PATROL OFFICER JOB DEMANDS: THEIR IMPLICATION FOR MEDICAL SCREENING

An important prerequisite step in the development of a lawful medical screening process is the identification of the functions of the job, both essential and marginal. Employment decisions should be based on each candidate's ability to safely perform all required duties associated with the patrol officer position. Therefore, it is imperative that employers provide their screening physicians with a description of the job demands that is comprehensive, accurate, sufficiently detailed, and relevant to the medical evaluation of candidates.

This section is divided into two parts:

Part 1: Identifying Job Functions provides information on both required and recommended ways to delineate essential job demands;

Part 2: Patrol Officer Job Information describes the results of statewide job analyses conducted by POST that have relevance for the medical screening of patrol officer candidates. It also includes a discussion of the impact of job stress on the patrol officer position, based on a literature review in this area.

PART 1: IDENTIFYING JOB FUNCTIONS

A. Criteria for Identifying Essential Job Functions

As described in the preceding chapter, "Pre-Employment Medical Screening and the Law," the determination of whether a candidate is "otherwise qualified" for a position is based on his/her ability to perform the essential functions of the job. The ADA provides fairly specific guidance regarding how to identify essential job functions. To be essential, a job function must first be real, that is, it must actually be performed on the job. Second, in must be universal, i.e., it must be required of all employees in the particular job function. Third -- and that which distinguishes an essential from a marginal job function -- is that an essential function, if removed, would fundamentally alter the job.

The EEOC regulations identify three types of job functions that can be considered essential, per the above criteria (29 CFR 1630.2(n)):

(1) The reason the position exists is to perform the particular function. For example, in the case of a security guard who checks identification cards, the ability to read the cards is an essential job function, since the only reason the position exists is to have identification cards checked.

(2) There are a limited number of employees available among whom the performance of the job function can be distributed. This is especially important where the total number of employees is low and/or where there are fluctuating job demands. Where there are a small number of employees for the volume of work to be performed,

each employee may be called upon to perform a multitude of different functions. Since in these situations an employee's ability to perform each function becomes critical, the options available to the employer for organizing the work among employees becomes more limited.

A similar situation might occur in a larger work force which experiences heavy demands followed by low demand periods. Although job functions could be distributed during low demand periods, during peak demand periods (e.g., emergency situations), the performance of each function becomes more critical and might limit the employer's flexibility in reorganizing operating procedures.

(3) The function is highly specialized such that the employee is hired for his or her expertise or ability to perform the particular function. In certain, highly skilled positions, an employee may be hired for his or her expertise or ability to perform a particular and specific job function. The performance of that specialized task would then constitute an essential function.

B. Evidence of Essential Job Functions

In conducting their reviews, regulators will look to the following evidence as to whether a particular function is essential:

- The employer's judgment as to what functions are essential;
- The employer's written job description, prepared before advertising or interviewing job applicants;
- The amount of time spent by employees performing the function;
- The consequences resulting from improper performance or a failure to perform the function;
- The work experience of past and current employees;
- The terms of a collective bargaining agreement.

The consequences of poor or inadequate performance can be far more important than the frequency of task performance in determining if a task is essential, particularly for positions like that of patrol officer which consist of highly critical but infrequently performed job functions (e.g., subduing combative subjects).

C. The Role of Job Analysis in Identifying the Essential Functions of the Job

The ADA does not require an employer to conduct a formal job analysis in order to identify essential job functions. However, a properly-conducted job analysis can provide an objective, defensible basis for the development of medical selection criteria and is therefore highly recommended.

There are a variety of job analysis methods, but not all of them are appropriate for the purpose of developing essential job functions or medically-oriented screening criteria. For example, an analysis that details the many different types of paperwork involved in law enforcement may be useful for developing job knowledge tests, but would offer little in the way of providing physicians with relevant job functions upon which to medically evaluate candidates.

Another example of an inappropriate job analysis method would be one that required employees and their supervisors to rate the importance of general characteristics such as "strength," "endurance," or "intelligence" without linking these characteristics to specific job functions or tasks. Such general information may not identify, for example, whether upper body or lower body strength is required, or whether muscular endurance or cardiovascular endurance is needed to perform a particular job function. Such information, by itself, would not be sufficient to determine whether a candidate who has particular limitations can perform an essential function with or without accommodation (EEOC, 1992).

