



The Impact of Fitness and Weight on Injuries



Study Background

In order to begin to better understand injuries within law enforcement agencies, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) partnered to conduct a multi-site evaluation of line-of-duty injuries. In total, there were 18 different agencies that participated and tracked all reported officer injuries for one year. The information from each injury was collected and entered into a database and then submitted to IACP for analysis. IACP partnered with George Mason University to generate findings and results and to develop strategies for prevention.

Findings

The study classified officer body fat using the body mass index (BMI), a commonly used measure that calculates body fat based on an individual's height and weight. Findings included the following:

- Overall, results reinforced the importance of participation in fitness programs; officers reported individual weights ranging from approximately 100 to 400 pounds, suggesting that officer's fitness levels varied widely.
- Few officers indicated high levels of fitness activity, and only 53% reported that they participated in some type of fitness regimen at all.
- Officers who did engage in fitness training were less likely to have an injury that was reportable to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration compared to those who did not, suggesting the value of fitness in reducing the severity of injuries sustained in the line of duty.
- Not only did officers who are overweight experience injuries that were more severe, but they also were found to miss more work days and require longer rehabilitations.
- Those who reported a healthy weight, as classified by BMI, missed almost half as many days after an injury as those who were overweight.

These findings provide strong evidence of the connection between weight and injury severity and recovery.

Putting it into Practice

The findings that officer weight was significantly related to injury severity, days missed from work, and recovery time from injuries provide important evidence for the need for fitness programs in order to reduce the cost of injuries to departments. Further, these results show that the impact of obesity on injuries to law enforcement officers is clear and that agencies need to take steps to increase fitness and nutrition programs as a practical solution to a costly problem within their organizations. Strategies may include:

- Developing an internal fitness program and encouraging participation.
- Creating an incentive program for employees who engage in healthy habits.
- Requiring rigorous annual fitness evaluations.
- Providing information and resources with easy-to-understand fitness and nutrition guidance.
- Partnering with local health and fitness centers to provide services and discounts.

For more information on the IACP Center for Officer Safety and Wellness, please visit: <http://www.theiacp.org/officersafety>



BJA
Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice



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