

Stress on police officers



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Police officers have one of the highest suicide rates in the nation, possibly the highest. They have a high divorce rate, about second in the nation. They are problem drinkers about twice as often as the general population. The facts are warning signals for unseen problems that are not being handled. Researchers use suicide, divorce and alcoholism rates as three key indexes of stress in a group of people. Clearly, police work is stressful.

Hans Selye, the foremost researcher in stress in the world, said that police work is the most stressful occupation in America even surpassing the formidable stresses of air traffic control. One study in Detroit concluded that the single, most important factor that led to a police suicide was marital discord. Studies in New York show that almost all officers are intoxicated at the time they commit suicide. The three indexes of stress are intertwined for police officers.

Police officials need to recognize the importance of these facts and provide policies and programs to reduce stress in these areas. Police stress is not always unique nor obvious. Almost any single stressor in police work can be found in another occupation. What is unique is all the different stressors in one job. Many people see the dangers of acute stressors such as post shooting trauma and have programs dealing with them. These stressors are easy to see because of the intense emotional strain a person suffers.

Data showed that 23 percent of male and 25 percent of female officers reported more suicidal thoughts than the general population 13.5 percent. In a previous study, suicide rates were three times higher in police than in other municipal workers, found. The findings, which in women officers' working day shifts were more likely to be related to depression and suicide

ideation, while in men working the afternoon or night shift was related to PTSD and depression, were surprising.

We thought both men and women officers would be negatively affected by midnight shifts. It's possible women may feel more uneasy and stressed in a daytime shift, where there can be more opportunity for conflict and a negative environment, On the other hand, higher suicide ideation reported by males on the midnight shift may be accounted for in part by a stronger need to be part of the social cohesiveness associated with peers in the police organization