

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

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Patrol Scheduling Alternatives

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**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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Leadership Command College**

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ABSTRACT

The nature of police work requires that patrol positions be manned 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Patrol officers have traditionally worked eight hour shifts spanning three shifts – days, evenings and nights. This research paper explores the possibility that 10 or 12-hour shifts could be more beneficial and efficient for the agency, the officers and the community they serve. The researcher first reviewed the Fair Labor Standards Act and Vernon's Local Government Code to determine if there were any legal issues that would prevent officers from working longer shifts. Researcher then conducted telephone interviews with representatives of agencies who currently staff their patrol division on longer shifts. Lastly, researcher compiled information, based on calendar year 2004, to reflect the average daily number of Calls for Service per hour at the researcher's agency, in order to more effectively deploy available manpower. Researcher found that the legal issues could be overcome and that there were benefits to all stakeholders. Benefits include more officers on the streets during peak hours, less time spent in briefings/more time spent on the streets, higher morale for officers. The disadvantages of longer shifts are the fatigue of officers, especially those assigned to nights, and the possibility of increased leave usage. The researcher contends that a combination of 8-hour shifts and 12-hours shifts, to include a 12-hour power shift during the busiest hours of the day, could be a win-win situation for all involved.

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INTRODUCTION

The nature of police work requires that patrol positions be staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Traditionally, police officers have worked eight-hour shifts with a variation of fixed or rotating days off. Could longer shifts, in the form of 10 or 12-hour days, be more efficient or beneficial to officers, administration and the community? The purpose of this research is to explore this question.

The researcher will complete a review of literature that has been published on the subject. Some of this literature is directly related to law enforcement, some of it is directed toward any business that provides 24-hour coverage through shift work. The researcher will interview supervisors of police agencies that are currently utilizing shifts that are longer than eight hours per day. Ultimately, if the research results are favorable to the researcher's agency, a vote will be conducted of the officers of the agency. If a majority of officers are in favor of the scheduling change, an alternate schedule will be implemented. Some of the issues that will be considered and researched include manpower/coverage, benefits to the department, benefits to the officers, benefits to the community and legal issues.

The anticipated findings of the research are that some departments may change to longer shifts to increase coverage and to benefit their employees and communities. Many departments already schedule shifts on longer hours. The employees' morale may be higher due to more time off. The department benefits from the unity of command that is present on many longer shifts. The community benefits from having the same officers in their area on a more regular basis and more officers on duty at any time.

This research paper will provide information about the pros and cons of alternative scheduling to any agency that has considered introducing longer shifts in their department.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several issues had to be considered before making a proposal to change patrol to longer shifts. These included any legal issues, manpower issues, choosing a schedule that would work for our department and the affects of a longer work day on the officers.

The researcher first considered the legal issues. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) makes exceptions to the 40-hour work week for police and fire personnel. Whereas, most municipal workers operate on a seven day, 40-hour work week, FLSA allows police to work 43 hours in a week before being eligible for overtime. If the work period is expanded to a two week period, 86 hours of work are allowed before overtime compensation is required. (O'Toole, 2002.)

Section 142.0015 (f),(j) of Vernon's Local Government Code states that in cities with a population of more than 10,000, a majority of police officers must sign a written waiver agreeing to adopt a work schedule that requires them to work more hours in a week than is required of other city employees. (Vernon's Texas Codes Annotated, pp. 33-34).

Section 143.045 (a), (c) of Vernon's Local Government Code discusses accrual and payment of sick leave. The city currently pays employees a maximum of 720 hours of accrued sick leave at separation. Researcher was concerned that the language of this section would require the city to pay out more accrued sick leave at a drastic cost to the city. This would have been a "deal-breaker." However, after talking with Assistant City Attorney and the police department legal advisor, researcher no longer believes this to be the case. (V. Huynh and W. Spencer, personal communication, March 9, 2005.) Researcher also spoke to representatives of several police agencies who also agreed with the legal experts that researcher consulted. Researcher was advised by a representative of the Irving Police Department, that before his

department changed to 12-hour shifts, their schedule plan was reviewed by the Texas Municipal Police Association and considered to be legally sound. (J. Thorpe, personal communication, March 29, 2005)

LAPD conducted a one-year test of compressed scheduling in 1994. They found that compressed work schedules were an important recruitment and retention tool. They believe that 12-hour shifts are cost neutral and that 10-hour shifts create a 10-15 percent increase in personnel and logistics. Compressed schedules have positive impact on morale. In their experience, sick time decreased and the longer shifts had little impact on on-duty injuries. (Williams, Eide, 1995.)

