

Home Movies

Make your own videos to sharpen your tactics.

By now your agency or department has realized some impact from the troubled economy. Some of you are laid off temporarily, or perhaps being mandatorily furloughed—your department’s way of saying “We’re not going to pay you for several days.” Whatever forms the money saving machinations may take, the bottom line is things are changing. Your personal tribulations aside, it’s probably safe to say that your Training Division’s budget has probably been slashed as well. That’s always the sacrificial lamb that bean counters look to first when looking for ways to save dollars.

So when training no longer exists, or survives albeit in an abbreviated version, what do we do as cops to keep our skills sharp? Simple: we continue to train—with or without the Department’s tutelage. One of the tactics that is never practiced enough is the room entry. It’s something that cops do often in well lit, dimly lit or dark environments. But are we doing it safely and tactically? Just because we do something the same way each time without incident, doesn’t mean that we are doing it correctly. It may be that you’ve been lucky thus far. Regardless, let me suggest a way to hone your skills when you’re about to look for a bad guy(s) in a room; a way to practice your craft without having to travel to any training site.

There is a product on the market that I’ve been using for about six months; it’s called [Flip Video™](#). This fantastic little camcorder weighs only about three ounces and is smaller than most cell phones. I’ve used it for a number of things: birthdays, holidays, and training sessions. What’s so neat about this little gadget is that it’s simple enough for cops to use—it’s a one button operation. Team that up with a cool, inexpensive five inch Flip Video [Tripod](#), and you are set to film your own training. Both of these items together are under \$150.00, the camera will fit in your pocket. It has a USB plug that goes directly into your computer USB port so there are no wires to play with.



Now that you’ve got the equipment, let’s get started. I know that many of you are now using gun-mounted lights. They are a great addition to the tool bag; they allow us to have a free hand should we need it. (Don’t forget to always carry a hand-held light as well.) But like all things that make our job easier, there is usually a down side to them as well. Get your camcorder and tripod and set it up in a room in your house or office, one that you can darken. Put it in the farthest corner of the room, hit the record button, then go

back out the door and prepare to make an entry with your gun-mounted light. (Caution: double safety check to ensure the weapon is safe and clear.) Do things as you normally would on the street, the way you train is the way you fight, and then when you are finished with the entry and search, retrieve the camcorder and review your entry.

I think that you will be surprised to see just how much of a target you are as you make your way into that room. Using our pistol as it was intended means that we'll have it right in the middle of our chest as we make our entry. Now that we have a light on the weapon, we've made our presence known to the bad guy in the worst way—we've highlighted our center mass. I make no judgment on the correctness of the aforementioned entry procedure. I simply use this example so that you are aware of how you appear to the bad guy. Knowing your vulnerabilities is extremely important in police work.

If after you've gone through this simple little exercise, why not use the camcorder to practice a couple of other techniques. Again, in a darkened room, have one of your children (they will love being a part of this) hide behind a piece of furniture. Get your tactical mirror and flashlight out, and begin to use them to search for any human shape or movement in the room. Record the exercise so that you will be aware of what your bad guy sees while you conduct your mirroring using a flashlight.

Some other good techniques to film are "quick peek," and "slicing the pie." Do each a couple of times to see how much, and for how long, you expose any part of your body. Remember the old adage, "If I can see him, he can see me." Don't give him much of a target. We know that most knuckle draggers never practice with their firearm, yet somehow they are inexplicably accurate when they shoot at us.

You can work these exercises alone or with a partner. It's a great way to refine your street survival fundamentals. You may even want to show these recorded videos to your colleagues as a way to hold your own roll call training where none exists.

Make training a continuous part of your vocation. There should never be a time when you can say, "I've learned all that I need to know to survive on the street." Remember, training dollars never dictate whether we train or not. Good cops thrive on training and survive because of it.

Stay safe brothers and sisters!