

Is AB 2880 Working?

CALSAGA

Special Report

AB 2880 has been heralded, not only in California, but across the nation as a model new standard for Security Officer training. But after the rhetoric and pats on the back are done, CALSAGA wanted to know, how is it working in practice. In short, *“Is AB 2880 Working?”*

As you might imagine, the opinions on how the California Security Officer Training Law, AB 2880, is working in the “real world” are mixed. Legislators who supported the law, and officials at Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (BSIS) and the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), all sing the law’s praises. Most Private Patrol Operators (PPOs) and Private Security Training Facilities (PSTFs) are generally supportive of increased training standards that are part of AB 2880.

But support for the concept of increased training standards does not yield universal support for how the law in being enforced or implemented today. On this count, many members are more critical of the lack of real enforcement and compliance efforts in the law. Members and other industry leaders, who rate *themselves* as working hard to comply with the new law,

widespread belief that compliance in the industry at large is not very good. They believe that their efforts to comply are not being rewarded by client recognition, and on the other end, non-compliant competitors are not feeling any consequences from being scofflaws.

One CALSAGA Member, Lee Landers, the Operations and Training Manager for Rancho Sante Fe Protective Services in San Diego County, seemed to sum it up for the industry when he wrote, “I believe the training program is very good and beneficial to the security officers and the industry. But one factor continues to plague the industry, MONEY. There have been many changes in focusing on upgrading standards for our industry, but one thing that has not changed is the pay that officers receive for their efforts. The “State” and the “clients” continue to put more demands on the officer and PPO, but no one is willing to pay for it.”

Indeed, one of the complaints with the law is the lack of any recognition by the state

that it does, in fact, cost money to comply. Officially, the regulations adopted by BSIS to support AB 2880 state that the law and regulations will, “not affect small businesses,” and that the regulations, “will have no significant statewide adverse economic impact,” on California security firms. In practice, of course, PPOs are paying thousands of dollars to comply with the law, with no evidence, and Mr. Landers indicates, that clients are paying more for their better trained officers.

Which of course raises the question of whether the officers are better trained.

Opinion here is mixed as well. For the companies that are diligently working hard to comply with the letter and the spirit of AB 2880, training standards are clearly improving. The question lies in how much of the industry is working hard to comply?

Most if not all CALSAGA members are officially in



compliance with the law, and anecdotally, are making sincere efforts to raise training standards. CALSAGA has over 200 member PPOs representing over 60,000 working security officers in California. Statewide, over 2,000 PPOs and over 200,000 security officers are registered with the state. However, it is unknown how many of those licenses are actively working. Most estimates are that about 120,000 officers are regularly working in California, meaning CALSAGA represents about half the regularly working contract security force in the Golden State.

Some question whether PPOs and training facilities are really training.

"Much of this seems to be just going through the motions," said one Training Director for a large PPO. "No one seems to understand what BSIS is looking for in compliance. The law says give a certain amount of training in a certain amount of time on a certain subject, and then stick a certificate in a file."

This Training Director suggests that BSIS start conducting audits of training programs and compliance, not to punish PPOs at this point, but to demonstrate to the whole community exactly what BSIS expects from PPOs to be in compliance.

The perceived lack of any enforcement of the training law is the

greatest complaint about the law from PPOs. Members who spend time and money to comply with the law - because they want to raise standards and want to obey the rules - feel like they are taken advantage of by those who flaunt the law.

"I would encourage BSIS to audit the many PPOs who have made no efforts to comply with the requirements," said Floyd Buckley, the Training Manager for Guard Systems, Inc. in Los Angeles.

Member after member reported to us that, on a nearly daily basis, officers with guard cards show up at their door looking for work, who say their previously employer had never even told them about a new training law.

Officially, BSIS will not comment on how many PPOs are in compliance with the law, or indeed, have even submitted the required plan indicating how they plan to comply, stating that to provide a list might imply non-compliance before a formal investigation. Rumors in the industry, for what they are worth, are that only 500 PPOs have submitted approved training plans. No one knows if this rumor is true, and, since no one knows how many of the 2000-plus PPOs in the state are actually working, even if this rumor is true, it is hard to gauge what portion of the industry is compliant.

For the record, BSIS believes that

about 90% of the working security industry in California is compliant.

Despite some dissatisfaction, however, nearly all are optimistic that, over time, AB 2880 will lead to higher training standards and greater professionalism in the contract security industry.

"I believe training standards will increase substantially over time," said the Training Director above who believed most PPOs were just going through the motions. "The training is appropriate, the subjects are good, and applicable to the industry. As soon as BSIS makes clear what they want in compliance, it will really be a positive for the industry."

"AB 2880 is highly positive for the industry and the state," added Joel Wiesner, Regional Training Director for Akal Security. Wiesner felt that CALSAGA has done a better job than BSIS in helping members understand the law, and believed continued communication between the parties would only increase the value of the law.

"It's only been a year," said another member who preferred not to be identified so as to keep his comments personal rather than be representative of his company. "Give it some time, and we'll all look back on AB 2880 as a major step forward for our industry."

