LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

MANAGEMENT'S ROLE IN

IDENTIFYING AND REDUCING

ORGANIZATIONAL STRESSORS

A RESEARCH PAPER

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INTRODUCTION

In most approaches to addressing the issue of stress, management has chosen to look at the individual officer and force the person to cope with the problems at hand. This attitude gives rise to the notion that nothing can be done about the stressors and that officers must learn to make the best out of a bad situation. Administrators have taken the stance that the individual is "sick" and therefore must be treated. This may be referred to as a person-centered approach.[1]

In using a person-centered approach departments have provided officers with psychological counseling or training in techniques on stress management. These efforts have been primarily aimed at increasing the officer's coping skills.

The time has come for management to be introspective. Administrators must assume that the organization, not the employee, is the "sick" entity. The employee is just a symptom of the true illness. The use of an organization-centered approach will allow management to remove or lessen organizational stressors, thereby treating the causes instead of merely the effects of stress.[2] By using an organization-centered approach, management can identify and eliminate organizational stressors and therefore develop a

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healthy environment, an environment perceived by employees as a good place to work.

The purpose of this paper is to present law enforcement managers with an organization-centered approach to identifying and reducing stressors within the organization. This will allow agencies to address the root of the problem rather than just treat the symptoms caused by the stressors, resulting in a healthier and happier work environment.

SUBTLE DANGERS OF POLICE WORK: STRESS

The public assumes that death on the job is the main occupational hazard of police work. We hear nightly news stories about the war on drugs, increasing crime rates and officers who have been wounded or killed in the line of duty. Admittedly, law enforcement is dangerous work. In the United States, during the year of 1987, 73 officers were feloniously killed in the line of duty. In the same year, 63,842 officers were assaulted and 21,281 recevied injuries as a result of these assaults.[3] Bodily injury, though, is not the number one threat facing police officers. Ninety percent of the time officers are in no physical danger at all.[4]

The real danger in police work is much more subtle. The greatest danger to police officers is not to their bodies. Management has to worry about injury to officers'

emotions and spirits because police work is a daily assault on the system, soul and the spirit.[5]

Although the stereotype is that police work is stressful because it is dangerous, in reality, the stressors in police work are likely to be more mundane events or situations such as frustration with the court system, police administrative policies and practices, constantly changing shift work, and lack of opportunity for advancement within the police organization. Other stressors that may affect officers are under-utilization of skills, quantitative workload or the opposite, inactivity.

In the last several years law enforcement administrators have shown a major interest in this phenomenon known as "police stress." It is important that "stress" be defined for the purposes of this article.

DEFINITION OF STRESS

In engineering terms, stress refers to an external force directed at some physical object. The result of stress is strain, that is, the temporary or permanent alteration in the structure of the object. Stress is some stimulus condition that causes disequilibrium in the system and thereby produces a dynamic kind of strain. The strain, in turn, triggers changes in the system aimed at restoring the original state of equilibrium. This engineering definition of stress also applies when dealing with the human body.[6]

Hans Selye, a physiologist and the acknowledged "father" of stress research defines stress as a nonspecific response of the body to any demands made upon it. According to Selye, when an individual is confronted by "any demand" (called a "stressor"), biological changes occur corresponding to the different levels of the body's defense mechanisms for coping with the insult. Sustained experiences with intense types of stressors can lead to a variety of ailments referred to by Selye as "diseases of adaptation." These diseases are caused by the body's own attempts to adapt to stress rather than to the stressor agents directly.[7]

While the word "stress" has acquired negative connotations, many researchers and theorists argue that stress can be either positive or negative. For example, the stress incurred during a sporting event or a mentally taxing exercise can challenge an individual to excel in performance and can even be a source of pleasure.

In this document the term "stress" refers to circumstances that have a negative, rather than a positive, effect on an individual. "Police stress" refers to negative stress that is directly related to an individual's job as a police officer.