Researcher would recommend that all leave benefits (vacation, sick leave, and holiday) be accrued and used in hourly increments in the same manner as all other city employees.

Manpower possibilities were the next consideration. How many officers can we put on the streets utilizing different shift scheduling techniques? Twelve-hour shifts provided a major benefit in time savings by cutting down on the number of briefings held each day. By moving from 8 to 12-hours shifts, saves a half hour per sector in briefing/debriefing time every day. This is time that officers are on the streets actively working. This time and cost savings was cited by several of the references.

Researcher found two commonly used 12-hour shift schedules. McKinney, Sherman and Irving Police Departments use a schedule which requires officers to work four 12-hour shifts and then have three days off one week. The next week the officers work three 12-hour shifts with four days off. Carrollton Police Department uses a schedule that allows all officers to have a three day weekend every other weekend and never work more than three days in a row. (A. Brennan, personal communication, March 24, 2005.)

Fatigue was a major factor that had to be considered. Excessive fatigue could lead to officer injury, bad-decision making and fleet accidents. Research has shown that officers who work compressed shifts with more time off, appear to have fewer sleep problems and thus less fatigue. Officers who worked longer shift, but fewer days have said that such shifts were less fatiguing. It is also known that people are less able to cope with fatigue as they age. (Vila, Kenney, 2000.) Sgt. Waldschmidt of the McKinney Police Department has expressed to the researcher that 12-hour shifts were extremely taxing on him physically. He worked the day shift which became busier toward the end of the shift. He stated that he was very worried about officers working the night shift. He would see these night shift officers coming off duty as he was reporting to work in the mornings and could see how fatigued they were. (D. Wallschmidt, personal communication, April 5, 2005.) To the contrary, Sherman Police Department found in their research that officers reported that they felt less stress, more rested and more alert because of the extra time off that they experienced due to the 12-hour shifts. (Ayers, Dunn, Jones, Brooks, Dawsey, 1999.)

The issue of overtime payments was considered. What affect would 12-hour shifts have on overtime? Bedford Police Department and DFW Airport Department of Public Safety both reported to the Sherman Police Department that their overtime payouts dropped significantly. DFW DPS report that they saw a 52% reduction in overtime. (Ayers, Dunn, Jones, Brooks, Dawsey, 1999.) Irving Police Department states that they saw a reduction in overtime as well. (J. Thorpe, personal communication, March 29, 2005)

McKinney Police Department reported that their overtime did not decrease, but that they are 12 officers short and that may contribute to the amount of overtime they pay out. (D. Wallschmidt, personal communication, April 5, 2005.)

Irving Police Department reported that sick leave usage went down during the initial trial period of the 12-hour shifts, but once the trial period was over, sick leave usage went back up.

(J. Thorpe, personal communication, March 29, 2005.)

All departments that the researcher spoke to or read about in the research of others, believed that compressed shifts improved the morale of the officers. Sherman cited that morale was improved because of less stress and more time off. (Ayers, Dunn, Jones, Brooks, Dawsey, 1999.) Carrollton also cited the amount of time off. They have trouble filling CID positions because CID is a five day work week. (A. Brennan, personal communication, March 24, 2005.)

McKinney cited the camaraderie that exists because of the close work units. The officers of a work unit all work together and are off together and often participate in activities together off duty. (D. Wallschmidt, personal communication, April 5, 2005.)

How do you schedule training, which is normally in eight hour blocks, into a 12-hour schedule? Several departments conduct in-service training in eight hour blocks per quarter. Another still schedules in-service in 40 hour blocks a week at a time. Ideally, training would be scheduled for the short day (8 hour day) of the two week schedule.