A job analysis may contain information on the manner in which a job is currently performed, but should not necessarily conclude that the ability to perform the job exactly in that manner is an essential function unless there is no other way to perform the function without causing undue hardship. For example, an individual with a missing finger may need to grasp a firearm in an unconventional manner, but may be able to do so with a satisfactory degree of strength and accuracy.

D. Job Analysis Techniques

Job analysis information can be collected using a variety of techniques, including:

- Review of current job descriptions
- Interviews with supervisors and employees
- Development and administration of questionnaires
- Use of daily job diaries by employees
- Review of records (e.g., police reports, critical incident reports)

If at all possible, someone experienced in conducting job analyses should assist in selecting the job analysis method and otherwise participate in the effort. However, small employers may wish to conduct an informal analysis by simply observing and consulting with current employees, prior employees, and/or supervisors. If possible, it is advisable to observe and consult with several employees under a range of conditions in order to get a better idea of all job functions and the different ways they may be performed (EEOC, 1992).

PART 2: PATROL OFFICER JOB INFORMATION

This section presents the results of several statewide patrol officer job analysis projects conducted by POST that have relevance for the medical screening of candidates. The impact of job stress on patrol officers is also discussed, based on a literature review in this area.

The job information presented below is provided to: (1) identify the job-analytic assumptions made during the creation of the manual's medical protocols; and

(2) assist law enforcement agencies in their delineation of essential patrol officer job functions. **Before adopting these results, each department should verify the relevance and accuracy of this statewide job information for its own organization.**

A. POST 1979 Analysis of Patrol Officer Duties and Task Groups (Table 1)

In 1979, POST conducted a job analysis survey of 1,720 officers and 717 supervisory/command personnel from 219 (53%) of the 416 police and sheriffs' departments in the POST program (Kohls, et al., 1979). This survey yielded a vast amount of information on the patrol officer position; Table 1 presents only that part of the job information that may have relevance for medical screening.

Table 1 includes a broad range of patrol officer duties and tasks, including those related to physical performance, patrol and investigation, traffic/motor vehicles, oral communications and written communications. The average importance ratings assigned to each task group are also included.

B. POST 1985 Analysis of Patrol Officer Physical Job Demands (Table 2)

In 1985, POST studied the physical demands of the patrol officer position (Berner, et al., 1985). A total of 1,625 officers from across the state maintained activity logs for eight weeks, during which time they detailed the nature, severity, and consequences of each job-related physical activity in which they engaged. The most frequently reported physical activities are detailed in Table 2.

A total of 1,641 physical incidents were recorded, which translates into a physical incident rate per officer of 23 per year. By far, the most commonly reported physical activity involved resisting combative subjects. In over 50% of the physical incidents, reported failure to perform (or perform correctly) would have likely resulted in injury to self or others.

C. POST 1992 Analysis of Patrol Officer Physical Activities (Table 3)

In 1992, POST conducted another analysis of the type and frequency of physical activities engaged in by patrol officers (Weiner, 1992). In this study, field training officers recorded and rated the critical physical activities of 377 patrol officer trainees over the course of their field training (an average of 37 shifts per officer). The study was conducted across five police departments: Oakland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Sacramento, and San Diego. Results are displayed in Table 3.

The physical activities reported in Table 3 are divided into two categories: (1) those of a combative nature; and (2) those pertaining to emergency response. Combative incidents were more frequently reported, with an average per officer incident rate of 97 per year, relative to an average emergency response incident rate of 13 per year. There was a combined critical physical incident rate of 110/year.

TABLE 1: Patrol Officer Duties and Task Groups (1979)

Only task groups from the 1979 POST job analysis that would appear to have relevance for medical screening are included. Also included are the average importance ratings assigned to each task group by job experts (5=critical; 4=very important; 3=important; 2=of some importance; 1= of little importance) and examples of tasks underlying each duty.

I. PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE DUTIES

RESTRAINING/SUBDUING - involves restraining and/or subduing individuals by means of baton techniques, locks, grips or holds, or restraining devices, such as handcuffs (3.9)

- Handcuff suspects or prisoners
- Subdue attacking or resisting persons using locks, grips or holds
- Use baton to subdue attacking or resisting persons
- Use restraining devices other than handcuffs (e.g., leg irons, straps)

PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE - involves physical activity such as lfiting, carrying or dragging heavy objects, climbing or jumping over obstacles, running, etc. (3.1)