FACTORS THAT INTENSIFY STRESS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

In his book The Choirboys, Joseph Wambaugh stated, "The physical dangers of police work are grossly overrated,

but the emotional dangers make it the most hazardous job on earth." Though police officers are mere mortals their authority role requires tight emotional control with suppression of emotion and the maintenance of a cool facade of authority. The law enforcement environment tends to block natural channels for emotional expression and stress reduction.

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF POLICE OFFICERS

The problem is that not only does society and the police department come to view the officer as a "cool facade of authority," but the officer comes to perceive himself in this stereotype. He starts to live his life in this manner, which leads him to the high incidence of burnout, divorce, suicide, and severe cynicism associated with the police profession. When the officer cannot separate the work facade from his personal life he runs the risk of becoming the victim of psychological and physiological stress.

The public has an immediate interest in the problems of police stress in that the public can be directly involved. This involvement can range from an inadequate police response, to a call for service, to an officer's improper use of deadly force.

The public's traditional view of police officers as "invincible superheroes" has further burdened officers by failing to recognize the very real impact of stress on officers' home, family, and work lives. The effects of

stress may be physiological (high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and gastric ulcers), psychological (anxiety, depression, and withdrawal), or behavioral (absenteeism, alcohol and drug abuse, and excessive use of force). Undoubtedly, these manifestations of stress can have a negative impact on the quality of officers' personal lives, the efficiency and effectiveness of the police department, and the adequacy of police services delivered to the public.

HIGHER SOCIETAL STRESS LEVELS

The more that stress levels in society increase the more stress an officer has to handle. The increased social pressures must be handled by officers who may be less able to cope with them than were their predecessors. Symptoms of burnout that used to appear in patrol officers after seven to ten years of service now show up in officers with just three to five years on the force.[8]

Dr. Mike Roberts, a San Jose California Police Department psychologist, thinks he knows why. He maintains:

> Today, for the first time, you have an entire generation growing up that has never been affirmed as adult members of society. They didn't live through a depression, such as their parents or grandparents did. There is no longer a military requirement; no war that required great national sacrifices they could participate in. They've never had to give up some of their needs for the common good.
>
> The generation now over 35 was quite happy to take a job that provided security. The younger generation doesn't have that same kind of security orientation. They've been to college; they expect more from life. They get tired of riding around in a beat car. They start wondering when they're going to be promoted and

chances probably aren't too good for that. So, rather than thinking it might be all right to ride around in a beat car for 20 years, they start hating the job. Their expectations are higher, and their backgrounds in terms of dealing with prolonged frustration are less, and recruits, especially whites, are more spoiled than they've ever been.[9]

Increased stress upon the officer takes it toll on the officer's family and the organization. Police departments must take it upon themselves to minimize the effects of job-related stress on an officer's family. More importantly, though, departments must seek to reduce or eliminate the sources of stress within the organization.

EFFECTS OF STRESS ON FAMILY

The effects of stress on officers' families is often overlooked. Police officers may hear from their spouses: "You've changed. You've become cold, callous, almost emotionless and unfeeling. You're not the same person I married. Whatever happened to the kind, considerate, patient, understanding person I used to know?" Veteran officers have surely heard these or similar comments due to the fact that their occupation affects the way they live. The stress associated with their profession impacts on their emotions and resultingly affects their relationship with others, especially family members.

Police training has traditionally failed to recognize the impact of stress on the officer's home, and too many agencies fail to adequately prepare the officer or the spouse for the effects this may have on the family. As a

result the stress that an officer experiences on the job is magnified by problems which must be confronted in an officer's home, family, and social life.[10] The families of law enforcement officers have rarely been a concern of management. Because of their antiquated training, administrators failed to acknowledge the link between job and home.

