



LAW ENFORCEMENT BULLETIN



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InFocus – NPI Research

Shift Work, Fatigue, and Overtime in Policing: Balancing Officer Wellness and Public Safety

The well-being of our personnel is an essential factor that all Police Leaders must address. It is a matter of leadership. Leadership includes caring for our fellow officers and making difficult decisions that may be unpopular. Our law enforcement team encourages you to meet this challenge head-on, do the research, discuss it with your command staff, reach out to other agencies, meet with your personnel, develop a policy, and explain to your personnel the effects of shift work, overtime, and fatigue on their ability to make good decisions and their overall health.

The [National Policing Institute](#), [The Police1 Survey on What Cops Want](#), [The National Institute of Justice](#), IACP, and the [National Library of Medicine](#), to name just a few, as any good scholarly search will show, this is not only an emerging topic, it is a known problem. As [Gordon Graham](#) says, Overtime Abuse in public safety is a problem lying in wait. Fatigue in policing is a problem, and it is reasonably foreseeable that a fatigued, tired, and not well officer can and will make poor decisions. The outcomes of this poor decision-making process can cost officers their lives, reputation, and career. The agency will also be held accountable for failing to address this known risk. According to the IACP Center for Police Research & Policy [Key Takeaways Bulletin](#), those risks include:

- Night Shift Officers are significantly more fatigued than other members of the Department.
- Fatigue correlates with degraded performance in community member encounters.
- Fatigue may compromise moral decision-making and impulse control
- Dayshift officers were more likely to generate cooperative resolutions

The National Policing Institute Study reports that, after decades of research, direct links have been established between a host of health problems among law enforcement personnel. Irregular and overnight schedules disrupt circadian rhythms, leading to chronic sleep deprivation. Night shifts, heavy overtime, and erratic schedules in policing are linked to higher rates of burnout, anxiety, and stress-related disorders (CDC/NIOSH, 2021).

We encourage our Law Enforcement Partners to begin addressing this risk by researching and implementing policies and procedures to reduce it. If you need a model policy on Fatigue Management, contact your J.A. Montgomery Law Enforcement Consultant for assistance.

Research Information:

<https://www.policinginstitute.org/infocus/infocus-shift-work-fatigue-and-overtime-in-policing-balancing-officer-wellness-and-public-safety/>

<https://www.police1.com/what-cops-want/perpetually-tired-what-police-officers-are-saying-about-fatigue-in-the-what-cops-want-survey>

<https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/officer-work-hours-stress-and-fatigue>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6381833/>