

Being a law enforcement officer has routinely been ranked as one of the most dangerous jobs.¹ On average, officers sustain **30,900 injuries** a year that require at least one day away from work.² Officers and their families can work together to take steps to keep officers healthy and reduce injuries. The following are topics officers should be mindful of when it comes to injury reduction and tips on how an officer's family can help.



Shift Work

Law enforcement officers often work long hours that could potentially increase risk for injury. Working a night shift presents extra challenges to the body's natural circadian clock and ability to focus. Night shift officers are more likely to sustain an injury than daytime officers.

For more information about night shifts, sleep deprivation and how families can help check out [*Supporting Officer Safety Through Family Wellness: The Effects of Sleep Deprivation*](#).

Night shift scheduling may be unavoidable, extra caution should be taken to remain alert and focused.



The first night of the shift week is the most dangerous for officers.³ Work to maintain a consistent sleeping schedule on days off to avoid extreme fatigue.



Developing a family routine for sleeping, eating, and spending time together can contribute to a healthy sleeping environment for officers who work a night shift.

Law enforcement officers are at a higher risk of obesity than civilians.

Overweight officers suffer more severe injuries and take longer to return to work than physically fit officers.



Overweight officers miss an average of twice as many days after an injury as officers with a healthy weight.⁴



Fitness and Nutrition



Make fitness a family effort. Go on a bike ride, a swim, or take a hike.



Develop healthy eating habits at home with the family and while on duty.

Ensuring proper fitness and nutrition routines can lead to a lower rate of injury, as well as decrease recovery time should an injury occur.

For more information about family and officer nutrition check out [*Supporting Officer Safety Through Family Wellness: Nutritional Needs*](#).

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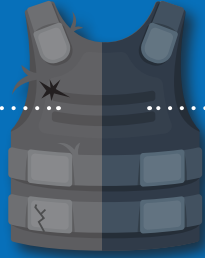
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Safety While on Duty

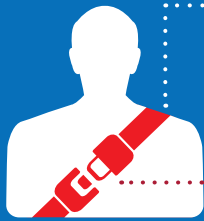
Wear your vest. Ballistic vest wear contributes to less severe injuries and decreased recovery time. An officer not wearing body armor is **14 times** more likely to suffer a fatal injury than an officer who is.⁶

Ill-fitting, degraded, or previously punctured vests do not provide the maximum protection and should be replaced immediately.



The U.S. Department of Justice [Bulletproof Vest Partnership](#) can assist in providing new and proper fitting ballistic vests to officers or agencies in need.

Wear your seatbelt. Seatbelt use contributes to less severe injuries in the event of a vehicle collision.



Officers wearing a seatbelt during a vehicle collision missed an average of **five fewer days** than those who didn't.

Wear your seatbelt on and off the job and insist the entire family does too.



Law enforcement officers are

3x

more likely to be injured on the job than other U.S. workers.⁵

Take precaution and be mindful of some ways to reduce the chance of injury while in the field.

Distraction-free driving is crucial to injury prevention. Routine use of technology behind the wheel does not mitigate the risk of collision and injury. Patrol car distractions impact driving more significantly than fatigue or driving under the influence.⁷



Distraction free driving should be a standard officers and families always follow.

Families should set up a plan of communication when the officer is on duty, to avoid unnecessary distractions or technology temptations while in the car. Consider agreeing to not contacting the on-duty officer, instead wait for them to reach out when it is safe to do so.



Ensure family members, particularly teens and young adults, understand the dangers of texting and driving.

Injuries may still occur.

The sooner an injury is seen by a physician or athletic trainer, the quicker treatment can begin. Being seen at the start of discomfort or pain can reduce the chance of chronic injury.⁸



This publication is one in a series. For more family support resources please visit: <http://www.theiacp.org/ICPRlawenforcementfamily>

For more information about injury prevention please visit: <https://www.theiacp.org/projects/ROI>

Endnotes

- 1 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Economic News Release- Fatal Occupational Injuries Counts and Rates for Selected Occupations, 2016-2017," December 18, 2018. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cfoi.t03.htm>
- 2 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Fact Sheet - Police Officers - August 2016," April 2018. <https://www.bls.gov/lif/oshwc/cfoi/police-officers-2014.htm#1>
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Zimmerman, Franklin H. "Cardiovascular disease and risk factors in law enforcement personnel: a comprehensive review." *Cardiology in review* 20, no. 4 (2012): 159-166.
- 5 Tiesman, Hope M., Melody Gwilliam, Srinivas Konda, Jeff Rojek, and Suzanne Marsh. "Nonfatal injuries to law enforcement officers: A rise in assaults." *American journal of preventive medicine* 54, no. 4 (2018): 503-509.
- 6 Tompkins, Dan. "Body armor safety initiative: To protect and serve... better." *NJ Journal* 254 (2006).
- 7 James, Stephen M. "Distracted driving impairs police patrol officer driving performance." *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management* 38, no. 3 (2015): 505-516.
- 8 A.S. Woody Goffnett, "Athletic Trainers in Police Departments: Costs Efficiency and Risk Mitigation," *Officer Safety Corner. The Police Chief* 84 (May 2017): 12-13.

