



National Association of Field Training Officers Indiana Chapter

The Importance of a 40 Hour FTO School

I must say that I was very skeptical about attending the 40-hour FTO School hosted by the Bloomington Police department. My first thought was why do I need to go and have someone tell me how to train other officers. I was a field-training officer before I attended the school. I had my own ideas and thoughts on how to train, so why go to this school.

Our department had just hired four new recruits and I was involved in the training with all four recruits. I myself had just become a field-training officer, so it was a new environment for me too. I attended the 40-hour school after we had trained the new recruits. After the training I thought, we did this right and did not have any problems. So, the question became why are we wasting our time with this school. Our department had completely revamped our FTO program. We had the same program since its inception about 8 years ago and there had been no modifications to it since. Sergeant Don Schmuhl said that it was time to revamp the program. Sergeant Schmuhl with the help of his FTOs rewrote training briefs, changed DORs, and completely overhauled the system. The FTO system that we now have in place is far superior to what we had before.

The week of the school arrived and I went in with an open mind. After two days at the school I realized that I had done a below average job of grading and documenting the recruits. Now, I said below average on grading, not training, there is a big difference. We as FTOs were doing a good job of training, but we were not documenting correctly. I learned so much on how to document and why it is important to document. Also, so much was taught on what to look for when recruits are not getting the information that you are giving them. I learned different ways of training that I had never even thought of before. We learned what the DORs were telling us that had been filled out on the recruits. For example, why was a recruit getting a 5 one day in traffic stops, then the next day a 1, then the next day a 5? So, was the school worth it? A definite YES!

In conclusion, if you are going to be a Field Training Officer and you want to be a good Field Training Officer then you must attend a 40-hour field training school put on by NAFTO. I learned the week of the school how little I actually knew about being a field-training officer. As of right now, all of our FTOs have been to the school except for one. We are getting ready to train a new set of officers and I really think that we will see a difference in our DORs since our staff will have completed the 40-hour school. Finally, I would like to thank Sergeant Steve Kellams of the Bloomington Police department and his staff for doing an excellent job with the 40-hour school that I attended.

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