

Benefits of Police Accreditation

Police accreditation has far-reaching benefits that touch every avenue of your department.

Liability avoidance is in the best interest of every law enforcement agency. By enforcing compliance to your agency's policies and procedures, you can prevent costly litigation issues.

Compliance not only protects your agency's reputation and finances; it also ensures the safety of your officers and community at large. Liability avoidance also keeps your agency in good standing with your insurer and provides protection from bankruptcy.

There's a common stereotype within law enforcement that only larger agencies face risk when it comes to liability avoidance. But truth be told, liability avoidance is no longer a "big agency problem." In fact, small agencies often suffer the most when it comes to liability because of resource and budgetary restrictions.

Many insurance companies withdraw coverage in the case of misconduct lawsuits. If a small municipality lacks insurance, even a single claim against a police department can lead to bankruptcy. According to [Governing Magazine](#), "cities in California, Illinois, Louisiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee have in recent years opted to disband their police departments after losing coverage." In other scenarios, [insurers have forced agencies to enact major reforms to ensure coverage](#).

Fortunately, there are ways to protect your agency, no matter the size, from the many risks of litigation. In particular, police accreditation is an important step toward liability avoidance.

The Importance of Accreditation

Police accreditation can protect smaller agencies by promoting compliance to an accrediting body's policies and procedures. Still, the majority of smaller agencies are not accredited.

The [Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement \(CALEA\)](#) states the majority of law enforcement agencies in the U.S. fall into an A- or B-sized category, meaning they have fewer than 25 sworn officers.

While these small agencies account for the majority of law enforcement departments, less than 2% have achieved accreditation status.

Are you considering pursuing police accreditation? Here are a few of the most significant ways accreditation can protect your agency.

Increase accountability

Police accreditation and liability avoidance go hand-in-hand. The accrediting body's standards provide a helpful framework for preventing unnecessary risk and ensuring compliance in your department.

The Orono, Maine Police Department, a 15-person agency, received full CALEA accreditation in March of 2017. Chief Josh Ewing says budgetary constraints had the potential to put his agency at risk prior to accreditation. Accreditation provided the accountability necessary for his department to avoid liability.

Build community trust

Chief Ewing also notes how accreditation strengthened his agency's relationship with other areas of Orono's government. "When the town council has questions about use of force, they appreciate I can provide them the data because it's a required part of accreditation," he says. "They can get immediate feedback and allay their fears."

By avoiding lawsuits associated with liability, your agency can also protect its reputation in the community. One benefit of accreditation is that it demonstrates your commitment to safety and professionalism across the board.

Save money

While police accreditation has up-front costs, consider it a long-term investment in your agency. The obvious benefit of accreditation is preventing costly lawsuits in the case of litigation. Should insurance drop your agency due to liability concerns, costs can increase astronomically. A single patrol car accident or wrongful arrest without insurance could lead to bankruptcy.

But pursuing accreditation can also cushion your insurance budget. In Chief Ewing's case, the Orono Department saved fifteen percent on liability insurance thanks to police accreditation.

Protect your agency

At the end of the day, police accreditation can keep your agency operating by keeping it insured. Without liability insurance, many small, unequipped agencies face the very real risk of closing.

In 2013, the Sorrento, LA Police Department encountered mounting liability risks. In the end, the department's insurer withdrew coverage, putting Sorrento at risk for

bankruptcy. To avoid the potential of expensive lawsuits without insurance, Sorrento made the difficult decision to abolish its agency.

If you are seeking practical, realistic methods of liability avoidance for your agency, it might be time to consider police accreditation.

Using Technology to Pursue Accreditation

The process of accreditation can be lengthy and financially impactful. But keep in mind that the right software solution can smooth out the process of accreditation, and ultimately protect your agency from risk.

Easy access to policies and procedures

The primary benefit of using technology for accreditation is that it provides one, central location for policies, procedures, and standards necessary for accreditation and compliance. PowerDMS comes pre-loaded with CALEA, MLEAP, and 22 other state accrediting standards, making policy and procedure review as simple as searching Google. With policies and procedures easily and quickly accessible from an electronic device, you can ensure compliance as you pursue police accreditation — not to mention reduce liability risk.

Prove your compliance

Chief Ewing says PowerDMS has been especially beneficial in proving compliance, whether for accreditation purposes or basic liability avoidance. With all your standards in one place, you can easily show you have crossed your T's and dotted your I's.

“We may get challenged on whether or not we have done proper training or on our policy language at a certain time. That will be very easy for me to show with PowerDMS,” says Chief Ewing.

Analyze accreditation gaps

Accreditation can be a complex and highly-detailed process because accrediting bodies want to ensure you meet all their standards. As you move toward state or national law enforcement accreditation, it's important you don't let anything fall through the cracks. With its ability to intuitively analyze your documents, PowerDMS can highlight standards that need additional proofs of compliance.

Standards update alerts

Along similar lines, cloud-based document management software alerts you when standards need updating. After you revise your standards, you can easily disseminate them to your officers electronically so everyone is on the same page.

Training and testing

With a cloud-based tool like PowerDMS, you can easily train your entire staff while you pursue police accreditation. The ability to train online is cost-effective as it prevents the need for overtime and classroom space and materials. PowerDMS also enables you to create customized tests to ensure your officers have retained the knowledge necessary for compliance.

Streamlined on-site reviews

For the actual review process, accreditors appreciate as much preparation on your end as possible. With accreditation software, you can give your assessors access to your policies and proofs of compliance prior to an onsite visit.

You can also electronically attach policies and proofs of compliance to each standard, eliminating the need for paper files altogether. This paperless accreditation process makes things easier for everyone, often reducing the workload by as much as half when compared to paper files.

Investing in Police Accreditation for Liability Avoidance

No matter the size of your police agency, prioritizing accreditation can prevent unnecessary risk for your department. Of course, accreditation software has its up-front costs. But like any other investment, a software like PowerDMS pays for itself over time. Choosing the right accreditation software can simplify compliance and reduce liability so you can maintain insurance and, ultimately, protect your agency and community at large.

PowerDMS: More Than Accreditation

Accreditation is just the beginning. PowerDMS by NEOGOV offers a full suite of solutions to support public safety agencies—streamlining scheduling, enhancing community engagement, tracking training, and more.

Discover how our platform can help your agency thrive: [Learn more here](#).