

Walker announces Law Enforcement Appreciation Day in Alaska

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ANCHORAGE – Alaska’s new governor has issued an executive proclamation naming Jan. 9 as Law Enforcement Appreciation Day.

Gov. Bill Walker signed the proclamation late Thursday, at the request of Public Safety Commissioner’s Office, reports Alaska State Trooper spokeswoman Beth Ipsen. It’s all part of a national movement led by the FBI National Academy Association and Concerns of Police Survivors, Inc. to recognize the efforts of law enforcement officers and the dangers they face on the job.

“What the public doesn’t see is the toll law enforcement takes to keep our communities safe,” said COPS, Inc. on their website (<http://www.nationalcops.org/>). “On average, between 105 and 203 officers die in the line of duty each year, 50,000 officers are assaulted in the line of duty each year, 14,000 officers are injured in the line of duty each year, and over 300 officers commit suicide each year.”

In Alaska, four law enforcement officers have lost their lives (<http://www.odmp.org/>) in the line of duty since the beginning of 2013.

- March 19, 2013- Village Public Safety Officer Thomas O. Madole was shot and killed while investigating reports of an altercation earlier that day in Manokotak
- March 30, 2013- Alaska State Trooper Tage Brandel Toll died in a helicopter crash that claimed the lives of two others during a search and rescue mission
- May 1, 2014- Alaska State Trooper Sgt. Patrick Scott Johnson was fatally shot while investigating reports of a man brandishing a firearm in Tanana
- May 1, 2014- Alaska State Trooper Gabriel Rich was also fatally shot while investigating reports of a man brandishing a firearm in Tanana

When asked about the news, Anchorage Police Department spokeswoman Jennifer Castro said, "It's just another day on the job, we're all still working like we do every day."

Observers of the day are encouraged to wear blue as a show of solidarity for law enforcement officers.

Alaska has more than 50 law enforcement agencies throughout the state, according to the last census of state and local agencies in 2008. Over 2,100 law enforcement personnel serve Alaskans, with a reported total of 1,298 sworn officers of the law.