

# THE AFTERMATH OF USING DEADLY FORCE

By Lee Vernon



*If deadly force is used, do not argue with law enforcement who arrive at a scene where shots have been fired. You will at least be detained until the scene is deemed secure. Photo: author*

At the Concealed Handgun Licensing classes, I've taught for years, I often throw out the old "What would you do in x, y, z situation?" question to students. And just as often, I've been amused and appalled at the responses. I then try to explain that, depending on the situation, what we think we will do and what we actually end up doing may be two totally different things. Simply put, every situation is different. That plus your experience and amount of training will dictate to a large degree the choices made. And the choices made in those critical few seconds have major implications in more ways than people realize. Let's look at what you will likely have to deal with after a situation where you use deadly force.

## **Law Enforcement Response**

First, disregard what you have seen in the movies or on primetime TV. The image of you having shot someone and the police not putting you in cuffs is nonsense. If you have fatally shot a person, even in self-defense, you have taken the life of another human being, which in most states is considered homicide. The determination of whether that homicide is legally justifiable is up to the courts and a jury, depending on where you live. That being said, when the police do arrive, they are going to be ramped up and entering a dangerous environment because they have been dispatched to a shooting with little or no information as to what is going on. In most cases, they are not going to know who is or is not the bad guy. Expect them to come in with guns drawn for their own protection.

A word of advice: do not argue with them. Follow their exact instructions and do as you're told for your safety. Allow them to de-escalate and secure the scene, and save the arguing for when you're not staring down the barrel of a gun. Christopher Gray, the head instructor for Combative Weapon Solutions, always informs people that "the Second Amendment does not offer any type of ballistic protection." You can't argue your case if you're dead because you argued with an officer and pointed your firearm in their direction, which resulted in your being shot. This exact situation happened locally just about a year ago. Don't be that person. At a minimum, expect to be handcuffed and taken to the station for questioning. You may even spend a day or so in jail depending on the circumstances.



*Considering the legal costs associated with defending yourself if you have to use deadly force, insurance is worth looking into.*

*Image: courtesy Texas Law Shield*

## **Lawyers and Insurance**

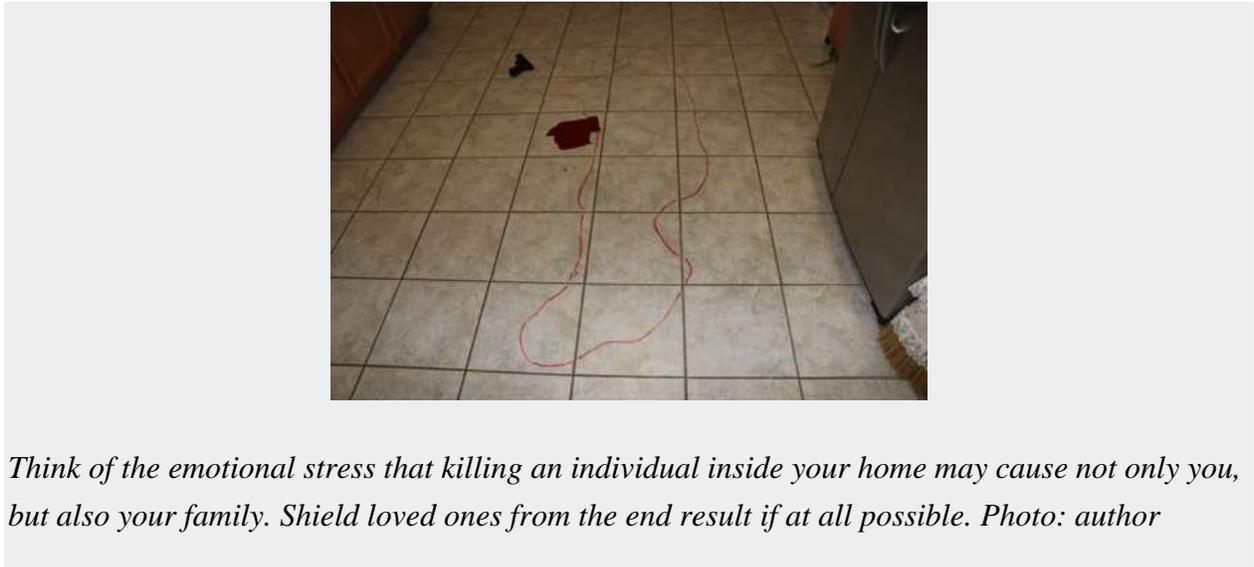
That brings us to an obvious individual you may want to have access to or the ability to contact when you're sitting downtown. A good lawyer will be critical if you find yourself in this situation. Picking one out of the Yellow Pages or Yelp.com is not what I am going to do when everything is at stake. And you know what comes with a good attorney — a huge financial cost. Stats vary, but plan on spending \$50,000 or more for an attorney to defend you through the entire process, both legally and civilly. This is where having some type of insurance such as Texas Law Shield (for those of us who live in Texas) or USCCA may be beneficial. Check this out if you haven't already.

