# IPSA JOURNAL

First Edition

# Editor's Note

*By Heather R. Cotter, IPSA Executive Director, Founder and Editor-in-Chief*

Thank you for your interest in the **First Edition** of the *IPSA Journal*. This new scholarly resource is available to all public safety professionals. The IPSA was fortunate to have a team of current and retired public safety professionals and academicians who volunteered their time to lay the foundation for this new executive-level, peer-reviewed publication.

The *IPSA Journal* is a new opportunity to publish articles about leadership issues and best practices applicable to all facets of the public safety community. Our readers represent the entire public safety community: law enforcement, fire service, EMS, telecommunications, public works (water, sanitation, and transportation), public health, hospitals, security, private sector, and emergency management. The *IPSA Journal* is suited for individuals interested in writing about public safety for public safety.

The IPSA has a systematic process in place for approval, rejection and resubmissions of manuscripts. The IPSA enlists peer reviewers made up of public safety practitioners and academicians with experience in scholarly writing to review all manuscripts. In this First Edition, readers will see the following peer-reviewed manuscripts:

- ❖ *Standard Operating Procedures: Should Police and Fire Departments Collaborate?*
- ❖ *Multidisciplinary Strategies for Mitigating Occupational Stress in Public Safety Organizations*
- ❖ *Employment & Promotional Interviews: Structure vs Unstructured*

Each manuscript was fully researched by the authors, includes a detailed literature review, offers key discussion points and they were all peer-reviewed.

It is the IPSA's vision to continually accept manuscripts and to release future editions of the *IPSA Journal*. We seek quality manuscripts from all public safety professionals, and I encourage you to download and review the IPSA Manuscript Guidelines, use the *IPSA Journal* Template and submit a manuscript to us for publication consideration. There is so much knowledge to share within and between each public safety discipline.

Stay safe,

Heather R. Cotter

**Standard Operating Procedures: Should Police and Fire Departments Collaborate?**

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**Standard Operating Procedures: Should Police and Fire Departments Collaborate?**

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**Abstract**

Tense relations between law enforcement and fire departments have long been a fact of life in many cities often leading to animosity and conflict. Some experts opine that this is emerging as a serious domestic preparedness problem. While NIMS/ICS was intended to provide a framework under which all responders could operate in a structured and coordinated management system many departments only use ICS on large incidents. Conflict between law enforcement and fire still exist on routine incidents and how these departments respond to routine incidents is a reflection of how they will respond to larger incidents. With many law enforcement and fire departments developing joint operating task forces to respond to terrorist and natural disaster events has the time come for law enforcement and fire departments to develop joint operating policies? Research indicates there is a slowly developing trend for law enforcement and fire department to work together more closely including the development joint operating policies that clarify roles, responsibilities, and authority at incidents.

**Key Words: Fire, Collaboration, Law enforcement, Policies, Procedures, Training, NIMS/ICS**

**Introduction**

In a 2005 article, *Governing* declared, "Tense relations between law enforcement and fire departments, long a fact of life in many cities, are now emerging as a serious domestic – preparedness problem" (Buntin, 2005). Hopefully in the decade since this article was written progress has been made, but there are still ample opportunities for law enforcement and fire collaboration, and joint operating procedures may be one important element of this collaboration.

Most law enforcement agencies and fire departments have established standard operating procedures to guide their members. Procedures may be identified by different terminology including, policies, directives, guidelines, general orders and more. The United States Fire Administration (1999) reports that the terminology is less important than the content and implementation and that courts tend to assess liability on factors such as: systems in place to develop and maintain procedures, compatibility with regulatory requirements and national standards, consideration of unique department needs, adequacy of training, demonstration of competence, and procedures to monitor performance and ensure compliance. For the purposes of this paper the terms "procedure" and "policy" will be used interchangeably.

Procedures are instrumental to ensuring service is delivered consistently, in accordance with applicable laws and accepted standards while managing risk and mitigating liability for the department and its members. Black's Law Dictionary defines procedure as "A specific method or course of action" (Gardener, 2005).

Undeniably, there are procedures specific to the operations of law enforcement agencies and fire departments respectively. However, as law enforcement and fire departments are increasingly working together in response to a myriad of situations, are there opportunities, and is there a need to develop standard operating procedures (SOP's) that are applicable to both? This research will attempt to answer this question by first looking at procedures from a historical

perspective, exploring where there may be opportunities that lend themselves to collaboration and if there are any departments taking advantage of these opportunities.

The intent of this paper is not to present or discuss specific details to be included in procedures, which is best left to individual departments. The discussion here will be limited to opportunities for collaboration on the development of joint operating procedures and general guidelines on how to develop joint procedures in an effort to reduce conflict and animosity between law enforcement agencies and fire departments and to improve response coordination, efficiency and safety.

As a point of clarification, emergency medical services (EMS) is an integral component of emergency response to routine as well as large scale incidents. EMS service may be integrated into fire departments, law enforcement agencies or may be stand-alone public or private entities. Fire departments as well as some law enforcement agencies provide EMS first responder service in support of EMS agencies. Whether EMS service is integrated into fire or law enforcement agencies or is provided by separate public or private entities, emergency medical services must have a seat at the table and be included where appropriate in the development of joint operating procedures. Though the focus of this research is on law enforcement and fire cooperation and collaboration it is intended that the ensuing discussion and conclusions are fully applicable to agencies providing EMS service.

**Literature Review**

Writings on the importance of policies to law enforcement officers have been recorded for more than a century. Inspector Cahalane in charge of the training school at the New York Law enforcement Department believed that there was no excuse for officers not knowing their department's rules and regulations and failure to do so was due to their own neglect and

carelessness (Cahalane, 1914). Cahalane was also of the opinion that officers who study the department rules and regulations are mentally well equipped and attentive to their duty.

If law enforcement officers are to be held accountable for carrying out their assigned duties properly they must know what is expected of them. These standards should be stated as written policies according to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (1986). The IACP indicates that written directives establish a specific code of acceptable behavior as well as guide officers in decision making narrowing the range of acceptable discretionary authority. The result is the minimization of misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and misconduct. According to the IACP policies must be legal, understandable, current, reflect officer participation (which is important in developing effective policies), be distributed to all officers, have all officers trained on the policies, and be reviewed periodically.

Procedures are important to the fire service for many of the same reasons they are important to law enforcement agencies. In its *Guide to Developing Effective Standard Operating Procedures for Fire and EMS Departments* the U.S. Fire Administration indicates that procedures clarify requirements and expectations and explain what the department wants personnel to do in situations they are most likely to encounter. And, that procedures result in improved safety, performance, morale, operational efficiency, greater accountability, and reduced liability.