Equipment could become an issue if the department does not have enough vehicles to support the number of officers on the street.

All of the agencies that the researcher spoke to, allow officers to flex time if they have to attend court during their off duty time. This would be a major benefit in decreasing fatigue of officers working nights.

METHODOLOGY

The research question posed by the project paper is “Would a work schedule other than eight-hour shifts be more efficient, effective and beneficial for patrol?” For an alternative shift

schedule to work it would have to be advantageous for the agency and the community, as well as the officers. The researcher briefly considered 10-hour shifts, but due to the necessity of extra vehicles and only a short overlap of increased manpower, this idea was not further pursued. Researcher concentrated on 12-hour shifts for the purpose of this research.

The hypothesis of this research is that longer, but fewer work days would be beneficial to the agency, the officers and the community. Less time spent conducting shift change briefings and debriefings would result in more officers on the streets at any given time. This would benefit the agency and the community. The structure of the 12-hours shifts would allow for a more cohesive chain of command since the sergeants and their officers would work as a unit, being on and off duty together. This would benefit the agency and the camaraderie that naturally occurs in this set up would raise the morale of the officers. More time spent away from work would benefit the officers by reducing stress and allowing more time to recuperate.

In addition to a review of the literature and legal research, the researcher conducted telephone surveys of cities in the area who currently work 12-hour shifts. The researcher was attempting to locate agencies that were similar in size and operate under Civil Service Statutes. Agencies surveyed included Sherman Police Department, McKinney Police Department, Carrollton Police Department and Irving Police Department. All of these agencies except McKinney Police Department are Civil Service agencies. Irving Police Department is the largest and most like the researcher's agency. The survey included questions about safety issues, the accrual and payout of benefits, overtime issues, manpower increases/decreases, scheduling of shifts and training, morale and officer likes/dislikes. The response to the surveys was positive with all agencies contacted responding. The information obtained was compared and analyzed on an issue by issue basis. It was also compared to information obtained from the literature.

The Crime Analysis Unit of the researcher's agency, compiled information, based on calendar year 2004, to reflect the average daily number of Calls for Service. This information will be analyzed to determine the busiest hours of the day, to more effectively deploy available manpower.