- Pursue fleeing suspects on foot
- Lift/carry heaving objects (e.g., disabled person or equipment)
- Pull oneself up over obstacles
- Climb up to elevated surfaces (e.g., roof)
- Jump or climb over obstacles (e.g., walls)
- Balance oneself on uneven or narrow surfaces
- Use bodily force to gain entrance through barriers (e.g, locked doors)

II. WEAPONS HANDLING (*including use of interior body armor*) (4.2)

- Draw and fire handgun/rifle/shotgun at persons
- Clean and service weapons
- Fire automatic weapons

II. PATROL AND INVESTIGATION DUTIES

ARREST AND DETAIN - involves arresting persons (with and without warrant) and guarding prisoners (3.5)

- Arrest persons with and without warrants
- Take into custody persons arrested by citizens
- Guard prisoners/inmates detained at facility other than jail

ADMINISTER FIRST AID (4.2)

- Administer CPR and other first aid techniques
- Operate resuscitator
- Control bleeding (e.g., apply direct pressure)

SURVEILLANCE - tasks that require careful observation such as while following suspicious vehicles, patrolling physically hazardous locations, operating observation posts, etc. (includes use of binoculars, photographic equipment, etc. (2.9)

- Follow suspicious vehicles
- Operate assigned observation post to apprehend criminal suspect (e.g., stakeout)
- Clock speed/visually estimate speed of vehicles

DECISION MAKING - involves analysis, evaluation, inquiry, etc., in order to make proper determinations (e.g., priority of required actions) (3.3)

- Survey and evaluate accident scenes and incidents
- Evaluate crime scenes to determine investigative procedures and assistance necessary
- Analyze and compare cases for similarity of modus operandi

REVIEW AND RECALL OF INFORMATION - involves the review and study of information for later recall such as regarding wanted persons and vehicles (3.3)

- Review information on known criminals and criminal activity
- Identify from memory wanted vehicles or persons
- Review reports and notes to prepare for testimony at trials

CHEMICAL, DRUG, AND ALCOHOL TESTING - involves physically or chemically testing for sobriety and/or presence of controlled substances (3.4)

- Administer physical roadside sobriety and "breathalizer" tests
- Use chemical test kits (e.g., Valtox, Narco-Ban) to test for controlled substances
- Arrange for obtaining blood or urine samples for sobriety tests

FINGERPRINTING/IDENTIFICATION (2.9)

- Dust and lift latent fingerprints
- Make fingerprint comparisons
- Fingerprint prisoners and other persons

SECURE AND PROTECT PROPERTY - involves making secure and protecting such things as accidents scenes, vehicles, homes and property (includes use of extinguisher) (3.5)

INSPECTING PROPERTY AND PERSONS - involves examining, searching, checking and inspecting buildings, people, vehicles, objects, etc.- includes use of flashlights, spotlights and strolometers to measure distances (3.1)

- Examine dead bodies for wounds and injuries to determine nature and cause of death
- Examine dwellings for signs of illegal entry
- Examine suspicious or potentially dangerous objects (e.g., suspicious packages, downed high tension wires)

SEARCHING - involves search of buildings, persons, vehicles, etc., and the search for missing, wanted, or lost persons, evidence, etc. (3.6)

- Pat search suspects
- Physically search properties and vehicles for contraband, criminal activity, wanted subject, or evidence
- Search, collect, and examine evidence from accident/crimes

LINEUPS - organizing and conducting lineups and photo lineups (3.2)

TABLE 2: Patrol Officer Physical Job Demands (1985)

All frequently reported physical demands are listed. These physical demands were found to be required in the service of both critical and noncritical incidents.

1. ***Running***

Distance: median and mode - 161 yards; maximum - 500+yards;
Speed required in almost all (89%) of cases;
Obstacles encountered 60% of time - most commonly:
- fences and walls
- shrubs
- vehicles

Most often performed in conjunction with encountering resistant subjects and/or jumping, climbing;
Average duration - 4+ minutes

2. ***Resisting Combative Subjects***

Most common physical peace officer activity (50% of instances);
Weight of resisters: mean - 165 lbs, mode - 180 lbs; max - over 220 lbs. (avg. height - 6 ft.);
Number of resisters: 1 (92%) to 3 (2%);
62% of resisters on drugs/alcohol.

Common resistances offered:
Pulling away
Wrestling
Hitting/kicking
Running away
Passive resistance
Pushing/shoving

Common actions taken by officer:
Grasping and moving
Takedown wrestling
Wrist, head or arm locks
Pushing/shoving
Dragging/pulling
Handcuffing

One-third performed without assistance;
10% of these activities performed without assistance and after running (avg. - 200 yds., max - over 400 yds.);
Average duration - 3+ minutes.