There are some recommendations in the literature for joint procedures in specific areas. *The Report of the Joint Police/Fire Task Force on Civil Unrest* (1994) recommends that "policies and procedures for joint ventures should be developed, approved and accepted by all agencies involved, in order to clearly establish responsibilities and avoid discrepancies and disagreements during the crisis". The report goes on to indicate that the ideal scenario is one

where policies are adopted in a joint law enforcement/fire preparedness stage and anticipate as many contingencies as possible.

Although law enforcement and fire have their own independent policies, this approach does not always lend itself to a close working relationship between the departments. *Governing*, reports that "Among the most innovative police and fire chiefs, there's a growing awareness that the status quo is unacceptable, even dangerous, in the event of a large-scale terrorist attack or natural catastrophe, and that tabletop drills and management protocols aren't enough to overcome the animosity" (Buntin, 2005). *Governing* goes on to state that healthy relationships in the future will be reliant on "PAPER PLANS". In 2001 New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani updated a directive entitled The *Direction and Control of Emergencies in New York City* with the purpose of "eliminating conflict among responding agencies which may have areas of overlapping expertise and responsibility – particularly the police and fire departments".  Another example of a city that has taken proactive steps to eliminate confusion between law enforcement and fire at incidents is Columbus, Ohio.

The City of Columbus developed Police and Fire Joint Operations Directives as early as 1996. Directive number 7.6 *Ranks Within the Divisions of Police and Fire* was developed to better coordinate efforts between the Division of Police and Division of Fire at scenes of joint operations.  Directive number 4.09 *Joint Operational Scenes* identifies types of joint operational scenes and describes in general terms the duties, responsibilities and procedures of law enforcement and fire personnel at those scenes. Policies such as these clarify roles, responsibilities and authorities, which reduce ambiguities and uncertainties that often culminate in on-scene conflict.

Collaboration is not limited to the United States. In fact where collaboration is still mostly at the policy level here, agencies in the United Kingdom are putting collaboration into practice. In 2014 Northamptonshire (UK) formed a joint law enforcement and fire operations team. The joint operations team brings together a number of functions including coordination of operational policies and procedures (Northamptonshire, 2014).

And, in 2013 the North Yorkshire (UK) Police and Fire Services announced a plan for collaboration. In their *Statement of Intent for the Strategic Partnership* they have identified the following areas of collaboration: human resources, finance, health and safety, communications, command and control, planning, IT and data management. The statement makes clear that these areas are a start and are not necessarily limiting.

As discussed previously there are procedures that are specific to law enforcement and fire departments respectively and generally do not lend themselves to the concept of joint procedures. Some examples of law enforcement policies include vehicle pursuit, transportation and restraint of prisoners, evidence, use of force and body worn cameras to name but a few examples. Likewise by way of example and not limitation procedures specific to the fire service include hazardous material response, confined spaces, trench collapse rescue, and response to structure fires including rapid intervention teams.

However, as the literature indicates there are areas where collaboration is possible. In fact there are areas where law enforcement and fire departments should have identical procedures. Not only is collaboration possible it is essential in these areas, particularly command and control and communications to ensure safe and effective joint responses to incidents while minimizing confusion and uncertainty that results in conflict.

**Procedures Where Collaboration is Essential**

Law enforcement agencies and fire departments in most communities regularly respond jointly to routine incidents and increasingly to more major incidents such as active violence and other mass casualty incidents including natural disasters. As retired Phoenix Fire Chief Alan Brunacini said, "Weapons-of-mass-destruction responses will emerge from everyday local responses" (Buntin, 2005). In other words, law enforcement and fire will respond to major incidents in the same manner they respond to routine incidents; and, if law enforcement and fire cannot work together in a coordinated and efficient manner on day-to-day incidents without conflict, how effectively will the response and coordination be to larger scale incidents?

Let's take for example routine highway incidents. Routine highway incidents whether from a motor vehicle crash, vehicle fire, or hazardous material spill typically brings law enforcement and fire together and often results in conflict. This conflict stems most often from disputes over lane or road closures, vehicle placement, time-on-scene, or who is in charge. There have been numerous incidents of fire fighters being arrested or detained by law enforcement officers at the scenes of highway incidents over conflict between the agencies. A quick internet search reveals that these unnecessary incidents have occurred in California, Kentucky, Louisiana and South Carolina to name a few examples. These incidents result in embarrassing and negative news coverage for the agencies involved resulting in poor public perception and loss of confidence in first responders by the public. Granted these situations are isolated but how often does conflict still exist that may not escalate to this level? This could all be minimized by developing a joint policy delineating authority, roles, and operational procedures at highway and other incidents. Procedures that clearly delineate, duties,

responsibilities, and authorities, such as the procedures from the City of Columbus, ensure law enforcement and fire response is coordinated, efficient and without conflict.

Active violence incidents are not routine but are becoming increasingly more prevalent and present situations that are chaotic by nature and present a severe threat to law enforcement officers and fire fighters. And, as more departments are forming law enforcement/fire task forces to speed medical care to victims at active violence incidents it is imperative that there be a joint tactical operating procedure and that training be conducted involving law enforcement, fire, EMS and other responding agencies (Police Executive, 2014).

Also critical to effective and safe response to active violence as well as other incidents is following law enforcement/fire/EMS unified command under a uniform system of incident management, preferably NIMS/ICS. Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5 issued in 2004, tied state, local and tribal preparedness grants to compliance with the National Incident Management System. In short law enforcement agencies, fire departments and EMS need to be following NIMS/ICS which is the nationally recognized expandable, all incident all hazard system of incident management. This is yet another opportunity for the development of a joint law enforcement/fire policy as both departments need to be operating from the same set of rules utilizing incident and unified command.

One example of ICS collaboration is Oregon where a committee was appointed of fire, law enforcement, public works, and emergency management agencies who selected and adopted the NIIMS-ICS model and developed and implemented training and certification standards and established an overhead team that provides command, planning and logistical support for local resources (Ullman, 1998). As this example illustrates simply developing a joint procedure is not sufficient, joint training exercises must be conducted for all agencies that will be working

together at incidents. It is critical that larger scale incidents be managed using the unified command system and joint operating procedures where law enforcement and fire have a coordinated response and know what the other is doing at all times. This is imperative for the safety of all responders and the public.