However, some departments are moving forward by providing training aimed at the whole family unit. The Houston Police Department now conducts a family night for cadets in the academy. Spouses are invited to the academy where they are given a tour of the facilities and a brief orientation. They are schooled on what their mates may encounter on a day to day basis, what their reactions may be, and how officers may deal with the situations they experience. Spouses are informed about such matters as insurance and death benefits. Some departments conduct classes for spouses and actually show photographs from crime scenes so that the families of officers may know what their officers are confronted with. Departments are developing and implementing programs whereby spouses are allowed to ride and observe the day to day activities that officers perform. Programs such as these foster understanding and by their very nature tend to reduce stress.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Law enforcement is in the infant stages when dealing with police stress. It is imperative that department managers openly express and demonstrate their commitment to department sanctioned stress management-reduction programs. Over the last several decades police administrators have done little to establish effective programs. Attitudes displayed by administrators have been "If you can't stand the heat get out of the kitchen" or "You were never meant to be an officer in the first place." As a result of many psychological studies related to stress and the law enforcement officer, administrators have begun to recognize the degree to which they are responsible for identifying, treating, and reducing employee stress. [11]

PEER SUPPORT AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS

These responsibilities are met partially today by numerous agencies who chose to provide programs which prevent or reduce the adverse effects of stress. Through employee assistance programs, wellness programs and rehabilitation approaches, management offers employees options never before available. The Los Angeles and San Jose Police Departments teach their sergeants to recognize signs of stress and then counsel officers who are beginning to show signs of succumbing to the strains of police work. [12] The Houston Police Department employs a full time staff of psychologists available to treat officers and their families

at no cost to the individual. Most large departments now use some form of a peer counseling program, where troubled officers may talk with trained fellow officers who have lived through similar problems.

Programs such as these are needed and wanted by officers. Therapeutic and preventive programs help officers cope and may even serve to lengthen officers' careers. Yet, in examining the research conducted in recent years, one begins to wonder if administrators have been treating the symptoms and ignoring the problem.[13]

If a doctor treating a patient for headaches finds that prolonged medication does not cure the headaches he will seek to find the source of the ailment. Once found, a good doctor will then attempt to cure the problem and not simply medicate a symptom. Law enforcement must now move past this "medication" stage and seek to examine itself honestly and openly. Only then will we find the problem and truly make an effort to cure it.

IDENTIFYING AND REDUCING ORGANIZATIONAL STRESSORS

Law enforcement managers must leave the stress management classes, the coping techniques, and the treatment of stress to the psychologists. Rather than concern themselves with stress management, law enforcement administrators must focus their attention on organizational stress reduction. The administrator's objective should be to provide and maintain a healthy work environment thus

creating a healthy, stable work force. With this in mind the administrator's main goal should be to improve the work environment by identifying and eliminating the sources of stress created and perpetuated by the organization.

MAJOR STRESS FACTORS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

Several studies in the last two decades have uncovered some common sources of organizational stress.[14] Although all of the factors shown cannot be eliminated it behooves the organizations to examine themselves and try to eliminate as many sources of stress as possible.

While it would be impossible to mention all of the organizational stressors found, we will examine some of the more common sources of organization-based stress.

PARA-MILITARY STRUCTURE AND STRESS

Most law enforcement agencies are based on a para-militaristic structure. Officers face the same pressures as a military recruit: strict personal appearance regulations, problems associated with always starting at the bottom of the ladder, observing that "rank has its privileges," etc.

The militaristic atmosphere within a police department discourages line police officers from expressing opinions to their supervisors. This is especially difficult for police. Officers have extensive professional training and feel that they have valuable input to make. Additionally, even the lowest ranking officer is required to act independently when he is out on the street. This

independence of carrying out one's job coupled with skilled training makes suppression of opinions a difficult task. The system discourages the officer from speaking, and so the conflict remains inside, most often in a state of silent rage.

As in the military, law enforcement is based on a punishment-centered philosophy. This philosophy assumes that officers willfully violate policy and, thus, should be punished accordingly. This leads to morale problems and the officer's feeling that he is always guilty until proven innocent.

