



TRAINING MODULE: PHYSICAL FITNESS AND WELLNESS PROGRAMS

PURPOSE: To provide an overview of the importance of physical fitness and wellness programs to the law enforcement community.

TIME: 45 Minutes

OBJECTIVES:

- Become familiar with the health risks that face the law enforcement community
- Become familiar about the benefits of physical fitness to an individual's health and wellness
- Learn about the benefits of being physically fit as it pertains to job performance and survival
- Learn about the positive effects a fitness and wellness program has on a law enforcement agency

PARTICIPANTS MATERIALS:

- Participant Manual

TRAINER MATERIALS:

- Training Manual
- PowerPoint Presentation

Physical Fitness and Wellness Programs



Zero Officers Killed or Injured

- Americans in general are not as fit as they should be and police officers are no exception. In recent years, there has been a reduction in the health and fitness of law enforcement officers across the country.
- Only 22% of Americans get at least 30 minutes of light to moderate exercise five or more times a week.
- Less than 10% exercise vigorously at least 3 times a week.

Physical Fitness and Wellness

- Cooper Institute Study
 - Randomly sampled 1700 officers
 - Results:
 - Officers “average” fitness levels were below the general population in:
 - Aerobic Fitness, Body Fat, Abdominal Strength
 - Officers were considered average in:
 - Upper Body Strength, Lower Back Flexibility

- **Cooper Institute Study:** (1983-1993)
- Randomly sampled 1700 officers from across the country
- Officers “average” fitness levels were below the general population in the following areas:
 - Aerobic fitness
 - Body fat
 - Abdominal strength
- Officers were considered average in regards to:
 - Upper Body Strength
 - Lower Back Flexibility

Data showed that law enforcement officers were less fit in most areas than at least half of all Americans despite the fact that their profession requires greater physical demands than the average person.

Increased levels of sick time, increased incidence of disability, early retirement, and other fitness-related losses of productivity have become a major concern for police administrators.

Physical Fitness and Wellness

- **Relative Risk:** statistical measure to evaluate the likelihood of dying or developing a particular disease with an identified “risk factor.”
- **Example: Coronary heart disease**
 - Average risk is **1.0**
 - Inactive/unfit law enforcement is **2.2**
 - Add a second risk factor and it raises to **6.6**
 - Smoking, High blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity.

This means an inactive law enforcement officer who has an additional risk factor is 6.6 times more likely to develop coronary heart disease

Law Enforcement Officers have a greater morbidity and mortality rate than the general public due mostly to:

- Cardiovascular disease, colon cancer and suicide.
- Risk of having a heart attack doubles with each decade of law enforcement experience. This helped encourage the adoption of “heart and lung bills” across the country.

Relative Risk: statistical measure to evaluate the likelihood of dying or developing a particular disease with an identified “risk factor.” **For example: coronary heart disease:**

- Average risk is 1.0
- Unfit or inactive law enforcement officer is 2.2 (meaning he/she is 2.2 times more likely of suffering from a heart attack than those officers participating in a physical fitness program)
- Adding a second risk factor raises it to 6.6 (this means an inactive law enforcement officer who has an additional risk factor is 6.6 times more likely than the average citizen to develop coronary heart disease (Smoking, High blood pressure, High cholesterol, Obesity))

This is important because one study of a major metropolitan police department found that almost **50% of their officers had at least 3 of the 5 major risk factors for coronary heart disease (listed above)**

The average life span of a law enforcement officer post retirement is 2-5 years. One contributing factor is the lack of personal and agency fitness and wellness programs.

Physical Fitness and Wellness

■ Fitness as it Relates to Job Performance

- **Core Critical Tasks:** running, climbing, jumping, lifting/carrying, dragging, pushing and use of force

- In 75% of police apprehensions, the amount of force given by the suspect was described as moderate or strong

- Average time to subdue a subject 30 seconds-2 minutes

- For physical tasks lasting over 2 minutes, a person uses 90% of their maximum capacity.