On-scene communication is another area where joint procedures are essential. As reported by *The Atlantic* (2015) "Indeed, 14 years after September 11, America's roughly 65,000 public-safety agencies still rely on a patchwork of radio systems that are often incompatible with each other." Admittedly the problem with interoperability extends beyond simply developing joint procedures. However, this is another area where law enforcement and fire must collaborate in the short-term to develop joint procedures to work around incompatible radio systems, and in the long-term to develop plans to replace or upgrade system infrastructure to ensure interoperable communication systems.

**Other Opportunities to Collaborate**

Some other opportunities for collaboration include ethics, exposure control, respiratory protection, and, social media policies. This is not by any means an exhaustive list and individual law enforcement agencies and fire departments will need to examine the opportunities that present themselves locally for collaboration. But, let's briefly examine each of the opportunities listed above that are applicable to most law enforcement agencies and fire departments.

The core principles in most ethics policies are similar and include accountability, diversity, honesty, respect, fairness, compassion, integrity and loyalty. In fact these principles define the vast majority of law enforcement and fire personnel. But, when it does occur, how ethical is on-scene conflict between law enforcement and fire departments that interfere with their ability to provide immediate, coordinate and efficient service to those in need? Many

colleges and universities now require an ethics course as a degree requirement. The principles of ethical behavior are broad based and specify generally how employees are expected to deliver service and treat others, including each other, in a fair, honest and respectful manner. As these principles apply equally to law enforcement and fire service personnel the subject of ethics lends itself well to a joint law enforcement/fire service procedure.

Exposure controls refers to universal precautions to protect employees from exposed blood and other potentially infectious body fluids. Agencies and departments regulated by Federal OSHA (29 CFR 1910.1030(c)(1)(i) *Bloodborne Pathogens*) or state occupational safety and health regulations are required to develop an exposure control plan. As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warn "Emergency responders may perform urgent, invasive procedures on unstable patients, treat open wounds, and stop bleeding. Law enforcement officers may encounter used needles or be assaulted. These events put them at increased risk for contracting blood borne pathogen infections, including hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infections". The CDC recommends an exposure control plan for all first responders. Universal precautions apply equally to law enforcement and fire service personnel and considering they often respond to the same incidents where protection is required it is logical to be operating from the same procedure.

Another area for procedural and operational collaboration may be respiratory protection. Federal OSHA (29 CFR 1910.134(c) *Respiratory Protection*) requires employers to develop a written respiratory protection program with required work-site specific procedures for required respirator use. Some states have similar requirements under state law. Respiratory protection is required where harmful dusts, fogs, fumes, mists, gases, smokes, sprays, or vapors are present that present a potential occupational health hazard by breathing the contaminated air.

Commons types of respirators used by both law enforcement agencies and fire departments include Air Purifying Respirators (APR) Powered Air Purifying Respirators (PAPRs) Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus (SCUBA) and N95Particulate Filtering Face Piece Respirators. There are many incident types to which law enforcement and fire service personnel jointly respond where hazardous atmospheres may be present including fires, civil disturbances, public health emergencies, and terrorist attacks that may involve chemical and/or biological agents.

Fit testing of employees and medical evaluation questionnaires are also required as part of the required respiratory program. Many fire departments have the required equipment and expertise to perform these tests and evaluations and could perform them for law enforcement agencies to avoid duplication of effort and cost.

Changing focus, social media is another area that often presents problems for both law enforcement and fire personnel both on and off duty. As reported by *Statter911* (2016) eight law enforcement officers and firefighters where either fired, demoted or suspended in response to their Facebook postings in response to the Dallas police shootings in July of 2016. Zumer and Bawroski (2017) report that while many law enforcement and fire departments have social media policies, the policies vary considerably. From the article it appears that the law enforcement policies are more restrictive. Being that the negative outcomes of using social media can equally affect law enforcement and fire departments there is no reason why these policies should vary in their content or application considering the U.S. Supreme Court has provided guidance in this regard.

In *Garcetti v. Ceballos* the Court held that "speech by a public official is only protected if it is engaged in as a private citizen, not if it is expressed as part of the official's public duties". In

*Pickering v. Board of Education* the Court held that public employees speaking as citizens on matters of public concern are afforded First Amendment protection and in *Connick v. Myers* that speech disruptive to a public employer may be suppressed.

Many problems created by social media stem from information posted related to emergency incidents or criticisms of department administrators, department members or the public. The posting of photos and video from incidents may violate HIPAA or other privacy acts, can compromise investigations and can bring embarrassment upon and disruption to the activities of departments. One concern with social media policies is they may, if not drafted properly, infringe on employee First Amendment rights, seeking advice of legal counsel is important when developing social media policies.

Not to throw the "baby out with the bathwater" social media has its place in public safety and there are many positive aspects that allow departments to communicate effectively with citizens, issue mass notifications and can be used as an investigate resource. Social media will have an increasing presence and role in public safety and procedures must be in place that addresses authority to use social media and the parameters of its use.

**Policy Development**

So, how should policies be developed and maintained? First, it is important that all stakeholders be involved in the development of policies. It is best that policies be developed by a committee with a broad range of knowledge and expertise and not by one or two individuals. The committee should include administrative and operational staff, union representation (if present), human resources, risk management and legal counsel as needed.

When developing new policies, it may be expedient to look to similar organizations to obtain a copy of their policies as a template. However, there is no "one size fits all" and policy

templates must be thoroughly reviewed and modified to the specific needs of the departments. Many state professional associations, municipal leagues, township associations and municipal risk management authorities have policy templates available. Safety and risk management are two factors to consider when developing joint procedures. Other factors include compliance with recognized standards and applicable statutes.

When developing procedures that have the potential of impacting employee's fundamental rights such as freedom of speech (social media policies), freedom of religion (dress and grooming standards) or freedom from unreasonable searches (drug testing policies) it is important to include the human resources professional and legal counsel for expert advice.

Once procedures have been developed and approved a department's work is still not done. It is important that the procedures be disseminated to all employees. For example, in ruling against a city in a sexual harassment lawsuit, the Court found, "a complete failure on the part of the City to disseminate said policy among Marine Safety Section Employees" (*Faragher*, 1998).

Next, the department must train all employees and supervisors on the content and application of the newly developed or revised procedures. Training should occur initially when a policy is approved and periodically thereafter, though some training is required to be conducted annually as specified by statute. One of many examples is 29 CFR 1910.1030 which requires annual training on bloodborne pathogens for those employees susceptible to exposure. This is another opportunity, for law enforcement and fire to work and train together and strengthen relationships in a more relaxed environment. It is important to document what procedure training employees have received and when. While judgment and experience play important roles in the application of procedures there is no substitute for training.

