deaths – 17%, by one estimate. Victims of suicide are not afforded a hero's funeral, and their families are often ineligible for death benefits.

The Ruderman study goes on to reveal that despite witnessing tragedy and horror on a regular basis and being at a heightened risk for depression, PTSD, and substance abuse, first responders often lack access to essential mental health services. Of the approximately 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the U.S., only 3-5% have suicide prevention programs. So even if a person were to overcome the misplaced shame and stigma associated with needing or seeking help, they may not know how and where to find it, and they may not be able to afford it.

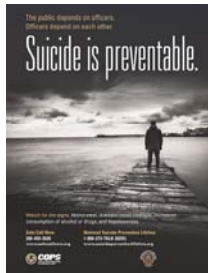
In 2014, then-IACP President Craig Steckler said, "Officer mental health is an issue of officer safety, and we should treat it as such...we can all list a variety of measures available to ensure our officers' physical safety. But what are we doing to actively protect and promote their mental and emotional health? Sadly, in many cases, not enough." To change this, the IACP has published suicide prevention studies and resources at: <https://www.theiacp.org/resources/document/law-enforcement-suicide-prevention-and-awareness>.

Being a first responder carries with it a tremendous responsibility, not the least of which is responsibility to one's self and one's colleagues. Learn how to save a life in a different way. Visit the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention for a list of risk factors and warning signs (<https://afsp.org/about-suicide/risk-factors-and-warning-signs/>) as well as other resources.

For the full text of the Ruderman Study, visit http://rudermanfoundation.org/white_papers/police-officers-and-firefighters-are-more-likely-to-die-by-suicide-than-in-line-of-duty/. Share it with your department.

Finally, read Kim Colegrove's article, *My Husband's Suicide: Recognizing Predictors of Police Suicide*, at <https://inpublicsafety.com/2018/08/my-husbands-suicide-recognizing-predictors-of-police-suicide/>.

The topic of suicide prevention may be an uncomfortable one, but a little discomfort can go a very long way.



Bicyclists May Use Full Lane

by Carlton Reid
Forbes Magazine

This article appeared in the October 12, 2018, issue of Forbes Magazine.

Some motorists think roads were built for cars, and that people on bicycles are interlopers. Historically and legally, this is not the case: most global jurisdictions enshrine the right of bicyclists to enjoy the public highway – that is, to enjoy it in law if not always in reality. International traffic treaties also guarantee this basic right. Some bicycle advocates like to remind motorists that they and their motor vehicles are allowed on the road only *under license* while cyclists are allowed on the road by *right*.

As evidenced by the 2009 Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, U.S. bicyclists "may use [the] full lane," but this doesn't stop some motorists shouting that cyclists do not belong on roads.

The explicit "may use full lane" permission has a parallel across the Atlantic: the

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GeoOrbital Electric Wheel

by Lieutenant Robert Palermo
Mashpee (MA) Police Department

The Town of Mashpee, Massachusetts, located on Cape Cod, is a seacoast community heavily impacted by summer tourism. The Mashpee Police Department was one of the agencies selected by GeoOrbital to participate in their 2017 Public Safety Electric Wheel Beta trials, based on our department's reputation for having an active bicycle patrol with a community-oriented approach to policing. Mashpee has had a bike patrol since before the early 90's, when I began working in Mashpee. Our department is in the "People Business". We believe that bike patrol make officers more human and is an extremely valuable tool that supports our philosophy of community policing.

The purpose of the Beta trial was to test the first generation GeoOrbital Wheel (model 700C) for several months. Our mission was to determine if the technology was useful for law enforcement and, if so, to document our unbiased feedback and recommendations for improvements. Upon completion of the test period, a lengthy survey was completed, accompanied by interviews with participating officers.