- Physical fitness for officers is having the energy to carry out daily law enforcement job requirements effectively with reserve energy to meet emergencies.
- Core list of critical physical tasks required to perform the duties of a law enforcement officer. Poor performance in these areas could put the officer or public in jeopardy.
- Running, Climbing, Jumping, Lifting/Carrying, Dragging, Pushing and Use of force
- For over 75% of police apprehensions, the amount of resistance given by the suspect was described as moderate to strong
- The average amount of time it took to subdue a subject varied from 30 seconds to 2 minutes.
- For physical tasks lasting over 2 minutes, officers use 75-90% of their maximum capability.
- Cardiovascular endurance, anaerobic power, muscle strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition are all underlying factors in successful job performance.

Physical Fitness and Wellness

- FBI Assault Study: examined 40 cases of serious assaults through offender/officer interviews
 - 47 of the 52 officers were self-described as being in excellent health
 - 73% were involved in a physical fitness program
 - Repeatedly officers credited their fitness level with aiding them in their survival

- FBI Studies
- 1997 Assault Study – examined 40 cases of serious assaults through offender/officer interviews and document reviews.
- 47 were self-described as being in “excellent” health,
- 4 as “better than average”
- the remaining officer was “average.”
- 73% were involved in a physical fitness program, most common were running and weight lifting.

Repeatedly officers credited their fitness level with aiding them in their survival.

Physical Fitness and Wellness

- FBI Felonious Death Studies: (1992-2006)
 - **Perceptions:** Officers need to be aware of the image they portray
 - Offenders often “sized up” the officer
 - Deciding factor was whether or not they could “take them.”

- 1992 and 2006 study analyzed felonious deaths, it was learned that offenders often “sized up” the officer. Officers need to be aware of the image they portray and recognize that their demeanor and appearance could protect them as much as their body armor.
- Offenders had difficulty identifying a particular trait or mannerism, but did state that the deciding factor was whether or not they felt they could “take them.”
- If the officer appeared fit and conducted him/herself in a professional manner, the offender hesitated
- When the officer presented him/herself as a potential target, the offender capitalized.

Physical Fitness and Wellness

- Individual Benefits:
 - Physical Health
 - Mortality rate for unfit men is 64 per 10,000 persons as compared to 18.6 per 10,000 for those that are most fit
 - Emotional Health
 - Reduces Stress
 - Intellectual Health
 - Studies have shown fitness increases mental alertness, increased problem solving ability, and increased learning potential

Individual Benefits of Being Physically Fit

Physical Health Benefits

More than 50% of deaths in America are attributable to lifestyle choices.

- Benefits of Regular Physical Activity
- Reduce blood pressure, blood lipids and glucose tolerance
- Prevent heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes
- Assists with weight control
- Builds muscle and endurance
- Enhances flexibility, protecting the body from injury and disability.

Expending 2,000 calories a week in physical activity reduces and individual's risk of dying from any cause by 28%

- Mortality rate for unfit men is estimated at 64 per 10,000 persons as compared to 18.6 per 10,000 persons for those that are most fit.

- **Emotional Benefits:**

Reduces Stress

- Law enforcement officers suffer more job related stress than most other occupations, all of which take its toll on the individual.
- Stress related emotional problems are prevalent in the law enforcement community: divorce, suicide, alcoholism
- Physical affects of stress include: cardiovascular disease, hypertension, low-back pain, and gastrointestinal disorders.
- Reducing stress promotes emotional stability by positively affecting physical, emotional and mental well being.

Intellectual Benefits

- Increased mental alertness: research indicates that an increased state of physical fitness increases mental alertness because the body is more efficient in the transporting of oxygen to the brain.
- Increased problem solving ability/decision making.
- Increased learning potential.

Physical Fitness and Wellness

- **Agency Benefits:**
 - **Reduces Liability**
 - Parker vs. the District of Columbia
 - **Reduces Costs**
 - 20% of the average law enforcement agency's workforce is responsible for 80% of the costs
 - Average Cost of an in-service heart attack is between \$400,000 and \$700,000
 - The cost of early retirement due to disability is 165% of the officer's salary

- **Agency Benefits to Utilizing Fitness and Wellness Programs**
Reduces Liability

- Ensures officers are prepared to handle tasks while controlling the possible risks and their associated costs. Failure to provide fitness and wellness training can open an agency to unnecessary liability, especially in cases of excessive force.
- **Parker vs. the District of Columbia:**
- Arresting officer was accused of using excessive force to affect an arrest of a combative subject. The officer's lack of physical fitness and his inability to use defensive tactics or less lethal options resulted in his discharging his firearm rendering the suspect a paraplegic.
- Court ruled that the Metropolitan Police Department was found to be **"deliberately indifferent" to the physical training needs** of its officers and the plaintiff was awarded a substantial sum of money.