Periodic review and updating of procedures is essential. Procedures should be reviewed on an annual basis and department administrators must be alert for changes in the law or national standards that may necessitate changes to procedures. Also, changes in operations could necessitate the need for adding, deleting or modifying procedures. Outdated procedures are of no value, lead to confusion and may be a liability.

It is equally important to enforce procedures as there is potential liability for departments that do not. NIOSH in their Firefighter Fatality Investigation Report #F2008-22 released September 21, 2009 made the following recommendations related to a line of duty death involving an apparatus crash. "Fire departments should enforce standard operating procedures on a "zero tolerance policy" for alcohol use while engaged in any fire department activity" and "fire departments should enforce standard operating procedures that require mandatory use of seat belts in all vehicles." If procedures are not enforced, in effect there are no procedures. It is the responsibility of all officers to ensure that procedures are being complied with. Failure to enforce procedures may result in normalization of deviance. Professor Diane Vaughn developed her theory of "normalization of deviance" during her investigation of the Challenger space shuttle explosion. "Normalization of deviance" refers to a gradual process through which unacceptable practices or standards become acceptable. Sound familiar? It is imperative that procedures be followed to provide a reasonable degree of safety for department members, to provide consistent and standardized service and to protect the department and its members from liability.

Though developing and reviewing procedures may appear to be a monumental undertaking, the task is manageable by breaking the process into smaller pieces and delegating to those with expertise in specific areas and provides another opportunity for law enforcement and

fire service personnel to work together. The benefit is well worth the effort and the importance of having and following well developed and up-to-date procedures cannot be underemphasized.

**Discussion**

Law enforcement and fire departments historically and still today generally work independently even when called to the same incident and are typically guided by distinctly different and separate operating procedures that are times incongruous. In the events of today's world it is no longer safe or efficient for law enforcement and fire departments to work the same incident independently and in isolation. Not only are law enforcement and fire departments called upon to work together at routine incidents but are increasingly facing larger scale incidents that require a coordinated response. However, operating in isolation under separate and distinct operational procedures can lead to animosity and conflict due to unclear or competing goals, and confusion or uncertainty over lines of authority and responsibility.

A review of the current literature reveals that innovative law enforcement and fire chiefs believe that this status quo is unacceptable and even dangerous in the event of a large scale terrorist attack or natural disaster. As reported by *Governing* healthy relationships between law enforcement and fire in the future will be reliant on paper plans (Buntin, 2005). Along these lines *The Report of the Joint Police/Fire Task Force on Civil Unrest* recommends that procedures for joint operations need to be developed, approved and accepted by all agencies involved.

Incidents of terrorism and natural disaster have prompted some law enforcement and fire departments both in the United States and the United Kingdom to develop joint operations teams and procedures for the operation of those teams. It is also increasingly common for law enforcement agencies and fire departments to share facilities, clerical staff, communications and

other facilities. Unfortunately this increasing need to work together is at times hampered by instances of animosity and conflict.

Though NIMS/ICS and unified command have lessened the conflict to some degree joint operating procedures are also needed such as those developed by New York and Columbus to clearly delineate roles, responsibilities and authorities. By clearly predetermining roles, responsibilities and authorities, ambiguities and uncertainties will be minimized that often culminate in confusion, uncertainty and ultimately on-scene conflict. More departments need to follow these examples and be proactive in developing joint procedures.

Developing joint procedures will guide law enforcement officers and fire fighters in their decision making narrowing the range of acceptable discretionary authority resulting in the minimization of misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and avoid disagreements during crisis. Other benefits derived from properly developed procedures include improved safety, performance, morale and accountability. Joint procedures must be developed through a collaborative effort, must be distributed to all employees, training must be conducted on the procedures and periodic review and updating is required.

As Chief Brunacini said how law enforcement and fire respond to routine incidents will determine how they respond to major incidents. Using NIMS/ICS and joint operating procedures on routine responses will create a culture that ensures a coordinated, efficient and safe law enforcement and fire service joint response while minimizing conflict. Following the example set by Oregon, law enforcement, fire and other agencies should develop local planning teams to develop joint procedures for implementing and following NIMS/ICS on a routine basis. Following NIMS/ICS and developing joint operating procedures will take effort and a commitment from both law enforcement and the fire service but the positive results will be worth

the effort. The public deserves nothing less than law enforcement agencies and fire departments that work closely together to deliver coordinated, effective and efficient emergency services without animosity and conflict.

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**Multidisciplinary Strategies for Mitigating Occupational Stress in Public Safety Organizations**

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**Multidisciplinary Strategies for Mitigating Occupational Stress in Public Safety Organizations**

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**Abstract**

While occupational stress is a factor in all organizations, industry culture and job demands contribute to the complexity of stress management interventions in public safety organizations. A review of occupational stress and public safety discipline-specific literature demonstrates the implications of occupational stress for individual employees and organizations and yields potential strategies for mitigating stress hazards. Public safety agencies can utilize a variety of organizational-level strategies to manage occupational stress and increase resilience, including support system development, job design reengineering, rewards and recognition, and fatigue management. Individual-level strategies for stress management include education and training of personnel and promoting the general health of employees. When prevention strategies fail, organizations must also have an adequate system to address the manifestations of cumulative stress and crisis events. Successful implementation of stress management programs requires broad stakeholder commitment and an investment of physical, financial, and human resources. This article discusses public safety challenges relevant to occupational stress and presents a synthesis of multidisciplinary administrative intervention strategies.

**Introduction**

Occupational stress represents a significant challenge for public safety organizations. While work-related stress can never be eliminated, administrators have a professional and ethical responsibility to engineer systems that offer employees the best possible chances to cope with cumulative stress. This article discusses challenges relevant to occupational stress and summarizes administrative intervention strategies based on a review of multidisciplinary literature.

**Background**

Occupational stress is present in all organizations, with significant micro-level implications for employees and macro-level implications for organizations and networks. Selye (1936) defined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change" (p. 32). While Selye was referring to physiological responses, the concept is also applicable to psychological response. Stressors can be either positive or negative, depending on how they are perceived and interpreted by the individual (Selye, 1956; Le Fevre, Kolt, & Matheny, 2006). The reaction to positive stressors, those that challenge rather than overwhelm adaptive capacities, are classified as eustress. Distress occurs when the individual's ability to adapt to the stressor is strained or overwhelmed.

