Women in Policing - July 03, 2014

I have seen the roles of women in the police force change in the 13 years that I have been a cop. One thing that I am proud of is that in general, women do not shy away from non-traditional roles. I have seen female officers run faster and possess greater fighting skills with each new generation of recruits. In fact, one of my own partners, who played professional soccer before her career in law enforcement, once chased down a 20 year old male burglar and caught him as he was jumping a 6-foot fence when she was 6-months pregnant. Yes... 6 months pregnant. (Relax, me and the rest of the squad pretty much forced her to go on light duty status right after the high-fives)

In general, females in law enforcement have integrated well and males have accepted policing side by side without making any big deal about it. There is, unfortunately, one dreadful habit that has been carried over from the past: excusing bad behavior from female officers simply because they are female. This isn't a chivalrous act; chivalry implies respect for women. This is the habit of a lazy manager (male or female) who has stereotypical views of women that make ignoring behavior that undermines squad cohesion seem more acceptable than dealing with the individual. This poor judgment must rest on the false belief that if they rattle the "bad" female, they may become targets of a harassment complaint themselves.

I say "hooey!" to that. As a supervisor myself, if I am within the law and within policy in correcting personnel issues, I say let them bring their complaint. If you are the manager dealing with a female officer that has created a personnel issue, keep your standards for behavior in the same place for all officers. If it would be unacceptable for a male to do or say something then gosh-darn it, it is unacceptable for a female officer to do or say it. Period.

If you think that female officers just behave differently because they are female, then it is your antiquated ideas that will allow that female officer to have a nice long career of destroying squad morale. It is time to kick that habit once and for all.

To all supervisors of female officers: if we mess up, hold us accountable! Give us the same correction that improves male officers so we can improve as well. To excuse divisive behavior is to condone it. Let's all of us maintain the same standard. Once you set the standard, hold whatcha got.

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