EXCESSIVE PAPERWORK

One of the most common complaints from officers is excessive paperwork. The importance of paperwork cannot be overstated in relation to documentation, civil litigation, evidentiary matters, and statutory requirements. Most officers will agree that paperwork is a necessary part of the job. Yet most officers feel that they have a form for everything. It is important that departments periodically review their forms and make every attempt to streamline and update the paper process of the organization.

Under-utilization of computers is also a cause of frustration. In recent years prices of computers have dropped so drastically as to make them affordable even to the smallest of departments. Most departments employing the use of computers have very rigid guidelines as to the use of

the system. Operators are not afforded the opportunity to suggest better ways to utilize the systems already in place.

ADVERSE WORK SCHEDULES

"The human adult is an animal whose body is tuned by evolution and training to go about its business during the hours of daylight and sleep during those of darkness. Ask it to work at night and sleep during the day and it does rather badly."[15] Although this quote was not made strictly about law enforcement it does sum up a problem inherent in the profession. Police work by its very nature is a "round-the-clock" affair. Shift work upsets the physiological and psychological rhythms of an officer's body. Changing shifts every two weeks, month, or three months disrupts the personal and occupational lifestyles of officers.

If an officer remains on a shift for a lengthy period of time his body may adjust to the schedule he is working. In most departments, though, permanent shift assignments are rare, and rotating shifts are prevalent. Even when an officer is on a permanent night shift schedule his body must adjust on his days off. Most officers try to adjust their off-day schedules to match that of their family's, thus forcing their body to adjust to a different rhythm on their two days off.

With a changing or rotating shift schedule the problems associated with physiological adaptation increase. It takes several days for the average individual to readjust

his eating and sleeping habits. No sooner do most officers start to adjust to a shift then it is time to rotate shifts again.

Another factor involved in shift work is that the later shifts are often perceived as the least desirable shifts to work. This gives rise to another organizational stressor: the use of shift assignment as a punishment tool. Rather than assigning shifts by ability some managers choose to assign shifts as punishment. This not only punishes the officer, but it also punishes his family as well.

POOR SUPERVISION

Poor supervisory practices, such as ineffective communication with line officers, favoritism in assignments and evaluations, inconsistency in applying rules and regulations, lack of direction, and lack of trust and respect, can be devastating to law enforcement officers. First line supervisors are management's most important link with the officers on the street. When the supervisory is incapable of carrying out its function properly and efficiently the foundation of the organization begins to crumble.

One problem with poor supervision stems from poor selection practices. Emphasis has always been placed on loyalty to the organization, the officer's image, and his congeniality with those superior to him. Officers who do not question authority nor the organization are the officers

most likely to be promoted. This causes officers to alter their behavior in order to fit the mold of a supervisor rather than to think and act independently.

Management has made few, if any, attempts to look for innovative thinkers. We have artificially retarded our growth and abilities by promoting clones of the organization, people who think and act exactly like the person who preceded them. Private sector businesses reward employees for being "forward thinkers." Police work punishes and chastises employees who suggest new ideas and solutions to problems. Every officer, at one point in his career has heard his superior say, "It's been that way for twenty years, why change it?"

Supervisors should be able to function as part of an officer's support system, not as the main cause of stress in an officer's life. Noted psychologist, Terry Eisenberg states this best:

> Styles of supervision vary tremendously, some providing a haven for the nurturence of psychological stress, while others tend to prohibit its manifestation or at least provide a vehicle available to the police officer for coping with stress. The supervisor who always 'goes by the book,' is never available on a complicated or delicate street situation, is overly demanding, tends not to back up a subordinate when conditions justify such support, or who fails to attend to subordinates' personal needs represents a supervisor who can substantially contribute to the psychological stress of his subordinates. The importance of the supervisor in the life of the patrol officer cannot be underestimated.[16]

JOB CONFLICT

Job conflict refers to the situation in which officers find themselves being torn between conflicting demands and job expectations. These conflicting demands may be demands placed on him by other people or may be a conflict between his own values and those of others.[17] Conflict arises between the officer's perception of what first line supervisors want and what the "top brass" expects.