Psychological resilience is commonly understood as emotional coping in times of stress (Bonanno, 2004). Seery, Holman, and Silver (2010) specifically define resilience as "successful adaptation or the absence of a pathological outcome following exposure to stressful or potentially traumatic life events or life circumstances" (p. 1025). While resilience can be viewed as a process of "bouncing back", resilient individuals may not return to a previous baseline state following an adverse event. Rather, resilient individuals can return to a new normal through a

process of adaptation, deliberate choices, and learning (Ross, 2014). Fostering this resilience renders individuals more likely to perceive stressors and adverse situations positively, increasing their ability to cope relative to less resilient individuals (Seery et al., 2010). Stressors that overwhelm an individual's ability to adapt have been shown to increase strain and decrease the ability to adapt to additional stressors (Crane & Searle, 2016).

When employees lack adaptive capacity and resilience, distress and adversity accumulate over time. Cumulative distress in public service professions can have profound implications for an employee's overall health and well-being, which can also impact the productivity and effectiveness of the workforce (Adriaenssens, De Gucht, & Maes, 2015; Blau, Bentley, & Eggerichs-Purcell, 2012; Brun, 2008; Dollard, Osborne, & Manning, 2013; Hintsa et al., 2016). Research suggests that targeted managerial interventions can have a positive effect on employee psychological and physical health, thereby minimizing organizational impact from cumulative distress (Le Fevre et al., 2006; Kalinina & Yushkowa, 2015; Kleim & Westphal, 2011).

**Public Safety Perspective: Culture**

Prior research has examined the role of culture in stress management and psychological health. Employees in public safety organizations work closely with other team members, often for prolonged hours and under adverse conditions. This collective adversity and intense bonding and fellowship experiences contributes to strong camaraderie and emotional closeness between team members. Despite this, public safety workers have demonstrated an unwillingness to discuss their feelings and problems related to stress and mental health (Baker, 2011; Norwood & Rascati, 2012; Stanley, Horn, & Joiner, 2016). This may be attributed to negative stigmatization of mental illness, or predisposition of those charged as caregivers to not seek external help.

A byproduct of the strong internal bond of public safety workers is the development of an *us-versus-them* mentality. Both law enforcement and fire service professionals have been shown to demonstrate a mentality of isolationism from those outside of the profession, including mental health professionals (Henderson, Van Hasselt, LeDuc, & Couwels, 2016). Such predispositions may cause employees to overlook signs and symptoms of cumulative stress (Baker, 2011).

Alcohol consumption is also a significant component of social interaction among public safety workers, which may also contribute to a predisposition for abuse. Alcohol abuse is a major factor in suicidal behavior (Baker, 2011; Henderson et al., 2016). Baker (2011) found that police officers were structurally predisposed to self-medicating behavior through alcohol consumption. Similarly, Kleim and Westphal (2011) referenced drug and alcohol abuse among a broader first-responder population as a common stress-related disorder.

**Public Safety Perspective: Job Demands**

The unique responsibilities and design of public safety careers also presents unique challenges. Exposure to certain critical incidents can elicit distress responses in public safety employees. One study found a significant relationship between distress and exposure of fire and EMS professionals to child death, caring for a friend or family member, and caring for disaster, crime, and burn victims (Holland, 2011). Similar stressors exist in police work, including use of force, particularly deadly force, and physical assault (Violanti & Aron, 1993).

Kalinina & Yushkowa (2015) identified several significant job stress factors, including working under time deficit, insufficient involvement in work process management, and decreased career and advancement prospects. The nature of public safety creates a near-constant time deficit, especially in emergency situations. Traditional hierarchical structures have also

excluded line personnel from decisions that affect the performance of their jobs. Especially in smaller agencies, promotion and career development opportunities are frequently limited.

As demand for efficiency of public organizations increases and public funding shortages increase, public safety agencies are frequently faced with the responsibility of doing more with less. Research suggests an association between distress and resource/demand mismatch (Dollard, Osborne, & Manning, 2013). When there are too few officers, ambulances, and fire apparatus to handle calls for service, organizational units experience higher levels of distress. The same is also true when resources are overstaffed and underutilized.

**Public Safety Perspective: Shift Work and Fatigue**

The physiological and psychological effects of shift work have been well studied. The nature of public safety organizations as around-the-clock resources necessitates the use of shift work for many public safety employees. A study of Australian paramedic shift workers found that paramedics were at high risk for increased levels of occupational fatigue, depression, and poor sleep (Courtney, Francis, & Paxton, 2010). Self-perceived fatigue has also been found to be a significant source of reported job stress in healthcare workers (Lin, Liao, Chen, & Fan, 2014). Police officers assigned to non-day shifts report significantly more physical and psychological threat-related events, which also translates to more frequent day-time administrative responsibilities following their shift, including paperwork and court appearances (Ma et al., 2014).

Beyond stress, fatigue plays a significant role in an employee's ability to perform critical tasks. Employees who frequently have less than seven hours of sleep per night have been shown to demonstrate impaired neurobehavioral functions (Banks & Dinges, 2007). This can affect important functions such as alertness, ability to drive and decision making. Other studies have

demonstrated the effect of prolonged periods of wakefulness on cognitive and psychomotor functions. Employees who have been awake for 17 to 19 hours demonstrate impairment similar to a blood alcohol content of 0.05% (Williamson & Feyer, 2000). Employees who have been awake for 21 hours may demonstrate impairment consistent with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08% (Dawson & Reid, 1997). This has significant implications for employees working consecutive days of extended shift duration or when employees report to or from another job immediately before or after their public safety work assignment.

**Public Safety Perspective: Managing Employee Stress**

J.C. Quick, J.D. Quick, Nelson, and Hurrell (1997) proposed a three-tiered system of stress management interventions. Primary interventions occur at the organizational level, addressing structure, policy, culture, and other group characteristics. Secondary interventions focus on building resilience and adaptive capacities for individual employees. These interventions are based on the premise that occupational stress can never be completely eliminated through primary interventions, thus it is necessary to cultivate the ability to deal with stressors at the individual level. Both primary and secondary interventions are aimed at preventing or mitigating the physical and psychological effects of distress. Tertiary interventions target manifested physical and psychological diseases resulting from stress.

It is important to note that in the Quick model, stress management interventions refer to those actions that have the primary goal of managing stress, although most management actions will have an unintended effect on occupational stress (Le Fevre et al., 2006). Ma et al. (2014) found that police officers reported a higher frequency of administrative stress than stress from physical and psychological threats. As such, administrators should consider the role of decisions on employee stress, particularly distress.