3. ***Balancing***

Width of surfaces: mode - 6", mean - 14";
Distance traveled: mean - 31', max. - over 140';
Distance from ground: avg. - 5', max - over 8';
Types of surfaces: Block walls
Mountains/hillsides
Fence tops
Roofs
Ledges
Garbage cans

80% of balancing performed in conjunction with climbing;
Average duration - 6 minutes;
Speed required in 28% of instances.

4. ***Climbing***

Object Climbed	Height Mean	Height Mode	Height Max.	Avg. Distance Run In Conjunction With Climb*
Fences/walls	7'	6'	16'	230 yds.
Ladders	20'	20'	35'	120 yds.
Stairs (flights)	2	1-2	5	120 yds.
Embankments	36'	10'	75'	120 yds.

Speed required in 33% of instances;
Average duration - 4+ minutes.

*Running required in conjunction with climbing in approx. 1/3 of instances.

5. **Moving Nonresistant Persons or Objects** (Includes motions such as dragging, pulling, lifting, carrying and supporting)

A. Moving persons

Weight: mean - 170 lbs., mode - 180 lbs, max. - over 250 lbs;
Distance: avg.- 40 ft., mode - 10 ft., max. - over 100 ft.;
94% of persons moved were conscious;
68% of persons moved were intoxicated;
Speed required in 40% of instances;
Performed without assistance at least 30% of time;
Persons lying down 85% of instances;
Movement of persons most commonly required lifting under arms, around trunk, or by both arms;
Average duration - 4 ½ minutes.

B. Dragging/pulling objects

Weight (unassisted) mean - 60 lbs, mode - 20 lbs.; max - over 100 lbs.;
Weight (assisted) mean -780 lbs, mode - 150-200 lbs., max - 1000 lbs.;
Distance: mean - 27 ft., mode - 6 ft., max - over 35 ft.;
Performed without assistance 80% of instances;
Speed required in 60% of instances.
Average duration - 3+ minutes

C. Lifting/carrying objects

Weight: avg. - 40 lbs, max - over 100 lbs.;
Items: boxes, lumber, furniture, sand bags, tire wheels;
Performed without assistance 85% of time;
Lifted from ground (70%), waist height (22%), shoulder (6%) and above head (2%);
Average duration - 6 minutes.

D. Pushing objects

Most common object pushed: vehicles;
Weight: mean - 3000 lbs, mode - 2000 lbs., max - over 5000 lbs.;
Distance: mean -58 ft., mode -50 ft., max - over 150 ft.;
Performed with assistance over 60% of time;
Speed required 50% of time;
Average duration - 2 minutes.

6. ***Jumping/Hurdling/Vaulting***

Most common object jumped: fences and walls

Direction	Distances Mean	Distances Mode	Distances Max.
Up	39"	36"	72"
Down	51"	72"	96"
Across	35"	36"	60"
Over	36"	24"	72"
Vaulted	56"	72"	72"

Speed required 90% of time;
Performed 66% of time while moving forward, 33% from stationary position;
Performed most commonly in conjunction with running and climbing;
Average duration - 4 ½ minutes.

TABLE 3:
Patrol Officer Rates of Critical Physical Activities by Type of Activity (1992) (N=377)

Type of Activity	Per Year Frequency*
	Mean
Combative Incidents	
Handcuffing	79.7
Using restrain device	2.4
Using baton	2.0
Using locks, grips, holds	10.4
Self-defense	1.8
Using body force	1.3
Emergency Response Incidents	
Running	10.6
Lifting/carrying	4.9
Dragging/pulling	2.4
Climbing	6.9
Crawling	2.2
Jumping	2.9
Balancing	2.9
Pushing	2.4
Other	1.8
Overall Physical Incident Rate	**110.7**

*Based on an estimated average of 221.3 shifts per year.

D. POST 1998 Entry-Level Patrol Officer Job Analysis (Table 4)

In 1998, POST conducted a patrol officer task analysis, surveying 1713 police officers and 611 patrol supervisors across 63 California agencies. There were 317 core tasks identified in the survey. These tasks were grouped into essential job functions. Comparison to the 1978 job analysis indicated that the core tasks for this position have remained stable over the last twenty years.

Table 4 lists those essential functions that are relevant to medical screening, along with a sample of tasks within each function. Also depicted are all tasks identified that involve physical activity and physical force.