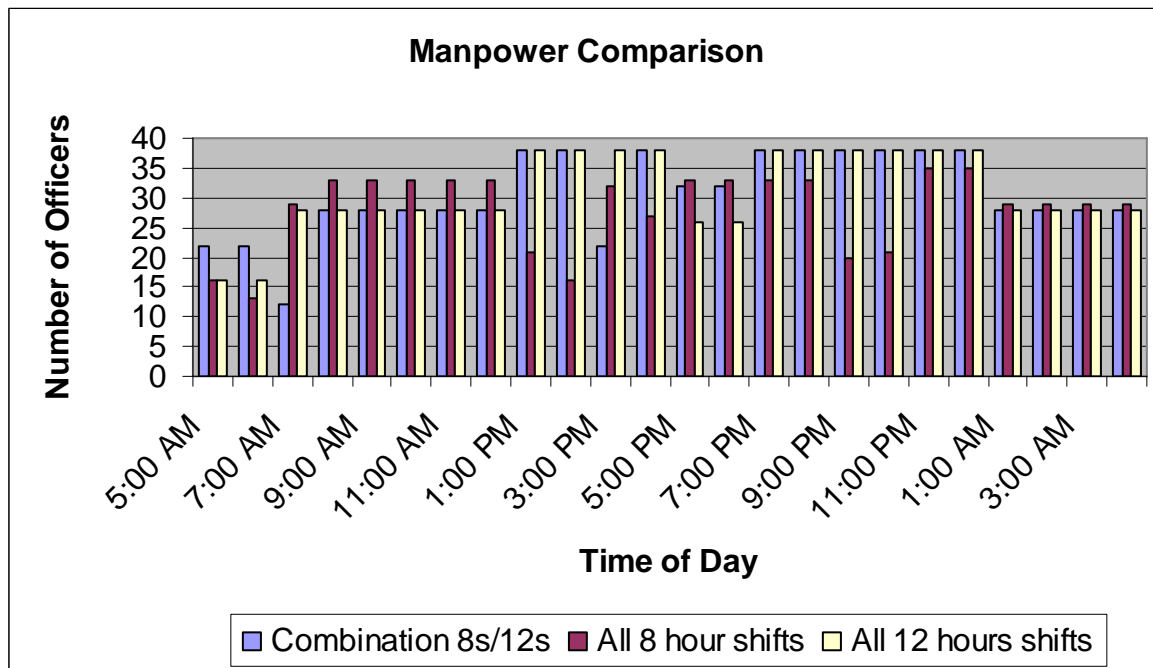
FINDINGS

The researcher briefly considered 10-hour shifts, because they are so popular with officers. 10-hour shifts work well for units that do not require 24 hour a day staffing. Irving Police Department tried 10 hours shifts but had to abandon the scheduling and have since gone to 12-hour shifts. (J. Thorpe, personal communication, March 29, 2005.)

Researcher considered a combination of 8-hour and 10-hour shifts – Day shift would remain on 8-hour shifts and Evening and Night shifts would work 10-hour shifts. This could not be accomplished due to an insufficient number of vehicles. This schedule would only provide a manpower boost/overlap for four hours a day. That was not enough benefit to the department.

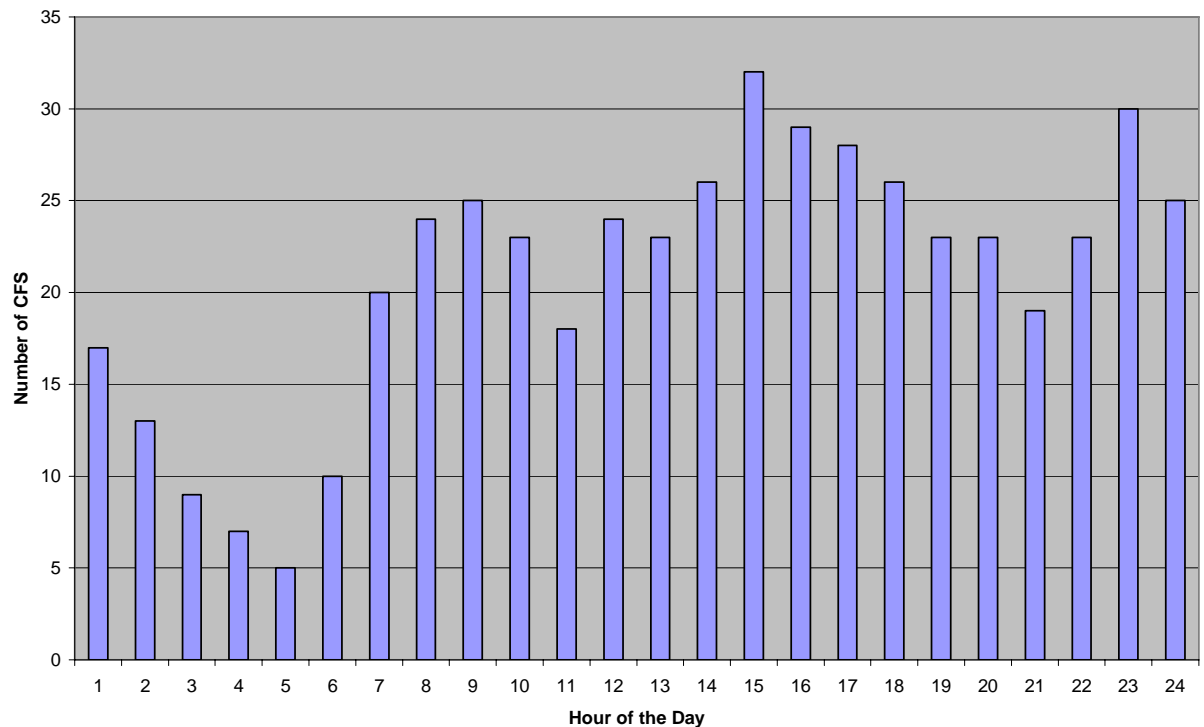
The researcher considered two plans that include 12-hour shifts. One plan would leave half of the sectors on 8-hours shifts, the other half on 12-hour shifts and a power shift on 12-hour shifts. The other would institute 12-hour shifts for all of patrol. Researcher compared highest average manpower possibilities for these two plans and the present 8-hour shift schedule. For this comparison, the greatest possible number of officers per day was used. Only regularly scheduled days off were figured in to the comparison. Researcher did not consider that any officer would be on vacation, sick leave or training. Researcher did consider the decrease in manpower during shift change briefings. On the current 8-hour shift schedule the manpower is spread more evenly throughout the 24-hour period; however, the advantage of the schedules that incorporate 12-hour shifts is that they greatly increase manpower during the busiest times of the