Regardless of the approaches chosen, any stress management interventions should be based on the needs of each individual organization. This is particularly significant for organizational level changes, which by their very nature can serve as a source of stress. Designing organizational level strategies should include an early analysis of job and organizational aspects that are perceived as stressors by employees (Le Fevre et al., 2006). It is likely that successful strategies will include a combination of primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions. Focusing only on individual stress models may cause administrators to overlook underlying systemic causes of distress among employees (Le Fevre et al., 2006). Similarly, focusing only on organizational factors may result in missed opportunities for targeted interventions for individual employees.

A critical factor in managing occupational stress for public safety employees is addressing the cultural challenges previously discussed. Administrators must drive a change in organizational culture that promotes proactive addressing of distress and mental health. Employees must believe that the effects of acute or cumulative distress are not individual faults or flaws, and that seeking help and support is not a sign of weakness (Baker, 2011; Henderson et al., 2016). Organizational leadership should be both participative and empathic with regard to employee stress (Adriaenssens et al., 2015), which will likely require education and training for all levels of management as well as peer leaders within the organization (Baker, 2011).

**Organizational-Based Strategies: Support System**

One study of occupational stress in teachers found that lack of organizational support was associated with increased employee stress, while employees who felt supported demonstrated lower occupational stress and increased functioning (Malik & Norren, 2015). Applicability of this concept for public safety employees is supported by an earlier study that found first

responders who felt supported and valued by administration experienced lower levels of distress (Kleim & Westphal, 2011). Strong emotional support fosters adaptive capacity and resilience, enabling employees to buffer the associated distress of occupational stress and critical incidents (Blau et al., 2012).

The importance of providing support systems is not isolated to administration and management. Peer support is also an important part of mitigating physiological response to cumulative occupational stress and feelings of emotional overextension and fatigue that affect ability to meet job demands (Blau et al., 2012). In a study of firefighters, Bernabé & Botia (2016) found that perception of coworkers as well as supervisors as supportive was associated with higher levels of vigor and dedication in the job. Low social support has also been identified as a predictive variable in the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (Marmar et al., 2006), while social harassment tended to be a predictor of emotional exhaustion (Adriaenssens et al., 2015). Administrative strategies should encourage satisfying and supportive relationships within the organization (Bernabé & Botia, 2016).

**Organizational-Based Strategies Job Design and Rewards System**

Job demands and control over one's own work have been shown to predict work engagement, job satisfaction, and feelings of being emotionally and physically depleted (Adriaenssens et al., 2015). Reducing job demands and increasing employees' ability to control their work can result in higher levels of engagement and satisfaction in the job, while mitigating emotional exhaustion. Conversely, higher demand and decreased control over work can produce decreased satisfaction and engagement.

While it is often difficult to reduce the demands of public safety jobs, administrators can nonetheless reduce demand-related stressors by involving employees in work process

management and providing opportunities to improve and develop processes (Kalinina & Yushkowa, 2015). This can be accomplished with the creation of working committees for such functions as equipment purchase recommendations, policy review and revision recommendations, or updating medical standing orders. Administrators can also develop mechanisms for employees to provide feedback regarding their work. For such practices to be effective as a job enrichment tool, however, employees must perceive that administration is receptive and considerate of such feedback.

Job enrichment is an effective mechanism for enhancing job design. Providing challenging work can not only offer job enrichment but also an opportunity for developing resilience (Crane & Searle, 2016). Dealing with challenging stressors within an employee's adaptive capacity can also develop problem-solving capacity, which also serves as a coping tool for occupational stress (Holland, 2011). Fostering the opportunity to overcome challenges within the work environment also serves to mitigate the monotony of routine work duties, which has been identified as a variable in PTSD development (Marmar et al., 2006).

Commitment-related rewards and recognition have also been found to be predictive of work engagement (Adriaenssens et al., 2015) and are viewed as particularly important to employees. Financial incentives are not as common in public organizations, however administrative acknowledgement of dedication and performance can also serve as a strong motivator and enrichment tool. Simple actions such as congratulating good performance and providing recognition for work can also increase resilience from critical stress (Bernabé & Botia, 2016).

**Organizational-Based Strategies: Schedule Management**

Shift work is a necessary component of providing continuous access to public safety function. However, there are several steps that administrators can take to manage the impact of shift-related fatigue and subsequent stress, including limiting shift duration, developing fatigue-related peer support activities, and restricting overtime (Sofianopoulos, Williams, Archer, & Thompson, 2011).

The Williamson & Feyer (2000) and Dawson & Reid (1997) studies support an argument against extended shift duration. These findings suggest that optimal shift length would limit on-duty time to a period within a 17-hour period following a full period of rest. Given this narrow window, administrators should also consider employee commute time to and from their duty assignment and the time it takes to prepare for work. Additionally, administrators should consider administrative tasks outside of the assigned tour of duty, including administrative paperwork, training, and other responsibilities such as court appearances. Based on the Banks & Dinges (2007) findings, it may also be prudent for administrators to consider the implementation of a work-rest cycle policy that prescribes a mandatory period of off-duty time between shift assignments, with the goal of preventing extended periods of sleep restriction. Such policies may also include provisions for scheduling of off-duty or secondary employment.

Managing shift length is a specific challenge for fire and EMS agencies where common industry practice includes the use of 24-hour or longer shift durations. It is worth noting, however, that the risk associated with prolonged shift duration may vary based on the utilization of resources and the quantity and quality of rest of employees while on duty. The utilization of longer shift lengths may be supported in systems that implement fatigue recognition and prevention safeguards, including permitting personnel to self-initiate safety stops, enabling

supervisors to put personnel in a mandatory down-time status, and training personnel to recognize the signs of critical fatigue.

It is important to remember that changes as the organizational level have the potential to propagate distress among employees. Employees who rely on or who have become accustomed to abundant overtime or substantial secondary employment may experience a significant financial impact from such policies. Additionally, creating mandatory rest periods before duty assignments may also affect availability of part-time employees who have a primary obligation to another employer. Administrators must consider the importance and benefit of programming schedule changes, while acknowledging such changes can add short term distress.

**Individual-Based Strategies: Education and Training**

Education of public safety personnel should begin during initial training so that personnel have realistic expectations and understanding about the challenges facing them in their career. Professional education should also include the development of capacities to emotionally handle crisis situations (Blau et al., 2012). This can be addressed by individual agencies who operate training academies, as they have greater control over content programming. For agencies who do not operate initial training programs, there may be opportunities to participate in program advisory boards or to include such training in their individual on-boarding program or continuing education and professional development programs.