- **Reduces Costs:** Officers are less likely to get hurt or retire on disability
- National accident, injury and illness data has shown that the small portion of least fit officers in a department are responsible for the majority of the compensable injuries
- 20% of the average law enforcement agency's workforce is responsible for 80% of the cost of accidents.
- Average cost of an in-service heart attack is between \$400,000 and \$700,000
- The cost of early disability is 165% of an officer's salary
- Heart disease accounts for 20-50% of all early retirements.
- Lower back problems account for 15-35% of all early retirements.
- Agencies who participate in fitness and wellness programs may qualify for incentives in the risk management field. They are considered preferred risks by state municipal league self-insured pooling organizations and increased participation is encouraged.

Physical Fitness and Wellness

■ Agency Benefits (continued):

■ Increased Productivity

- Increased ability to perform job functions
- Higher performance ratings
- More fit and active officers had 40-70% less absenteeism

For every \$1 invested in a fitness and wellness program, the return ranges from \$2 to \$5

- **Increased Productivity**

Physically:

- Improved capability to perform job functions
- Better physical preparation

Psychologically:

- Reduced Stress
- Mental preparation for duty

- Studies in the civilian work force showed that physically active employees had greater productivity. Based on this the law enforcement community was analyzed:
- Performance ratings for more fit and active officers were consistently higher than their inactive peers.
- More fit and active officers had 40-70% less absenteeism than less fit officers.

- **Research has shown for every \$1 invested into a fitness and wellness program, the return ranges from \$2 to \$5.**

Physical Fitness and Wellness

■ North Carolina Pilot Study

■ Results

- Overall improvement in health and fitness
- Significant improvements in cardiovascular endurance and strength
- Participants were able to stop taking medications for diabetes and hypertension due to weight loss
- 25% increase in productivity through reduced absenteeism, turnover rate, accidents, and worker's compensation claims

Pilot Program/North Carolina Study

- Due to the alarming health data and steady decline in American wellness, a task force was created by various law enforcement organizations to create a model health and fitness program that would be voluntary.
- Several agencies in the State of North Carolina participated:
 - Improvements across the board in overall health and fitness
 - Significant improvements in cardiovascular endurance and strength were noted.
 - Several participants were able to stop taking medication for diabetes and hypertension due to weight loss.
 - Reported a 25% increase in productivity through reduced absenteeism, reduced turnover rate, reduced accidents, and reduced workers compensation claims.

Physical Fitness and Wellness

- Total Fitness Program
 - Incorporates good lifestyle habits
 - Regular exercise
 - Good nutrition
 - Weight management
 - Stress management
 - Substance abuse prevention

The IACP commends the development of fitness programs utilizing activities generally performed by police officers and encourages the adoption of career-long fitness and wellness standards by law enforcement agencies.

Total Fitness Program

Incorporates good lifestyle habits

- Regular exercise
- Good nutrition
- Weight management
- Stress management
- Substance abuse awareness and prevention

It will increase employee loyalty, improve morale, and decrease turnover while improving the quality of life and health for the officers and reducing employee related accidents and injuries, therefore reducing operating costs.

2006 IACP Resolution

- Recognizes the importance of law enforcement fitness and wellness programs.
- The IACP commends the development of fitness programs utilizing activities generally performed by police officers and encourages the adoption of career-long fitness and wellness standards by law enforcement agencies.

REFERENCES:

Training Key #265 Physical Fitness: Importance for Police Officers

Fit for Duty? The Need for Physical Fitness Programs for Law Enforcement Officers. Police Chief Magazine Vol. 125. (#6). pgs. 62-64. Quigley, Adrienne C. (June 2008)