Job conflict also occurs in most organizations through the relationship that exists with "city hall." City government has its own ideas of what a policeman should do, while the police chief normally has other ideas. Both sets of expectations are usually communicated to the officer. Role conflict often arises out of the city's view of the officer as a public servant who should run any and all errands the city deems necessary and the officer's view of himself as a crime fighter.

Officers at the bottom of the chain find themselves at the end of what seems to be a never-ending, changing, values system. Officers are told to enforce laws a certain way due to political pressures which are placed on the administration. Later they may be told to do the exact opposite.[18]

Another facet of role conflict may be found in a study of Miami, Florida police officers. This study found

that the wide range of roles officers were expected to perform; e.g., peace keeping, community service, crime fighting, traffic enforcement, etc., coupled with the ambiguities of those roles, contributed significantly to stress and fatigue. Officers eventually become frustrated with what they see as a lack of emphasis on "real" law enforcement matters. Officers usually perceive community service as taking them away from their real job of fighting crime.[19]

INACTIVITY

Inactivity can be a cause of organizational stress. Stress researchers may call this "Job Underload." Job underload, often times, is as stressful--if not more stressful--than job overload. Job underload may be either qualitative or quantitative.

Qualitative underload occurs when officers must complete repetitive tasks. These tasks take on the same quality as those performed by a line worker in a plant. While the worker is kept physically busy his mind is not stimulated and challenged. The worker is mentally under-stimulated and thus bored. The day to day tasks of issuing traffic citations, cruising empty streets, or operating a radar, are just a few examples of being physically active but not mentally challenged.

Quantitative underload occurs when officers become bored due to inactivity. Simply stated, officers become

bored when they do not have enough work to do on a job. It comes as a surprise to most people that once they go beyond the television image of police work the majority of the job is mundane and boring. The public also has the misconception that criminals come out at night and that, resultingly, the night is the busiest time for police. The potential felon, like most people, does not enjoy being out on the streets when it is dark. This is especially true during the wintertime, where the weather makes it uncomfortable to go out in the elements. Thus, in the early hours of the morning, a policeman's activity is minimal.

It is believed that the stressor of inactivity is most tolling on the individual who works alone. Inactivity is considered to be one of the main stressors on firemen as they sit around the fire station waiting for hours on end with nothing to do. In reality, though, the effects are limited because firemen are facing this stressor in a group. The policeman is usually alone during his times of inactivity. The isolation added to the mental or physical under-stimulation tends to increase the overall effect of this stressor.[20]

UNFAIR DISCIPLINE, EVALUATION, AND PROMOTION PRACTICES

Unfair discipline, performance evaluation, and promotion practices could be included under the heading of "Poor Supervision." Supervisors can and do have an impact on how fairly officers will be treated. Yet, supervision is

only a part of the issue. Top management has the responsibility for developing an organizational climate of fairness. It is for this reason that fairness will be addressed here separately.

Unfair Discipline

As mentioned previously the military style of discipline in law enforcement can be a source of stress. Officers, many times, see themselves as second-class citizens, who have less rights than the criminals that they arrest. Officers are aware that they are not only civilly and criminally liable for their actions, but they can also be punished from within the organization.

Officers often express frustration with the disciplinary process. They complain of favoritism, excessive time between violation and corrective action, discipline based on public pressure, inconsistency and arbitrariness.

The intent of discipline is lost in the process. The idea of being able to disciple and teach an employee is lost in the process of punishment aimed at impugning the officer and deterring the behavior.

Unfair Performance Evaluations

The topic of fairness also arises during employee performance evaluations. Is the evaluation objective? Is their a concrete way of measuring the criteria? Will the "last bad act" style prevail and skew the evaluation? Will

the officer be rated on his ability to do the job? In most
organizations the answers to these questions will
unquestionably produce stress.