Prior to the trials, we knew that many departments were successfully integrating e-bikes into their bike patrols, but we were concerned about the high initial startup costs and the potential long-term future costs. We replace our patrol bikes every 5-6 years. If we purchased e-bikes, would the department be locked into much higher replacement costs every time we needed to replace a bike? E-bikes are more complex than conventional patrol pedal bikes. What are the maintenance costs and logistics involved with having them serviced? If we made this investment, would the officers be more or less interested in riding? As it was, filling bike patrol shifts had become more difficult in recent years.

In March 2018, after a very successful Beta trial, the Mashpee Police Department purchased new Second Generation GeoOrbital Electric Wheels Model PS29. Twelve officers began actively patrolling with them. The new PS29 was designed specifically with public safety needs in mind. GeoOrbital

must be commended as all our recommendations were incorporated into the new design such as a wider tire, increased battery strength, a more powerful motor, an emergency lights package and an easily-accessible USB port for charging cell phones and tablets.

Administration immediately recognized that the wheel provided officer safety benefits. On average, our bicycle patrol shifts are scheduled for eight hours, but can be as long as 14 hours, depending on the needs of the community or when policing special events. Those long days can lead to officer fatigue, which the PS29 can alleviate.

Our bike officers typically patrol the Mashpee Commons, a large commercial and retail venue with numerous shopping and dining options, as well as parking lots that attract heavy vehicle and pedestrian traffic. The GeoOrbital wheel enables the officers to patrol within proximity to the public at low speeds and in confined, crowded spaces.

The electric wheels are also used in support for the neighboring Town of Falmouth for their annual Falmouth Road Race, which attracts 100,000 people. Events with a large footprint, such as the annual 4th of July Fireworks Celebration, Oktoberfest, and numerous bicycle and road races are other ideal uses. The boost provided by the wheel expands the officers' patrol zones without the burden and costs of additional manpower.

This past summer, the Administration received positive feedback from community leaders and the public because the bicycle officers are even more visible and approachable than before. The eye-catching wheels whose centers do not turn (only the tire spins) pique people's curiosity and encourages conversation.

We no longer need to transport our bicycles by patrol cars to the beachheads where we patrol; we now ride our bikes

directly from the station. The community now welcomes and benefits from patrols in areas seldom patrolled on bicycles previously.

While the wheels are not perfect (nothing is), the positives far exceed the negatives. It took a little time for the officers to adjust to this "new-fangled" wheel, but the GeoOrbital soon proved to be a valuable tool that boosted our patrol. We have been hard on the equipment, and it has withstood the test.

Curbs, stairs, potholes, gravel roads, and inclement weather have been no problem. Our

GeoOrbital wheels have not required any service or maintenance during our first season of use.

Positives

Enhanced Officer Safety. The

GeoOrbital guards against over-exertion and dehydration in the heat, especially when longer shifts are required. It

also affords officers strength and stamina after responding to a call for service that requires a hands-on approach.

Expanded Patrol Zones. Our officers are able to patrol larger areas with increased visibility and productivity when compared to our standard patrol bikes.

Purchase Cost. GeoOrbital wheels are significantly less expensive than a good quality e-bike, yet deliver excellent performance.

Future Upgrade Savings. All GeoOrbital wheels are rebuildable. The next time we upgrade our bikes, we will transfer our electric wheels to the new patrol pedal bikes. If needed, GeoOrbital will refurbish our electric wheels for a much lower cost than purchasing new e-bikes or new electric wheels.

Easy Upgrade. Having our existing bicycles equipped with GeoOrbital wheels makes for an easy transition. Officers ride familiar bicycles that are equipped just the way they want them.

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GeoOrbital Electric Wheel

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Freedom of Choice. Officers determine when to solely pedal and when – and how much – to use the variable electric assist, which is operated by a simple throttle.

Low Maintenance. If a problem occurs, the electric wheel can be replaced with the original bicycle wheel or a spare GeoOrbital wheel. The GeoOrbital wheels are made in the U.S.A., and repairs are factory direct. They are

hours. Plugging into a wall outlet for just 30 minutes (e.g., on a meal break) allows a significant charge to be added. A green L.E.D. indicates when fully charged. The GeoOrbital Smartcharger enables batteries to be plugged in for extended periods without the risk of overcharging and damaging the Panasonic cells.

