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**The Dynamics of 8-Hour Shifts Over 12-hour Shifts in the Law
Enforcement Arena: An Administrative View**

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ABSTRACT

Law enforcement administrators across the country are observing a transition (especially those over patrol) from 8-hour shifts to 12-hour compressed shifts. Working long hours in an already stressful environment should be a concern for law enforcement administrators. Although, the immediate idea is intriguing, one should take a closer and overall look at the impacts of converting to a 12-hour schedule. From an administrative view, police officers should work an eight hour patrol schedule instead of the 12-hour patrol shift.

Twelve hour shifts are becoming more popular, which allows police administrators to view the pros and cons versus typical eight hours shifts. Research was gathered from police journals, books and internet sites. The common denominator discovered was that fatigue and lack of sleep hinders a fatigued police officer's decision making skills and poses a danger not only to themselves, but to the community as a whole. Police officers want more time off, as do many other hard working people, but they need to examine the effects of all involved, including the individual and the organization. Administrators should consider the research and the ramifications of integrating a 12-hour schedule instead of the traditional eight hour schedule in their departments not only for the officer, but for the administration as well, for they may be surprised.

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INTRODUCTION

Police agencies across the country are constantly trying to compress work weeks to get more work out of police officers for less days worked. This is not an administrative view in all aspects; officers coming into law enforcement are also pitching this idea for a number of reasons. Although this may be appealing to police administrators at first, a closer look is necessary prior to such a restructure in any police agency. From an administrative view, police officers working patrol functions should stay on the traditional eight hour patrol shifts and not work a compressed 12-hour work week. An article by Sharp (2003) found that each agency is bound to schedule police officers according to the culture of the agency as well as the citizens of the community in order to create the ideal work schedule. This research will show how the police officer working shift work owes it to himself, as well as the community he serves to work an eight hour patrol shift.

This research will also show that an eight hour shift work schedule is more beneficial for the individual officer, the law enforcement agency, and the citizens they are bound to serve. An eight hour work schedule is easier to manage by administrative personnel during times of shortage. This shorter day at work will also reduce officer fatigue and the dangers that come with it. There is also supporting information regarding the overall health factor to police officers working shift work. Administration could also see extended sick times, an increase in overtime compensation, and less congruity within the agency. These are all issues facing police administrators in the 21st century regarding the 12-hour work day.

It is not uncommon for law enforcement agencies to face the issue of making sure officers patrol the streets in an effective manner. Police administrators should not have to worry if an officer is fatigued especially if the reason the officer is fatigued is because the administration approved or contributed to a shift that was too long. Administration in smaller police agencies notice and recognize this shortage dilemma more often than the larger police agencies. Furthermore, in smaller agencies, it is more difficult to pull other officers from other assignments to fill in on patrol.

When administration pulls another officer, whether it is a detective or someone else, their duties suffer just in order to fulfill patrol functions when and if this shortage occurs. This would become even more complicated on a 12-hour work schedule by the logistics, simply more hours to cover at one time. Police officers have minimum expectations while working patrol and when one does not show up for work administration should not have to seek and pull personnel from other divisions when there is an easy and simple explanation. Police agencies across the country have implemented the 12-hour work schedule, but after time some have reverted back to the traditional eight hour work schedules for varied reasons, to include officer fatigue. In an interview back in 2006, Chief Boisse Correa of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD) spoke out about his reasons for switching from 12-hour shifts, which they had been on since 1997, to eight hour shifts; fear of officer fatigue being amongst the many reasons Chief Correa cited for reverting back to the traditional eight hour shift five days a week (Vorsino & Parker, 2006). From an administrative point of view, police officers working patrol shift work should work eight hour patrol shifts instead of the 12-hour patrol shift

not only for the betterment of the department, but for the citizens that the department is bound to serve and protect.

POSITION

Police officers are responsible for covering and protecting citizens throughout this country as well as many parts of the world, 24 hours a day 365 days a year, with no break in service. Police every day and night have a duty to serve its citizens and do so while being alert and attentive to their surroundings. In an article by Webby (2008), he found that shift work in general can fatigue persons, especially police officers working patrol and studies show that persons working long shifts become fatigued and can experience negative health hazards. Further research by Dembe, Erickson, Delbos, and Banks (2005) illustrated that "Working at least 12-hours per day was associated with a 37% increased hazard rate and working at least 60 hours per week was associated with a 23% increased hazard rate" (p. 588). Research suggested that officers working shift work are at higher risk for developing hypertension due to disruptive sleep patterns (Dembe et al., 2005). In addition, officers that become sleepy during the daytime are more likely to experience cognitive dysfunction (Charles et al., 2007).

