



National Association of Field Training Officers Indiana Chapter

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Limbo Period

No I don't mean the dance. I'm referring to the period of time in which the recruit observes the FTO, instead of being evaluated. The limbo period serves several important functions and is essential to a well run program.

Normally a new officer rides with an experienced FTO and is trained and evaluated during that shift. There are certain times, however, when this method needs to be put on hold. During the limbo period the recruit is not evaluated, and rarely does much of the work. Instead the FTO does the majority of the work and the new officer is simply an observer. This might seem inefficient, but in reality it can be quite effective.

One reason for a limbo period is so the FTO and recruit can get to know each other, and the expectations of the new rotation or assignment. When a new officer advances from one phase of training into another they typically change shifts and FTO's. The differences from afternoon shift to night shift can be staggering and the uncertainty of a new FTO may cause performance difficulties with the new officer. A limbo period of two or three days at the beginning of the switch can allow the new officer to adapt to the different environment and drastically improve overall performance.

Another reason for the implementation of a limbo period is to affect the immediate poor performance of a student. Sometimes a new officer's poor performance can be linked to stress created by the program itself. All training programs are stressful and the effects of this are understood and expected. However, there are individuals who allow the concept of constant evaluation to adversely affect their performance. If your training unit believes this might be the case then by implementing a limbo period you may drastically improve performance levels and help rejuvenate the recruit.

The FTO must set an example and this is never more important then during the Limbo period. Show the new officer what "right looks and sounds like" and you will be on your way to a successful program.

-Steven Kellams