Range. The projected range of 25 miles with moderate pedaling throughout the shift is accurate, though will vary slightly +/- based on environmental conditions and the weight of rider. With additional pedaling, many officers achieve 30-36 mile range or more.

Speed. The top speed of 20mph is ideal for patrol response on urgent calls and can be sustained for longer distances.

Stealth. Officers patrol and respond to calls quickly and

quietly because the wheel is virtually silent

mounted motors), the ride is smooth and stable, especially at low speed. Lifting the bike for any distance or carrying it as a defensive shield is prohibitive. For transport, the battery is easily removed from the wheel, resulting in a more manageable 12-pound weight increase.

Learning Curve. The rider must adjust to the new technology. However, the learning curve is not steep and riders soon become familiar with the ways the wheel affects the way the bike handles.

Battery Life. Officers must be attentive to the battery life. If the battery runs low, power output and speed will diminish. However, the battery doesn't just quit at the end of a charge; it empties slowly, maintaining a minimal assist even after many miles in the "red". At red, officers usually have enough power to return to the station to recharge. The light indicators on the throttle give ample warning, changing from green to yellow to red. If the battery is 100% emptied, GeoOrbital tells us pedaling in a low gear is possible but there will be some resistance. We have never experienced this as there has always been at least minimal assist available – though at lower speeds.

Summary

Transitioning the Mashpee Police Department patrol bikes from regular wheels to GeoOrbital electric wheels was seamless and a positive experience.

The GeoOrbital wheels have renewed our officers' enthusiasm for bike patrolling, improved community relations, and enhanced officer visibility and safety. The GeoOrbital Wheel offered a way for our department to "go electric" while minimizing current and future costs and contributing to a safer environment.

Lieutenant Palermo is a 23 year law enforcement veteran, serving the last 21 years with the Mashpee Police Department. He started out his law enforcement career with the Broward County Sheriff's Office in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Since joining the Mashpee Police, he has been involved with the department's bike team as a member, supervisor and coordinator. Lt. Palermo believes in the fundamentals of community policing, combining high officer visibility with new age, "outside the box" technology to provide the very best in public service to the residents of Mashpee. He can be reached at rpalermo@mashpeema.gov.

quietly because the wheel is virtually silent

Performance. The GeoOrbital wheel is equipped with a "No Flat" tire, which is a standard tire with a special foam core. We have reduced the number and frequency of flats since installing GeoOrbital wheels.

The electric wheels provide superior traction (compared to other bikes) in slippery conditions and while driving up hills. The patrol bike essentially has All-Wheel drive when the rider is pedaling and driving the rear wheel.

Public Relations. Our officers interact with more citizens more frequently. And many of our constituents are aware of and appreciate the use of green technologies by the department.

Negatives

Weight. The GeoOrbital adds approximately 18 pounds of weight to the front of the bicycle when you subtract the weight of the wheel being replaced. However, because the motor is mounted low at the bottom of the wheel (as compared to e-bikes with axle-

much easier and cheaper to ship for repair when compared to a complete e-bike. GeoOrbital provides a small box and shipping label should a repair be necessary.

Self-Charging Lights. The L.E.D. light package runs off the existing battery, eliminating the need to charge lights independently. This guarantees that both emergency and running lights will work if and when needed. Both lights operate with a simple On/Off button.

Integrated USB Port. This affords officers the ability to charge cell phones or tablets while on patrol, reducing downtime.

Battery Features. Changing out the battery takes seconds. If preferred, spare batteries are available. They weigh six pounds so are best carried in a supervisor's vehicle or on the bike itself.

The battery can be charged in the wheel or when removed from the wheel. Charging a battery to a full charges takes a maximum of five hours, but will vary based on the remaining charge level. The battery charges to 80% in only 2.5



Photo Courtesy Mashpee Police Department