



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 26, 2012

Office of Justice Programs (OJP)
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www.ojp.gov

USDOJ STUDIES OFFICER WELLNESS AND WORK SHIFTS

Shift length most beneficial to officers may also offer cost savings

WASHINGTON - The Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP) today announced findings from two studies examining law enforcement officer wellness. Funded through OJP's National Institute of Justice, the studies look at sleep disorders among law enforcement officers and the impact of shift length on officer wellness.

The Shift Length Experiment: What We Know About 8-, 10-, and 12- Hour Shifts in Policing found that 10-hour shifts offered numerous benefits over the traditionally used 8-hour shifts: officers get more sleep, work less overtime, and report a significantly higher quality of work life. This report is released concurrently with a related study, *Sleep Disorders, Health, and Safety in Police Officers*, which shows that sleep disorders, typically associated with poor health, performance, and safety outcomes, are prevalent among police officers.

Summary of Findings:

In *The Shift Length Experiment: What We Know About 8-, 10-, and 12- Hour Shifts in Policing*, researchers at the Police Foundation studied officers from two departments from different regions of the country and with different demographic composition: Detroit, Michigan and Arlington, Texas. The researchers found that officers working 10-hour shifts got more sleep than officers who worked the traditionally used 8-hour shifts. The 10-hour shift offered several benefits not associated with 8-hour shifts, while 12-hour shifts had some disadvantages.

Notably, officers working the 10-hour shift worked the least overtime of the three shift schedules. These reduced levels of overtime suggest the possibility of cost savings for agencies that use compressed schedules.

Additional study findings supporting 10-hour shifts include:

- Officers working 12-hour shifts reported greater levels of sleepiness and lower levels of alertness than those assigned to 8-hour shifts.
- Officers working 10-hour shifts reported significantly higher quality of work life than those on 8-hour shifts. No quality of work benefits came from the 12-hour shifts.
- There is no significant difference on actual work performance among the three shift lengths.

The full report is available at www.policefoundation.org/shiftexperiment/.

In *Sleep Disorders, Health, and Safety in Police Officers*, researchers at the Brigham and Women's Hospital gathered data on sleep disorders, health, and performance from nearly 5000 police officers in North America over a period of two years. The study showed that about 40 percent of police officers screened positive for sleep disorders – at least double the estimated 15 to 20 percent rate of sleep disorders seen in the general population. If untreated, sleep disorders can have adverse health and safety affects, which could ultimately pose a risk to the public.

The most common sleep disorder – likely to affect 33 percent of officers screened - was obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), a condition where the airway becomes narrowed or blocked during sleep. Excessive sleepiness affected 28.5 percent and moderate to severe insomnia affected 6.5 percent of officers surveyed. Overall, police officers who were identified as having a sleep disorder were also more likely to have physical and mental health conditions.

During a two-year follow-up, officers with sleep disorders had a higher risk of falling asleep while driving, committing an error or safety violation attributable to fatigue, and experiencing uncontrolled anger towards a suspect. These officers were also more likely to report a serious administrative error and had a higher rate of absenteeism.

An article on these findings published in the Journal of the American Medical Association is available at <http://jama.ama-assn.org/content/306/23/2567.full.pdf>.

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