



TRAINING MODULE: POLICE FATIGUE

PURPOSE: To provide an overview of the problem of law enforcement fatigue, identifying associated risks, contributing factors, and possible solutions.

TIME: 20 Minutes

OBJECTIVES:

- Become familiar with the increasing problem of law enforcement fatigue due to sleep deprivation
- Identify the contributing factors to police related fatigue
- Identify the potential risks associated with fatigue
- Become familiar with possible solutions to combat fatigue

PARTICIPANTS MATERIALS:

- Participant Manual

TRAINER MATERIALS:

- Training Manual
- PowerPoint Presentation

Officer Fatigue



Zero Officers Killed or Injured

In 1991, the National Commission on Sleep Disorders Research heard testimony from police officers who described terrible work schedules, high stress, and overwhelming fatigue. Unfortunately, the commission had no way of determining if this was representative of police officers in general due to a lack of scientific data documenting the prevalence of police fatigue.

Officer Fatigue

Police Executive Research Forum Study

- Analyzed
 - Number of hours worked by Officers
 - Regularity of Work Schedule
 - Related accident and on-the-job injury data

In 1996, members from the Police Executive Research Forum conducted a study utilizing officers from four mid-sized agencies from across the country.

The study analyzed the following information and correlated it to fatigue:

- Number of hours worked by officers
- Regularity of work schedules
- Related accident and on-the-job injury data

Results showed that police fatigue is a huge problem for the law enforcement community. Data showed that fatigue is a contributing factor in officer accidents, injuries, and citizen complaints. Psychomotor performance deficiencies are directly related to sleep loss. Often times it is the every day tasks such as driving and walking that tend to be affected most.

Officer Fatigue

■ Law Enforcement Fatigue Statistics

- 53% of law enforcement officers average less than 6.5 hours of sleep per night
- 85% of officers reported inadvertently falling asleep while on duty
- 54% reported driving drowsy

Effects of Fatigue: Fatigue can lead to counterproductive behavior as well as put the officer and the public in danger.

Research has shown the vast majority of people need 7-8 hours of sleep each night with a minimum requirement of 6.5 hours to avoid sleep deprivation.

- 53% of law enforcement officers average less than 6.5 hours
- More than 90% of officers report being routinely fatigued
- 85% of officers reported inadvertently falling asleep while on duty
- 26% reported nodding off during daytime activities
- 54% reported driving drowsy

Officer Fatigue

- Two types of sleep deprivation:
 - Total Sleep Deprivation:
 - Extended periods of wakefulness without sleep
 - Chronic Sleep Deprivation:
 - Restriction of sleep over a period of time.

There are two types of sleep deprivation:

- **Total Sleep Deprivation:** Extended periods of wakefulness without sleep (ie: person stays up for 24, 36, 72 hours straight)
- **Chronic Sleep Deprivation:** Restriction of sleep over a period of time.

Current studies show that chronic sleep deprivation where the amount of sleep is reduced to 4 hours or less a night can be as detrimental as staying awake for extended periods of time. One study has proven that over a two week period, reducing sleep to 4 hours a night will result in psychomotor performance equal to that of a person who has been awake for three straight days.

However, less severe sleep reduction at the level of 6 hours per night results in reduced performance but eventually levels off. This means the deterioration reaches a point where performance stabilizes but is still considerably lower than that of a person who regularly gets 8 hours of sleep.

Officer Fatigue

- Physical Effects of Fatigue
 - Worsened mood: irritability, angry outbursts
 - Decreased Awareness
 - Impaired physical and cognitive functioning
 - Reduced ability to deal with Stress
 - Impulsiveness
 - Microsleep

Physical Response: Degraded functioning can be observed in individuals after as little as 2 hours of sleep loss.

Examples of changes in behavior include:

- Worsened mood: irritability, angry outbursts
- Decreased Awareness
- Impaired physical and cognitive functioning
 - **Decreased reaction time, memory, psychomotor coordination, information processing, and decision making**
 - **After 24 hours of wakefulness, the brains metabolic activity can decrease by up to 65%, particularly in those areas that play a role in judgment, attention, and visual functions.**
- Reduced ability to deal with Stress
- Impulsiveness
- Microsleep: Situation where a person falls asleep anywhere from 2-10 seconds at a time. Recent lab studies have shown that sleep deprived people have limited ability to predict the onset of sleep.

When a person is deprived of sleep, changes occur in the brain that cannot be overcome with willpower, caffeine or nicotine.

Emotional Responses are also observed with sleep deprivation

Depression and suicidal thoughts increase for male officers as their overtime increases. For females, these mental states are more affected by shift changes.

Officer Fatigue

■ Risks Associated with Fatigue

- Driving Behavior
 - 20% of all accidents are associated with fatigue
 - 100,000 accidents a year, 71,000 injuries, 1550 fatalities
 - Costing government and businesses \$46 billion annually
- Recent research has linked sleep deprivation to alcohol intoxication by evaluating cognitive psychomotor skills
 - 19 hours awake = .05 BAC
 - 24 hours awake = .10 BAC

Risks Associated with Fatigue

Driving Behavior: Fatigue is recognized around the world as the main cause of accidents in the transportation industry. Sleepiness can impair the ability to drive safely even before an individual falls asleep.

- 20% of all accidents are associated with fatigue
 - 100,000 accidents a year
 - 71,000 injuries
 - 1550 fatalities
 - Costing government and businesses \$46 billion annually.

Police are not exempt: NHTSA states that law enforcement officers are one of the higher at risk work groups for fatigue related accidents.