day. See comparison chart below. There are 11 hours during the day that a combination of 8-hour and 12-hour shifts provides the greatest number of officers on the streets. Ten hours during the day all 12-hour shifts provide manpower equal to the combination shift. There are 13 hours that an all 8-hour shift provides the greatest manpower, 7 a.m. until 1 p.m. and 1 a.m. until 5 a.m. The increases 5-7 p.m. and 3-5 a.m. are miniscule, leaving only the five officer increase from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. as having any impact.



Based on the chart above, the researcher would recommend a combination of 8-hour and 12-hour shifts. Half of the sectors would remain on 8-hour shifts and half would convert to 12-hour shifts. There would be a 12-hour power shift for the busiest hours of the day. The chart below reflects the daily average Calls for Service based on data collected by the researcher's agency's Crime Analysis Unit for the calendar year 2004.

2004 Daily Average Calls for Service per Hour



Leaving half of the sectors on 8-hour shifts would accomplish the increased manpower during the busiest hours of the day and maintain some 8-hour shifts for those officers who do not want to work 12-hour shifts due to personal fatigue, child care or college attendance. A combination schedule would incorporate the best of both shift schedules benefiting the agency and the community by fielding more officers and benefiting the officers who want to have more time off.

This is the 12-hour shift schedule that the researcher would recommend:

	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
Platoon 1	W	W	O	O	W	W	W	O	O	W	W	O	O	O
Platoon 2	O	O	W	W	O	O	O	W	W	O	O	W	W	W

