



Northwest Illinois Criminal Justice Commission

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Mobile Team Unit #1 is funded in partnership with the Illinois Law Enforcement Training & Standards Board

Aquatic Death & Homicidal Drowning Investigations

DATE: September 5-6, 2019

Registration Ends: August 1, 2019

TIME: 8:30 AM—5:00 PM 16 Hours

LOCATION: La Salle County Sheriff's Office, 707 E. Etna Road Ottawa, IL

INSTRUCTOR: Andrea Zaferes, medicolegal death investigator for Dutchess CTY Medical Examiner office/ NYS DCJS Aquatic Death Investigation Instructor

COURSE CONTENT:

In the 1980's and early 90's, Walt Hendrick worked on several drownings with Dutchess and Ulster County Sheriff's Departments that he did not believe were accidental. Further investigation led Deputy Hendrick to present enough evidence to warrant investigations. For over 30 years, he has worked on drowning sites and observed that responding law enforcement typically assumed the drowning was an accident.

For example, an officer on the way to the scene of a child who drowned in a pool is probably thinking about the grieving parents and is possibly thinking about his own children. On the other hand, an officer arriving on the scene where a child is found dead in a house would probably already be looking for signs of possible foul play. The Susan Smith case is not a single event. Our research over the past ten years of newspaper article searches, interviews of law enforcement personnel, working on actual incidents, and researching published studies has shown that drowning is reported to be the eighth most common method of homicide. If more drownings were investigated as possible foul play, we believe that that number would be even lower.

So, the course was first designed to teach the officers and investigating detectives special tactics to take for drowning incidents. Then, as the evidence of child abuse by parents grew, the possibilities of child drownings and near drownings became more apparent, which then became an important focus of the course.

The next part of the course involves homicide victim bodies being dumped in the water postmortem. We researched postmortem physiology forensics and learned of several ways officers on the scene might be cued to the possibility that the victim did not die in the water, and that this was not an accidental drowning fatality. In addition, we wrote up procedures for what divers should do when they find a body: check and record positioning, bring up the necessary evidence for the forensics pathologist, and manage the scene to disturb as little evidence as possible. Since most of our waters are black, photographic recordings are not usually possible.

Lastly, we wanted to do something to help law enforcement personnel who are subjected to the risk of physical and liability attack as a result of a perpetrator attempting to escape by way of water. We wrote up procedures officers can take during such an incident to keep themselves as safe as possible, and do whatever they can to ensure the recovery of the



perpetrators whether they are alive or drowned. We also wrote up suggestions for guidelines in standard operating procedures to protect the department's liability.

Course Outline

- Approach drowning fatalities and child near drownings with the same degree of suspicion as any other homicide or possible child abuse incident.
- Case history debriefings
- Witness Interviewing Procedures
- Investigation procedures on the scene.
- Profiling an open water investigation
- Post mortem physiology forensics- what to look for on a body recovered from the water.
- Three types of incidents: homicide by drowning, victim's body dumped in water after homicide on land, and near-drowning as a result of child abuse or other foul play.
- How to retrieve and handle evidence thrown in the water – how can a detective know if a dive team conducted a thorough search, or if the team just missed the item?
- Investigation of vehicular water suicides, and how to determine the difference between a vehicular suicide and attempted cover-up.
- Where to look for a body in open water – what procedures to follow
- How to know if a dive team is doing an effective search or not.
- How to protect individual and department liability when perpetrators attempt to escape police by way of water, and the perpetrator drowns.
- What procedures can be followed during such an incident to keep the officers safe physically and liability-wise

Who Can Attend any law enforcement personnel including prosecutors and other such personnel. Medical examiners and coroners, fire or dive team members with permission of host or Lifeguard Systems.

Partial funding provided by Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board and MTU#1's request for certification of this course has been approved by the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board

REGISTRATION:

All registrations are received on the [MTU#1 website](#). Find Registration instructions [here](#)

THIS IS NOT A PUBLIC MEETING

Instructor: Andrea Zaferes - With 30 years of working in the field of submerged body/evidence recovery and investigation with Team LGS teaching fire, law enforcement and military teams, Andrea is a noted innovator in aquatic death investigation. She is a medicolegal death investigator for Dutchess County Medical Examiner office, is the NYS DCJS Aquatic Death Investigation Instructor, is the same for California POST, has more than 100 publications, is an aquatic consultant for the National Center for Missing & Exploited children, has presented at well over 150 forensic, aquatic and rescue conferences, has taught thousands of enforcement/death investigators/child advocacy practitioners/prosecutors in her Aquatic Death Investigation talks and multiday program, and serves as a body-found-in-water expert witness for homicide cases. Andrea has received national and international awards such as the DAN-Rolux Dive of the Year and Beneath the Sea Diver of the Year.

This class has been submitted to ILETSB for approval in meeting mandatory training for:

Mandated Annually

- ☐ Law Updates ☐ Use of Force (must include scenario based or similar approved)

Mandated once every 3 years (begin 1/1/16)

- ☐ Civil Rights ☐ Constitutional and proper use of law enforcement authority
☐ Cultural competency ☐ Procedural Justice ☐ Human Rights

Mandated once every 3 years (begin 1/1/17 all/ within 2 yrs. for investigators)

- ☐ Sexual Assault Trauma Informed Response / all sworn & T.C.'s due by 1/1/2020
☐ Sexual Assault Trauma Informed Investigator / Investigators due by 1/1/2019

Mandated once every 3 years

- ☐ Mental Health Awareness

Mandated

- ☐ Psychology of Domestic Violence

Mandated 32 hours every four years after initial training

- ☒ **Lead Homicide Investigator training**