RECENT EXAMPLE: March 9, 2008 Santa Clara, CA Sheriff Deputy was in his second 12 hours shift of his three day work week. He veered off of the road and struck a group of cyclists, killing two.

- Recent research has linked sleep deprivation to alcohol intoxication by evaluating cognitive psychomotor skills
 - 19 hours awake = .05 BAC

- 24 hours awake = .10 BAC
- Reaction time when fatigued could be reduced by as much as a half of second which results in:
 - 45 feet at 60mph
 - 30 feet at 40mph
- Ability to maintain speed and road position are significantly reduced when the awake period is extended by only 3 hours

Officer Fatigue

■ Risks Associated with Fatigue

- Health Concerns
 - Change eating a sleeping habits
 - Hypertension
 - Fertility rates
 - Gastrointestinal disorders
 - Decrease productivity and increased absenteeism
 - Stress related disability claims

Health concerns: Irregular work hours has been directly linked to negative health issues to include disruptions of the body's biological rhythms which could affect

- Change eating a sleeping habits
- Hypertension
- Fertility rates
- Gastrointestinal disorders
- Decrease productivity and increased absenteeism
- Stress related disability claims

Fatigue is 4 times more likely to cause workplace impairment than alcohol or drugs.

Law enforcement fatigue and sleep deprivation are becoming serious political and legal liabilities for police managers.

Officer Fatigue

■ Contributing Factors to Fatigue

- Long hours
- Shift length
- Shift assignment
- Commuting
- Personal circumstances
- Job demands

Contributing Factors: The work hours in many professions are standardized and regulated as with airline pilots and truck drivers, however no such structure exists for police officers.

- **Long hours:** Long work hours are widely accepted as a major contributing factor in fatigue. As work hours increase, sleep is reduced, elevating fatigue and reducing levels of alertness. Overtime work in particular contributes greatly to police fatigue
 - Some officers work as much as 80-130 hours in a given week, logging up to 3,000 hours per year in addition to their regular shift
 - In the study the average amount of overtime per officer was 17.5 hours per month but as many know it is usually a few officers working the majority of the overtime while most work little or none.
 - Breakdown of overtime:
 - 35% Court appearances
 - 20% Late arrests
 - 11% Extra shift assignments for coverage
 - 9% Special events

- **Shift Length**
 - Although some studies have shown that the 8 hour work schedule has resulted in less fatigue, officers who work the compressed schedules (10-12 hour shifts for fewer days) have repeatedly emphasized that such schedules were less fatiguing on them and far more favorable to work.
- **Shift Assignment**
 - People are less able to cope with fatigue as they age. Age and experience explained a substantial amount of fatigue reported by the night shift officers.
- **Commuting**
 - There was a positive correlation between commuting distance and fatigue-related impairment as measured by the pupil response test.
 - Officers on day shifts with longer commutes self-reported fatigue and lower quality sleep. This is believed to be related to traffic concerns.
- **Personal Circumstances**
 - No relationship was found between marital status and fatigue but many noted that having young children at home was a major source of fatigue and sleep deprivation.
 - Female officers tended to show poorer quality sleep on standard scientific measures than male officers.
- **Job Demands**
 - Dealing with the public
 - Expectations of management.

Officer Fatigue

Ways to Combat Fatigue

- Review policies, procedures, and practices
 - Shift Scheduling and Rotation
 - Overtime and off-duty employment
 - How the department deals with overly tired employees
- Training
 - Importance of good sleep habits, hazards, and strategies on how to combat fatigue
 - How to recognize signs of fatigue

Solutions

Review policies procedures and practices within your department that affect:

- Shift scheduling and rotation
 - Assess how much voice officers are given in work-hour and shift-scheduling decisions. The number of hours and time of day an officer works has a direct effect the personal, social, family, and professional lives.
 - Minimize shift rotation
- Overtime and off-duty employment
 - Minimize overtime and long hours
 - 16-8 rule: For every 16 hours of work, departments must provide 8 hours of rest time
- Number of consecutive work days allowed
- How the department deals with overly tired employees
 - Assess the level of fatigue officers experience, the quality of their sleep, and how tired they are while on the job
 - Assess officer attitudes toward fatigue and work-hour issues.

- **Training:**
 - Recruit and in-service training on:
 - Importance of good sleep habits
 - Hazards associated with fatigue and shift work
 - Strategies to manage fatigue: good sleep habits, nutrition and fitness all combat fatigue.
 - Elliott Alertness Method www.drowsydriver.org
 - Combats fatigue using tactics to increase blood flow to the brain. Very quick online training course.
 - Recognizing Signs of Fatigue
 - Lack of alertness: missing traffic signals, not remembering the last few miles you drove
 - Lack of focus: wandering mind, incoherent thoughts
 - Physical Behaviors: yawning, excessive blinking, heavy eyes

Police executives must take steps to manage police fatigue and better understand its causes and circumstances. Increased political and legal pressure are forcing the agencies to develop proactive strategies to reduce fatigue-related incidents.

It would be foolish not to recognize the individual officer's responsibility in combating fatigue. Administrators and executives can institute mandatory rest periods and limit off duty but unless the officer recognizes the importance of getting the necessary amount of sleep, the policies are not going to achieve the desired outcome. Agencies have to take responsibility for educating the officers about the affects of fatigue. In addition, supervisors must conduct informal inspections of their personnel to ascertain if an officer is fit for duty or if their fatigue puts them or others at risk for injury.

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