E. Environmental Factors and Working Conditions That Can Be Associated with the Patrol Officer Job (Table 5)

Working conditions and environmental factors can also have a direct impact on the ability of a candidate with a disability to perform as a patrol officer. Table 5 provides a list of contextual factors that may have an impact on the medical screening of patrol officer candidates. This list, however, is not based on a job analysis, and therefore no data exists as to either the prevalence or consequence associated with any of these factors. Rather, it is provided to assist employers in identifying their own agency-specific job conditions and environmental considerations.

TABLE 4:
Entry-Level Uniformed Job Analysis (1998)

I. Job Functions and Tasks

Detecting and Investigating Crimes
- conduct surveillance of individuals, vehicles, or locations
- interview victims, suspects, and witnesses
- collect and identify evidence and property
- seize contraband and/or evidence.

Apprehending and Arresting Suspects
- obtain, verify, and executing arrest warrants
- conduct high risk/felony vehicle stops;
- use weapons;
- detain, search and handcuff suspicious persons;
- subdue and disarm resisting or attacking persons;
- transport, book, and handle prisoners.

Preparing for and Presenting Legal Testimony
- give legal testimony
- appear in court as a designated investigating officer

Managing Traffic
- observe traffic and identify, cite/arrest and book Vehicle Code violators
- conduct traffic stops and roadside sobriety tests
- direct traffic
- secure, manage, and investigate traffic accident scenes and hazardous roadway conditions

Providing Emergency Assistance to the Public
- engage in high speed driving in response to emergencies and escort emergency vehicles
- move, assist and transport persons in need of emergency assistance
- administer first aid moving/assisting incapacitated persons; and

Maintaining Order in the Community
- mediate disputes and quell disturbances;
- use verbal persuasion to encourage compliance assessing
- crowd/riot control

Advising and Assisting the Public
- assist persons with disabilities;
- calm emotionally upset persons

Working with the Community to Reduce Crime and Address Concerns
- conduct security inspections of businesses and dwellings;
- work with community members to reduce crime and address concerns;

Maintaining and Improving Job Readiness
- participate in physical fitness programs;
- engage in required practice with firearms and other service weapons;

Performing Routine Patrol Activities
- drive police vehicle in adverse or poor conditions
- perform physical work such as lifting, climbing, reaching, etc.

Table 4 continued on next page.

TABLE 4:
Entry-Level Uniformed Job Analysis (1998) (Continued)

II. Tasks Involving Physical Activity and Physical Force
Pursue on foot fleeing suspects
Subdue resisting or attacking persons using locks, grips, or control holds (excluding mechanical devices).
Use compliance or come-along holds to move persons.
Use hands or feet in weaponless defense.
Physically disarm persons.
Lift and/or carry hard-to-move objects or persons.
Climb up over obstacles or through openings (e.g., fences, walls, windows).
Jump/hurdle/vault over or across obstacles (e.g., bushes, low fences, ditches).
Balance oneself on uneven or narrow surfaces (e.g., roofs, ledges).
Sit in one position for extended periods of time.
Stand in one position for extended periods of time.
Walk for extended periods of time (e.g., foot patrol).
Drag and/or pull hard-to-move objects or persons.
Crawl in confined spaces or low areas (e.g., attics, culverts).
Push hard-to-move objects by hand (e.g., disabled or abandoned vehicles).
Use body force to gain entrance through barriers (e.g., locked doors).
Hold or support heavy objects (e.g., equipment, disoriented/injured persons).
Reach overhead to retrieve objects.
Jump down from elevated surfaces.
Squat, crouch, or kneel (to conduct person/vehicle searches, collect evidence).
Bend or stoop (to conduct person/vehicle searches, collect evidence, etc.).
Climb ladders/stairs.

TABLE 5:
Environmental Factors and Working Conditions That Can Be Associated With Patrol Officer Job Duties

1. Exposure to the following atmospheric conditions:

   Direct sunlight
   High temperatures (above 95 degrees)
   Low temperatures (below 30 degrees)
   Sudden temperature changes (more than 30 degrees)
   Humidity (high or low)
   High or low air pressure conditions
   Snow and ice
   High winds

2. Exposure to the following irritants:

   Dust
   Allergenic substances (e.g., bee stings, pollens, animal dander)
   Other toxic/poisonous substances (e.g., pesticides, herbicides, EDB, PCB, carbon monoxide, fingerprint powder, chemical irritants, chemical agents)