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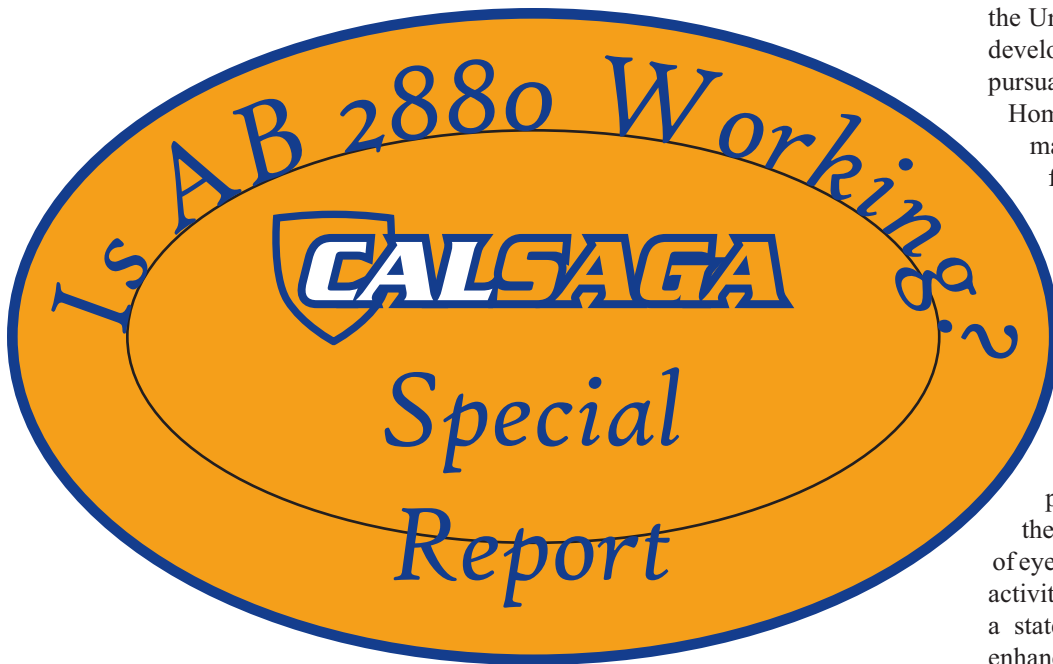
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State Announces New WMD Train- ing Course: Weapons of Mass Destruction & Ter- rorism Awareness for Security Profes- sionals to be part of Powers to Arrest

California private security training and professionalism jumped to a new level on May 19, 2005 with the announcement by Charlene Zettel, Director of the California Department of Consumer Affairs, that California would begin requiring all new contract private security officers in California to take a four hour course on “Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism Awareness for Security Professionals.”

The course, which will ultimately encompass the expanded content for the mandatory eight-hour “Powers to Arrest” course under AB 2880, was announced by Director Zettel at the Law Enforcement and Private Security (LEAPS) conference in Los Angeles. CALSAGA Training Committee Chairman Randall Ely of Preferred Response Security helped announce the course with Zettel. Ely also served on the private sector advisory committee that helped design the course.

“This training offers a great opportunity to add up to 400,000 sets of eyes and ears to assist California’s 90,000 law enforcement officers in their efforts to prevent terrorist attacks,” said DCA Director Charlene Zettel.

The new course reflects a growing consensus among homeland defense policy makers that government employees alone cannot adequately safeguard every facility in the United States, and indeed that the vast majority of designated “critical infrastructure sites” in the nation are protected primarily by private security.

The course materials themselves, which consist of a student workbook, a facilitator’s guide, and a menu-driven video on DVD, were developed by a coalition of BSIS staff, California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) representatives, private sector security experts (including CALSAGA members), security directors from protected sites, and education leaders from

the University of California at Irvine. The development of the materials were funded pursuant to a grant of the U.S. Office of Homeland Security, and the program and materials are intended to be a model for other states to incorporate their private sector efforts into homeland security.

“This new addition to California’s security training law cements private security as an essential component of our state’s homeland defense,” said CALSAGA President Randy Davis. “With over 200,000 licensed private security officers in California, there are nearly three times as many sets of eyes and ears available to spot suspicious activity. Have these officers trained with a state-of-the-art program will definitely enhance California’s safety.”

The student workbook and facilitator’s guide are on a CD, and the video on DVD, each of which was mailed by BSIS to all licensed PPO main branches and Training Facilities in late June. Additional copies to all PPO branch offices, as well as selected protected sites, are being mailed out this month.

The passage of AB 2880 included an expansion of the old, 3-hour Powers to Arrest” course to an 8-hour course, but BSIS did not provide any new content for that course, only advising trainers to expand the existing content with greater use of role-playing and exercises. Now, with the advent of the WMD training course, BSIS is advising trainers that they can utilize this content to the expanded time allotted to the mandatory 8-hours of pre-post training.

The legal authority requiring all new contract security officers to take this course as part of their 8-hours pre-post requirement will be added to the training regulations later this year, but BSIS is asking all facilities providing security training to begin to offer it immediately on a voluntary basis.

Additionally, BSIS is encouraging all PPOs to utilize the WMD training to satisfy 4 hours of each officers’ 8 hours annual continuing education requirement.

This article, which appeared in the Summer 2005 issue of CALSAGA’s Observed & Reported, is reprinted here for those who missed it, and because of its relevance to the training issue in focus on this issue.