## **Financial Stress**

Speaking of finances, the monetary stress doesn't end with your lawyer. What if your dilemma causes you to lose your job? What if the shooting takes place within your home? Do you think little Jimmy or the wife is going to be able to stay in a home where someone bled out and lay dead for hours? Probably not. Not to mention you will more than likely have to move anyway for your family's safety due to the death threats and protesters who will camp in front of your home. Selling your existing home and buying a new one will not be covered by insurance. Plus, imagine trying to do that while possibly looking for new employment. The financial implications of the expenses alone will be daunting.

## Emotional Turmoil

Due to the emotional and financial stress, some type of therapy may be needed. I know, the dreaded “therapy” word that nobody ever talks about. Having worked the streets for over 21 years and seeing the kind of brutal and heartless actions that humans can inflict on one another, I can say without a doubt that therapy is critical to getting back to some kind of emotional normal. It is a fact that emotionally healthy humans are not wired to indiscriminately take a life. You or your family members may have to deal with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). If any family members were involved or witnessed the event, time must be devoted to making sure they get back on track too.



*Think of the emotional stress that killing an individual inside your home may cause not only you, but also your family. Shield loved ones from the end result if at all possible. Photo: author*

Something I see that infuriates me to no end is when adults allow their young children to view the end result of whatever violence has been inflicted. Whether it's a violent homicide or a traumatic gory call we're working, I am appalled that so many people allow children to look at these scenes. If you are involved in a deadly force encounter and your family is present, please do your best to shield them from the end results. Trust me, they simply do not need to see it.

## Time Lost

Lastly, let's look at time. What is your time worth? The whole process, from the actual event to the court (legal and civil) proceedings, to emotional healing and eventually getting back to some sort of normal life is going to be measured not in months, but likely years. And those are precious years that you and your family will not get back. Now, don't get me wrong. If my family or I am in a life-threatening situation that leaves me with no other option than to use deadly force, I will defend myself and my family, knowing there will be a long road ahead and many issues that will need to be dealt with. This is where good diversified training and being prepared can help. If you are thinking “Should I?” in a situation, then you probably shouldn't. And if you did, it may very well be used against you. Proper training and education can help in making the right decisions when things go bad. And since bad things happen in mere seconds, making the right choices can mean not only the difference between life and death, but also what quality of life you will have after the event.



*Proper and relevant training can prove to be an important factor that determines your actions when you are involved in a critical incident. Photo: author*

### **Summing Up**

I want to leave you with some ideas to contemplate and prepare for in case you are confronted with that life-altering situation:

- Training, training, training. Continue to learn so you are better prepared to make the right choices when things unexpectedly go to hell in a handbasket.
- If you use deadly force as a last resort, be ready for law enforcement to take control of the scene. Don't take their actions personally. They are doing their job and attempting to secure a scene where the information relayed to them is often lacking or wrong. Listen and follow their directions.
- Have an attorney you can call before you need one. Make that one phone call count.
- Have a healthy savings account or at least look at possible insurance options that specifically cover such incidents.
- Be aware and prepared to deal with the emotional and psychological trauma of such an event for both you and your family.
- Be ready to move your homestead, even if just temporarily.
- Shelter family and children from viewing anything that may scar them for life.
- It is a marathon, not a sprint. Understand that this is going to be a long, drawn-out process.

Hopefully this will shed some light on the realities of what you may encounter if you use deadly force. It is not meant to persuade you from not using it if no other options remain. I simply want people to understand that life is not like the movies, where the police show up, pat you on the back, and you are free to go about your daily life as if nothing happened. Every situation is different, but

if you're prepared for the realities of what is to come afterward, you increase your chances of coming out on top.

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