Police officers already face greater health hazards than many other professions. Police face a higher risk for heart disease than the rest of the general population; they also face considerable stress due to the day in and day out of being bored one second and facing a situation that warrants the officer utilizing deadly force the next. For instance, an officer might be doing a routine patrol by and have it turn into a burglary where the suspects are armed and the officer has to make a quick assessment of the

situation and decide on the best course of action. Although many other emergency personnel professions face many of the same issues regarding 12-hour shifts most do not face this type of emotional roller coaster. Police officers have to make split second decisions, have more immediate responsibility and power than many professions.

Officers working an eight hour shift instead of a 12-hour shift, actual time off per day, will have 16 hours off instead of 12-hours off per 24-hour period. It is not a common occurrence for police officers to immediately leave their shift at the scheduled time off. Officers often have to switch cars with a relieving officer, finish arrests reports, accident reports, and not to mention the completion of miscellaneous paperwork associated with that day's work. In addition, the court summons and schedules officer appearances for prior days' work, mostly for traffic citations and arrests. This could become a serious fatigue problem in the event the officer gets off work at 6:00am and has court at 10:00am. Furthermore, the court case could go well into the afternoon which compounds the problem. Consider that scenario for a couple days during the week and you have a fatigued officer, on duty, carrying a gun, with the immediate authority to take a life if need be. According to Dawson and Reid (1997) lack of sleep can equate to an alcohol induced person, if an officer has not slept for 17 hours his motor skills are impaired which equates to a 0.05 Blood Alcohol Content (BAC), (p. 235). In a similar study conducted by Dijk et al. (2001), research found that on average a police officer only sleeps 6.5 hours per day (p. 1647-1664). In addition, officers who experience the effects of fatigue are more likely to call in sick, have a harder time communicating and assisting outside agencies, have a higher likelihood of using

excessive force, are in greater danger of getting into a vehicular crash, as well as being prone to accidental injury (Vila & Kenney, 2002, p. 1-6).

Assuming the officer is on a 12-hour work schedule; the officer must return to duty at 6:00 pm for his/her scheduled shift and would still have two more days of work. Although not considered a common occurrence for every police officer working the street everyday it certainly should concern police administrators, the very ones who approved the schedule. Police officers have to make split second decisions that could result in serious bodily injury, or worse the taking of a life. Working in this type of environment has an effect on the police officer, his fellow officers, and all those around him. Unlike other professions such as aviators, truckers, firefighters, amongst many others, the federal and state commissions do not regulate the total amount of hours that a police officer may work (Lindsey, 2007, p.2).

Law enforcement administrators face the task of keeping the community safe and having enough officers on staff to respond to calls for service within the community they serve, specific to patrol functions which serves as the backbone of any police department. Law enforcement administrators must constantly look at ways to better serve the community with reliability and dependability as the community is dependent on such service. A small agency might experience difficulty staffing patrol on a 12-hour work schedule in times of shortage, which include but are not limited to sick days, vacation days, and training. In addition, officers have an obligation and duty to the community they serve to be alert.

On an eight hour shift schedule and in the event of a shift shortage administrators can require an officer to stay an additional four hours and require the

oncoming officer to come in four hours early. In actuality the affected officers work a 12-hour work schedule at the time of shortage. On the other side of the spectrum if an officer is needed to cover a 12-hour shift, administration would have a harder time getting the shift covered. Again, overtime compensation comes to the table as well as a fatigued officer. If one were to apply the same theory then two covering officers would be required to work a 16 hour shift, have an eight hour break and be back to work to work another 12-hour. This could pose a serious problem not only for the individual officer, but for all of those around him. Police officers have an obligation and duty to be alert and attentive to his/her surroundings. The Occupational Outlook Handbook 2010-2011 Edition for the Bureau of Labor Statistics provides an overview of a police officer's responsibilities which include detecting and oppressing criminal activity, as well as providing assistance to the community at large (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012, para. 1).