There is strong evidence supporting individual cognitive skill training for the management of occupational stress (Le Fevre et al., 2006). Such techniques may include situational framing, breathing control, and meditation. There may also be benefit to implementing resilience-building components into training and professional development. Exposing employees to low levels of challenge stressors can promote self-confidence and

resilience (Kleim & Westphal, 2011; Seery et al., 2010) through techniques such as immersive simulation. Exposing employees to progressively stressful situations through simulation in pre-deployment and professional development training is thought to produce an immune-system like response, better preparing employees to deal with future challenges (Seery et al., 2010). Administrators and training managers should also consider that training programs often lack sufficient content pertaining to psychological self-aid, and incorporate such material into program design (Rutkow, Gable, & Links, 2011).

**Individual-Based Strategies: Focus on Employee Health**

Significant stress has been associated with many adverse physiologic processes, including heart disease (Rozanski, Blumenthal, & Kaplan, 1999). Research has identified lower level of physical activity in public safety employees than reference groups, which may contribute to overall stress and poor health outcomes (Baker, 2011; Courtney et al., 2010). Overall physical health plays an important role in buffering work exhaustion as a component of burnout (Blau et al., 2012).

Employee assistance programs, bereavement programs, and stress management programs are also common components of organizational wellness initiatives (Miller et al., 2016). These programs can be utilized to proactively mitigate stress accumulation and assist public safety employees in coping with occupational stress. Organizations are more commonly including wellness initiatives as a benefit to employees. In addition to programs specifically aimed at managing stress, employers can provide diet and exercise programs or subsidized gym memberships (Miller et al., 2016). Additional strategies can include supplementing or supplanting traditional workplace meals and snacks with healthy alternatives. While some workplaces provide incentivized wellness programs, agency administrators should consult with

legal counsel when considering such programs to ensure compliance with disability and discrimination laws.

**Individual-Based Strategies: When Prevention Is Not Enough**

Regardless of the quality of primary and secondary stress management interventions, there will be times when tertiary interventions are necessary to handle the manifestations of cumulative stress and crisis events (Guenthner, 2012). Public safety agencies should consider tertiary intervention options such as contracting with or employing staff psychologists when financially feasible, implementing a Chaplaincy Program, and providing access to Critical Incident Stress Management teams (Henderson et al., 2016). Agencies should also consider developing the ability to have mental health resources on-scene at large scale events or disasters (Rutkow et al., 2011).

**Discussion**

Occupational stress can have a profound impact on employees and their organizations (Adriaenssens, De Gucht, & Maes, 2015; Blau, Bentley, & Eggerichs-Purcell, 2012; Brun, 2008; Dollard, Osborne, & Manning, 2013; Hintsa et al., 2016). Stress, when not appropriately managed, can manifest as a myriad of disease processes, both physical and psychological (Rozanski, Blumenthal, & Kaplan, 1999). For public safety organizations, these manifestations can result in issues with attendance and punctuality, decreased productivity and quality, staff turnover, and increased cost of healthcare and Workers' Compensation from on-the-job injuries. Considering these factors, it becomes evident that effective stress management at the individual and organizational levels are worthwhile business practices.

Programming effective stress management interventions requires varying investments of an organization's physical, financial, and human resources, depending on the strategies chosen.

Broad commitment is crucial for program success. It is important to involve stakeholders at all levels of the organization and governance body in not only stress risk analyses, but throughout the planning and implementation of stress management interventions. Employee support is critical to the success of stress management initiatives. To facilitate this support, organizations should highlight the significance and implications of effective stress management. Similarly, governing entities, particularly those who exercise financial controls, must understand the anticipated return or risk reduction sought to be obtained in relation to resources utilized.

While occupational stress is not a phenomenon unique to public safety organizations, the evidence demonstrates industry-specific factors that contribute to increased occupational stress among public safety employees. Recent years have seen improved mental health awareness among public safety professionals (e.g., Anderson-Fletcher et al., 2017) , accompanied by a rise in discipline-specific research of stress and its implications. Although existing research in workforce occupational stress management provides a foundation for public safety organizations developing stress management programs, administrators should consider the unique public safety perspective during program design, implementation, and follow up.

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**Employment & Promotional Interviews: Structure vs Unstructured**

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**Abstract**

The employment interview screening process is the most widely used process to screen employment and promotional candidates. The purpose of this article was to explore the employment and promotional screening process with a focus on structured and unstructured interviews; steps to conducting employment screening training for public sector organizations. The article is based on current literature on employment and promotional screening procedures. By sharing this content, public sector organizations are better prepared to take the necessary steps to minimize legal challenges to the employment interview process, increase process validity and credibility, and show the need for interview individual rating scales. The article calls for agencies to move towards a formal training program that an individual must take to participate as an employment & promotional interviewer.

**Key Words: Structure Interview, Employment, Screening, Promotion**

**Introduction**

Public sector agencies will be faced with conducting some form of employment interview with perspective candidates for employment or conducting promotional interviews. Public and private sector agencies know that in today's ligation society, they need to follow the laws and regulations when it comes to employment and promotional interviews to prevent legal action (Russo, 2009; Walsh, 2015). How agencies conduct employment or promotional interviews are diverse with each agency claiming their process is the best. The interview process for employment candidates and promotional candidates may be impacted by other key factors such as the involvement of labor unions, Federal laws, state laws, agency regulations, and the human resource management department requirements. Before conducting interviews, it is recommended that the agency have the proposed procedure reviewed by the legal department and human resource management department to ensure that laws and regulations are not being violated and to reduce the risk of a legal challenge to the process. The intent of this article will be to show the importance of conducting structured interviews and the importance of providing some level of interview training for the interviewer's conducting the interview to reduce the risk of a legal challenge.

In the public sector, hiring committee members seldom receiving formal employment/promotional interview training or interview ratings. The employment screening committee members are often not held accountable for their selection decisions or ratings. The employment/promotional screening process can have long term positive or negative impacts on the organization and may end in a prolonged legal challenge for each side. The poorly executed interview can result in the public sector agency trying to defend the procedure, steps taken to screen candidates, interview question selection, how search committee members rated individual

questions, and the written notes provided by each committee member during the process (Williamson, Campion, Malos, Roehling, Campion, 2007; Terpstra, Mohamed, & Kethley, 1999). In one research study, they found that 90% of the legal challenges for employment screening go against the employer (Williams, Schaffer, & Ellis, 2013). In an effort to reduce this level of risk to the organization, the following article will provide possible steps that an organization can implement in their employment/promotional process. The organization should be taking necessary steps to reduce the possibility of a legal challenge to the employment screening process. As reported, the majority of legal cases are going against the employer, it is recommended that the employers focus additional attention on the procedures utilized for screening candidates.