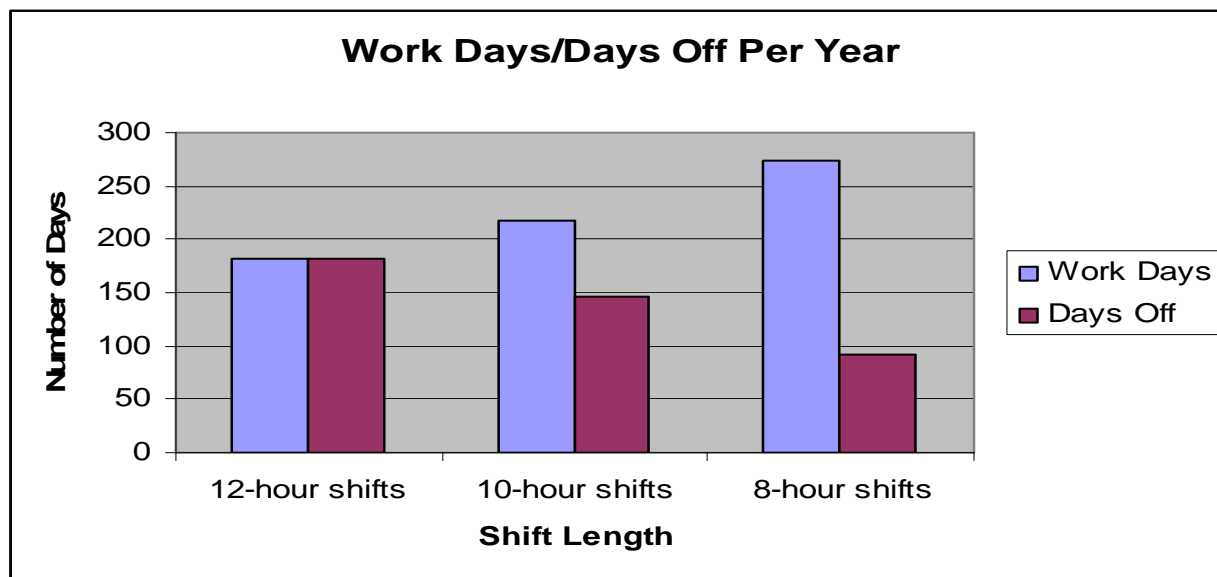
W=Working

O=Off

One working day during the 2 wks would be 8 hours (to be scheduled by your sergeant and considering manpower.)

This schedule allows officers to have seven out of 14 days off. They have every other Friday, Saturday and Sunday off and never work more than three days in a row. The Review of Literature substantiated that more days off allows officers to spend more time with their families and return to work more rested and less stressed. This leads to better officer morale.

Below is a graph created from data provided by Shiftwork Solutions LLC, showing a comparison of days worked to days off on 8, 10 and 12-hour shifts. (Shiftwork Solutions, LLC, February 13, 2005.)



Information gathered from all sources was consistent in that even though longer shifts can be taxing on officers, all officers enjoyed the extra time off. The extra time off left them more relaxed and less stressed, leading to more camaraderie and higher morale. The agency benefits from the unity of command created by officers and their supervisors being on duty together. The community benefits from having the same beat officer on a more regular basis.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research project paper was to determine if a work schedule other than

eight-hour shifts would be more efficient, effective and beneficial for patrol. An alternative shift schedule would be advantageous to the agency and the community, as well as the officers.

Conclusions to the following issues were addressed in the research of this topic:

- Legal issues – Fair Labor Standards Act includes an exemption for police officers that allows them to work 43 hours in a 7 day period and 86 hours in a 14 day period before earning overtime. The schedule that the researcher is recommending is based on an 80-hour, 14 day schedule. The other legal issues center around Vernon's Civil Statutes which govern municipalities. If the Chief of Police wishes to follow through with this recommendation to implement 12-hour shifts, a vote of all sworn officers would have to be held and would have to pass by a majority. This vote would entail officers signing a waiver stating that they agree to work the longer hours, including working more hours in one of the weeks of the two week period. The waiver would also have to spell out the accrual and usage/payment of benefits such as vacation, sick leave and holiday time.
- Manpower/Coverage/Vehicles – A combination of 8-hour and 12-hour shifts would be recommended. This recommendation led to the greatest coverage throughout the hours of the day. It also improved coverage during the busiest time of the day. The greatest number of officers on the streets at one time would be 38. Supply advised me that we have enough vehicles to cover this number.
- Benefits to the police agency – There would be more officers on the streets during the busiest hours of the day. There would be less time wasted conducting briefings. Most agencies interviewed stated that longer shifts cut down on

overtime payouts. The only agencies that did not experience a decrease in overtime were understaffed and the understaffing was causing the overtime.

More time off for the officers would suggest better morale. Better morale leads to increased productivity. The unity of command created by sergeants and their officers having the same duty days and same days off would be conducive to greater accountability, consistency and continuity. The camaraderie of the shift could be influenced by officers always working with the same shift-mates.

- Benefits to the community – The community, too, would benefit from having more officers on the streets during the busiest times of the day. On the longer shifts, there would be more beat integrity, with only 4 officers working a beat – two on day shift and two on nights – as opposed to six on 8-hour shifts and fill-in beat officers on the regular beat officers' days off. The community, too, could benefit from the accountability and the high morale of the officers.
- Benefits to the officer – The greatest benefit to the officers is the time off they would have to spend with their families. Even though the shifts would be longer, they would never work more than three days in a row and that would only happen once every two weeks. With the option to stay on an 8-hour shift, the officers would have more choice in their work schedule. This could lead to higher morale and a more motivated and productive officer.

If presented and carried out in a positive manner, a combination of 8-hour and 12-hour shifts could be a win-win for the agency, the community and the officers.

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