Unfair Promotion Practices

Fairness is always an issue in the promotional
process. The fact that a promotion may be based strictly on
a numerical score from a written test is questioned as fair
by most officers. The highest score on a written
examination is not, necessarily, an indicator of the best
person for the job. A promotional system that uses strictly
oral interview is sure to be questioned by officers. No
combination has been found that may be judged as truly fair
to all in involved. The problems inherent in promotion are
simply magnified by the small number of promotional
opportunities available to officers. By nature police
officers are competitive. Failure to be promoted within an
anticipated time frame may result in alienation from the
group, depression, or low self esteem.[21]

LACK OF INPUT INTO POLICY AND DECISION-MAKING

In any occupation it is imperative that employees be
allowed input into the decision-making process. Employees
who have no input feel they have no control over their own
destiny. They experience higher levels of stress, anxiety,
and anger. Officers are better able to deal with stress if
they know that they have some influence in the policy and
decision-making process. As discussed previously, the para-

militaristic structure, by design, creates stress. The
militaristic structure discourages officers from expressing
opinions to their superiors. In a 1975 job study, John
French found that the lower the level of participation, the
higher the job dissatisfaction. French also found that
common by-products of low levels of participation are
boredom and depression. French further discovered that not
only does participation reduce stress, it also produces good
working relations with others, positive attitudes towards
work, and high productivity.[22]

The more education that law enforcement officers
receive, the more likely are their chances of experiencing
strain as a result of occupational stress. The impact of
individual stressors intensifies proportionately with the
rise in the level of officer education. The more education
law enforcement officers have, the more vocal they want to
be in how the department is run. Consequently, one of the
greatest sources of stress for the college educated officer
is the lack of input into policy and decision making. The
officer who has worked hard to obtain an education, and then
attempts to apply his knowledge on the job, becomes
extremely frustrated when there are no opportunities to be
heard or when his suggestions fall on deaf ears.

Lack of input also includes the frustration an
officer feels when his talents are either being misused or
not used at all. Highly trained officers are required to

undertake numerous tasks that are not directly law enforcement related. Various reasons why officers must handle calls that do not seem to be law enforcement oriented exist because of limited tax dollars, understaffed or nonexistent city support agencies and the public's expectations of the law enforcement community. Though logical reasons exist for these non-police activities it does not make the professional policeman feel any better even if he is told the reasons. In fact, most often he is not told why he is to perform such functions. Before condemning an officer for such feelings a manager should consider he or shee would feel if assigned to empty all the wastebaskets, sweep the floors, or clean the restrooms.[23]

It is in management's best interest to know the talents of each individual officer and to put them to use as often as possible.

To this point we have discussed the problems inherent in most organizations. It would be remiss not to address strategies that would help in achieving the goal of reducing organizational stress.

WHAT IS A GOOD WORKPLACE?

Studies examining what are considered to be "good workplaces" show some common themes. In Levering's book A Great Place to Work, employees consistently use phrases such as: "trust," "pride," "freedom," "family," "fair treatment," and "being allowed to make mistakes."[24] These

recurring themes address the atmosphere and rarely address tangible items associated with one's work. The working relationships established rank high in employee's priorities.

When asked what it is like to work for good employers the following five phrases were heard frequently:

o "A friendly place;"

o "There isn't much politicking around here;"

o "You get a fair shake;"

o "More than a job;"

o "It's just like family."[25]

Again Levering shows the emphasis to be placed on the relational characteristics of the work environment. Although important, the physical and tangible elements are not sources of satisfaction. If the physical and tangible aspects are lacking they will become a source of dissatisfaction. Their mere presence does not create satisfaction, it only placates dissatisfaction.