3. Adverse physical surroundings:

   Slippery surfaces (e.g., chasing suspect through wet grass, or over rain-slicked roofs)
   Working above floor level (e.g., roofs, fences)
   Extreme vibrations (from exposure to equipment or machines as might occur while directing traffic, or from sudden jerks or jars as might occur while subduing combative suspect)
   Confined areas or work that requires awkward or confined body positions

4. Adverse vision and hearing conditions:

   Poor lighting (e.g., glare, night vision conditions)
   Fog
   Noise (e.g., activated alarms, wailing sirens, gunfire)
   Faint sounds
   Other poor auditory conditions (e.g., distracting background noise)

5. Adverse working conditions:

   Irregular/extended work hours (including frequently fluctuating work hours and rotating shift work)
   Job pressure/tension
   Prolonged sitting

F. The Prevalence and Impact of Job Stress on the Patrol Officer Position[1]

One of the more intangible yet pervasive components of police work is job stress. In fact, police work has often been implicated as one of the most stressful occupations in the world. The patrol officer is constantly exposed to aggression, violence, and cruelty, and must frequently intervene in high-pressure, human crisis situations. It is one of the few occupations in which individuals are continually asked to face danger and put their lives on the line at any moment (Spielberger, et al., 1981). Patrol officers have a great deal of authority, are empowered to use deadly force, and must anticipate personal harm (Ellison and Genz, 1983). They must make critical decisions with little time for deliberation (Sigler & Wilson, 1988). They face a continual conflict between the instinctual tendency to avoid hazard and the obligation to face up to risks (Territo & Vetner, 1981).

[1]The impact of job stress is also discussed in the Gastrointestinal System.

In addition to the inherent dangers of police work, law enforcement officers are influenced by a variety of organizational stressors resulting from the administrative and professional requirements of the job. Topping the list is the autocratic, often rigid structure of law enforcement agencies, which can alienate and frustrate the patrol officer, as well as hinder communication and create feelings of non-support (Ayres, 1990; Brooks & Piquero, 1998). Shift work, common among police agencies, can result in chronic fatigue, deterioration of job performance, gastrointestinal and sleeping difficulties, as well as significant changes in the officer's lifestyle and domestic patterns (Villa, 1996; and Villa & Taiji, 1999). Staff shortages, work overload, tedious tasks and equipment failure are not uncommon (U.S. Department of Justice, 1997) and can lead to mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion (Figely,1999; Stack & Kelley, 1994).

Patrol officers must also deal with feelings of fear and hatred from a non-supportive, often-hostile public, and must respond to provocations with self-control, patience and compassion (Spielberger, et al., 1981). Added to their stressors is a criminal justice system which is often seen by officers as non-supportive (Brooks & Piquero, 1998; Stevens, 1999).

The stress faced by patrol officers comes in many forms: acute (e.g., high order emergency situations), chronic (day-to-day routine nature of the job), psychological (e.g, frustration with the criminal justice system), physiological (e.g., taxing nature of shift work; infrequent but rigorous physical demands), external (e.g., frustration with the justice system), internal (excessive paperwork; restrictive administrative policies) and stressors found in police work itself (e.g., role conflict between enforcement and providing service to the community).

Acute stressors, although less common, can have a significant impact on the officer. The more common acute stressors that officers can experience include a child's death or abuse, being involved in a shooting, a fellow officer's death/injury and gruesome scenes such as multiple deaths from vehicle accidents. Experiencing these acute stressors can lead to symptoms commonly found in an Acute Stress Disorder (such as sleep disturbances, intrusive flashbacks and recurring thoughts, and feelings of anxiety, anger and/or depression) and sometimes can lead to a Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (Gentz, 1994; Solomon & Horn, 1986; Stevens, 1999). Approximately fifty-five percent of officers will encounter at least one acute stressor within the first five years on the job (Gentz, 1994).

The impact of psychological job stress is evident by the sizable proportion of police worker's compensation claims that involve anxiety reactions and other mental disorders (counting for approximately 7% of disability claims according to the California Department of Industrial Relations). Furthermore, although precise figures are not available, a high incidence of alcohol abuse among police is not an infrequent finding (Hurrell & Kroes, 1975; Violanti, et al., 1983; Hageman, 1982). Yet another indication of the psychological demands of the job are the suicide rates of patrol officers, which run significantly higher than many other occupations, with standardized mortality ratios (SMR) of 133+ (Somoderilla, 1978; Lester, 1978).

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