COUNTER POSITION

As newer generations emerge into society they must also emerge into police work. In addition to a newer generation, known as Generation Y, or Millennials, a generational priority shift occurs. It has become more common in recent years for people to want to spend more time with their families and less time at work. This is and should be supported by any employer especially due to previous generations, the Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, and even Generation X typically spent more time at the workplace than at home with family. Research by Digilio and Lynn-Nelson (2004) maintains that the reason Millennials want to spend more time away from work is that during their childhood and adolescent years they observed their parents sacrifice family

for work: they observed hard working parents spending extended days and nights at work only to lose their jobs due to layoffs. Albeit this is not specific to law enforcement, it is a generational learned concept.

Although the 12-hour shift schedule has been around for years, it was not until recently that this subject has made it to the law enforcement front lines. The 12-hour shift schedule is a relatively new concept, but one that seems to be gaining momentum nonetheless. Officers want to spend more time with their families, difficult to counter by administration. Although families are extremely important, so is the job as police officers. This is a sensitive issue for all employers to address, not only in law enforcement, but any private industry. According to Armour (2005), businesses across the country have to adjust the way they do business to accommodate the estimated 70 million Millennials. Millennials bring a variety of ideas to the workplace to include working from home, via internet and phone. This may work for the private sector, but this is not feasible in a law enforcement organization. Millennials account for approximately 20% of the workforce and if the trend continues their number will continue to grow in the next few years. Even though this may benefit some individual officers it may not benefit the overall picture to include the law enforcement agency, the citizens of the community, and the police agency itself.

At the time police work started, police officers were and still are held to a higher standard than the common citizen. Police officers were the protectors and peace keepers of society. A police officers primary focus was protecting life and property. Although that was not the only focus of police work, but it was the majority of what police officers did. Officers did have other duties to include working desk duty, handling

accident reports, and even working dispatch at times. Police officers had a passion for the job, a desire to police those who did not want law enforcement regulation. This job is required year round 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. Police Officer Code of Ethics established what is expected of an officer, not just on duty, but off duty as well (Law Enforcement Code of Ethics, n.d.). The mission of many police agencies supports this type of language, and is seen and known as the police culture and many police department manuals relay this message. Officers serve at the discretion of the agency, the mission and vision of same. These missions and visions often serve the community at heart.

Police officers supporting the 12-hour shifts advocate that they feel more refreshed upon returning to patrol due to the extended days off from work. The first day upon returning to work may in fact be true due to being off either two, three, or up to four days depending on the schedule, but it may have a negative side effect to the agency. Amongst those negative side effects are losing touch with agency issues, following up on investigations, or failing to complete accurate police reports prior to leaving for two, three, or even four days. Taking time off in conjunction with relief days compounds the situation. The problem gets worse when the patrol officer's days off are during the week and a detective needs a follow up from the patrol officer, who typically is the first to initiate or document a police call for service. Detectives are typically off Saturday and Sundays and therefore it could be longer than a week until a follow up issue gets resolved from a patrol officer.

Police officers proposing the 12-hour shifts want to work less and have more free time off, away from work. Officers working 12-hour shifts, in all actuality, only work

approximately half a year, or six months in a calendar year. Just look at the average hard working person, which includes patrol officers; they typically work a 40 hour a week schedule or 80 hours per pay period. That equates to 2080 hours worked per year. If one would divide that by a 12-hour schedule then the days worked in one year would be 173 days. The same officers advocate a more refreshed return to duty. Officers who propose this are not looking at the big picture, the administrative picture.

RECOMMENDATION

Not long ago police officers to include police administrators were intrigued by the idea of working 12-hours a day two or three days a week and having more time off. Officers and administrators thought the idea had merit. They also believed this would reduce officer fatigue and make it easier to schedule patrol by administrators. Officers also sold the idea that this would reduce sick time, as well as the idea that shift coverage would be greater. From an administrative view it is much easier to cover an eight hour shortage than to cover a 12-hour shortage on patrol. It is better to provide patrol officers with 16 hours of rest per 24 hour period, whether they themselves believe it is better or not. Police administrators have to look at what is best for the organization, the community it serves and the officers' wellbeing as a whole and make the best decisions necessary based on the culture and the bosses expectations. Administrators have the responsibility to view the organization from all possible angles and to take all points of view into consideration to make an accurate assessment in order to come up with the best course of action for the agency and the community it serves and protects.

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