The head of a law enforcement agency is the most important factor in the development of a healthy workplace. The administrator must be fully committed to making the workplace a healthy environment. The willingness to change and the fortitude to examine the organization are vital in the process of removing the stressors found in the workplace. Mere words will not suffice. The law

enforcement manager must lead the way with his actions. He must be highly visible in his efforts to truly change the environment. Should the manager fail to prove his commitment employees will only pay lip service to the recommended changes.

EXAMINING THE ENVIRONMENT

The premise of this paper is to look at the organization as the "patient" rather than the individual as the "patient." Therefore it is necessary that the workplace should be given a thorough "physical." The factors previously discussed are common to most agencies. It is necessary, however, for each agency to look at itself and determine the causes of stress and how they may best be remedied. There are many ways of going about the business of self-examination including surveys, quality circles, inspection processes, etc. Management must act on the problems that it finds. Without action employees are subjected to the frustration of knowing that management knows what is wrong with the organization, yet fails to do anything about it. Again, it is imperative that employees perceive management as being sincere or the results obtained will not be honest. Management should also ensure that employees feel that they will not be chastised or reprimanded for being honest about the organization.

After examining the workplace management must establish goals that lead the organization to become a more

healthy environment. First in this process should be to establish a Mission Statement, or Objective. The mission statement will define the purpose of the department and give officers a direction to work toward. A department without goals is akin to a ship without a rudder. It is doomed to sail haplessly, never knowing where the next wind will take it. The following is an example of an effective mission statement:

> The mission of the Houston Police Department is to enhance the quality of life in the City of Houston by working cooperatively with the public and within the framework of the U.S. Constitution to enforce the laws, preserve the peace, reduce fear, and provide a safe environment.[26]

Defining a mission statement is a time consuming task, but its value to the organization should not be overlooked. The agency leader must believe in, and constantly promote the mission of the department. Belief in the organization's missions inspires all employees to commit to the level of excellence stated in the goals of the department.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

In spite of the para-militaristic structure of most agencies, law enforcement administrators must find a way to practice the type of administration necessary to make their agency a good place to work. Employees must be trusted. Alternatives to punishment-centered philosophy must be explored. Leaders must be guided by their values. They must create a sense of purpose in their employees, give them

a sense of direction and worth, and encourage attitudes that are conducive to a healthy work environment.

The organizational approach to reducing stress requires that law enforcement agencies clarify their values as to how people are to be managed and treated. Respect for the individual must be at the core of an agency's value system.

ENCOURAGING COMMUNICATION

Law enforcement managers must encourage better communication within their agencies. Officers should feel free to voice their ideas and opinions within the organization while preserving the "chain of command" for procedural matters. When an agency provides open channels of communication it allows ideas to be exchanged, and many problems can be resolved or entirely avoided.

There are many techniques available that encourage better communication within an agency. These include, but are not limited to the following:

o Brainstorming;

o Command and Staff meetings;

o Designated Devil's advocate at meetings;

o Executives working on line jobs;

o Open door systems;

o Quality circles;

o Suggestion programs;

o Surveys.

Officers must be encouraged to input into the system. Often they are the ones performing the day to day tasks, yet no one asks them how to best do those very same tasks.

CONCLUSION

Law enforcement leaders wanting to reduce the psychological stress caused by poor supervision and apathetic attitudes toward employees must be committed to making the workplace a "worthplace" -- where people care about people and where both organizational and employee needs are emphasized.[27]

The time has come for law enforcement administrators to realize that their employees are not machines that can be disposed of when they fail to function properly. Agencies have large investments in each of their officers and officers have large investments in their agencies. To throw those investments away because of a breakdown in the system, or the person, does not make good sense. The agency owes it to itself and its employees to "treat" the employee and, more importantly, to "treat" the organization, thus creating a healthy work environment and a healthy employee.

End Notes

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23.   Kroes, <u>Society's Victims</u>, 14.

24.   N.I.O.S.H., <u>Preventing Law Enforcement Stress</u>, 23.

25.   Ibid.

26.   Ibid., 47.

27.   Ibid., 33.

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