**Interview Types**

The employment screening and promotional process utilizes candidate interviews as the most widely used screening tool today, next to the resume review (Macan, 2009). The employment interview may play a central role in the employment or promotional screening process in an effort to identify a suitable candidate for the position. The interview procedure used to screen candidates can be in the form of a highly structured process when all candidates are asked the same questions, same follow up questions, same assessment committee individuals, each question is provided a rating scale for the answer provided, written narratives are provided for each answer the candidates provides, and allowed the same time limits; or the interview procedure can be an unstructured interview, when the set of questions may or may not be asked of each candidate, the range of questions are prompted by the candidates' responses to prior questions and the procedure has no set timeframe. In addition, screening committee members may not provide any interview notes, the interview procedure will lack rating for each response

and may just rely on one rating for the entire interview, and the candidates may not be interviewed by the same interviewer (Huffcutt, 2011; Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson, & Campion, 2014). In an effort to better understand the two forms of interviewing, we will break down each one further to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of each type.

**Unstructured Interview**

In the field of recruitment, the unstructured interview is the most widely used procedure (Rudin & Gover, 2007). In part, interviewers conducting employment and promotion interviews enjoy the freedom to ask questions that they like, allowed to have a casual conversation with the candidate, less time is spent preparing for the unstructured interviews, lack of a timeframe for conducting the interviews, and the lack of any formal scoring or notetaking assessment for the process. Interviewers feel that they are free to conduct the interview as they feel fit and are not restricted by a set guideline. The unstructured interview format places the agency at a greater risk of a legal challenge and a decreased opportunity for providing a solid legal defense for the interview process.

Despite being widely used in the employment interview process; organizations today need to move away from the unstructured interview process. The fact that candidates for employment or for promotion are not asked the same questions may provide an unfair advantage to a candidate. The lack of formal questions and consistent scoring scales can create an environment that may provide an adverse impact on candidates and opens the organization up to a legal challenge. Unstructured interviews have been shown to have poor statistical validity, however most people think they can hire the best person from this process (Alder & Gilbert, 2006). Candidates tend to like the unstructured interview because they feel they are allowed a greater opportunity to present information that they feel is relevant. In this case, the interviewer

or committee cannot be assured that the interview will gain insightful content about the job or if they will gain useful information. The level of interviewer bias may be increased with this interview format and there is potential for an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) claim against the agency.

**Structured Interview**

The term structured interview is used for the purpose of this paper; however other terms like "standardized," "guided," "planned," or "uniform" interviews may be used to indicate a structured interview. The structured interview ensures that all of the candidates are asked the same set of performance-based questions including the same set of prompting questions used for each question. The performance-based questions may be constructed with the use of the job analysis. The structured interview process uses the same assessing and scoring of each individual interview question asked of the candidate, this process requires the evaluators to assess and score each question being asked. The general practice is to ask the candidates to wait until the end of the interview process to ask any questions to the interviewer or the panel (Huffcutt, Culbertson, & Weyhrauch, 2013; Klehe, König, Richter, Kleinmann, & Melcher, 2008). It is essential to have the same person or people perform the interview to ensure that each candidate is equally assessed by the same interviewer; doing so will ensure that the interview process is reliable and valid. When all candidates are assessed by the same person or people while using performance-based questions, the screening procedure becomes legally defensible for the agency when the agency can link the questions to the job analysis (Antonellis & Flam, 2016). Using the same questions and interview format for all candidates will reduce the risk of interviewer bias while increasing the reliability and validity of the process.

Candidates report that they felt the level of fairness was highest when a structured interview format was used with each candidate. When a candidate feels that the interview process was fair and transparent; this feeling becomes a positive reflection on the agency. Candidates not hired or promoted during this fair and transparent process may be more inclined to apply again based on this feeling and observation (Chinomona, Dhurup, & Chinomona, 2013). The employment/promotion interview process is a reflection of the agency and may be the first impression of the agency, care should be considered not only for the individual hired/promoted but also the candidates not selected.

**Structured Interview Techniques**

The structured interview requires advance planning to determine what set of questions will be asked of all candidates and what prompting questions will be used in an effort to seek additional information based on the original question. For each interview question, it is recommended to have two prompting questions to gain clarification of the candidates' original response or if the candidates do not understand the question as it was asked. It is recommended that each question have its own scoring scale, each individual interviewer can score the response given and if they would like to provide any notes on each response to support the score provided. It is recommended that the candidate hold his/her questions until the end of the interview to allow for ample time for the interviewers to ask the standard questions. Inform the candidate at the start of the interview how many questions will be asked and the projected timeframe they will be asked; this will allow the candidate to decide if the responses they are providing to the questions are too long or too short given the timeframe provided; candidates are better prepared to self-manage their time. The predetermined performance-based questions will reduce the chance for personal bias with the evaluators based on appearance, body language, disabilities,

accent, etc. (Bye, & Sandal, 2015; Chen, Tsai, & Hu, 2008; Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010; Dipboye, 1992; Huffcutt, 2011). Deprez-Sims & Morris (2010) emphasized that "Ethnicity refers to a social group with a shared heritage or culture…an accent may serve to trigger stereotypes and biases associated with an ethnic group or country" (p.418). The interviewers should openly discuss personal bias during the interviewer training session to minimize the risk of a negative influence on the process.

If an interview committee is being used, each of the members should rate the question response individually and not communicate with the other members of the panel to ensure a level of consistency and to minimize bias and undue influence from others on the committee during the original assessment rating (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010). Structured interviews conducted in a committee format or individually should score all the candidates without sharing scores or narrative comments with others until all the candidates in the pool have been interviewed (Roach, 2015; Tran & Blackman, 2006). The sharing of information between committee members before rating the candidate may bias the other evaluators or provide undue influence in the rating process.

Interviewers score each candidate and may take individual notes during or after the interview on the scoring sheet or a notepad. Any notes or scoring scales performed during the interview process should be considered as part of the procedure and should be retained by the agency in an individual employment folder. Each candidate should have an employment folder that contains all documents, notes, resumes, letters of recommendations, references checks, etc (Curran, & Quinn, 2012). Based on case law (City of Canton v. Harris, 1989), law enforcement agencies are held responsible for hiring and training officers to perform the duties and responsibilities of the position (Stickle, 2016).  Regardless of the size of the agency, creating and

maintaining such documents will provide beneficial in the event of litigation. Williams, Schaffer, and Ellis (2013) reported "…employers lose employment discrimination cases at a rate nearing 90 % and suffer an average payout of over \$1.5 million per case" (p. 406). Based on these findings, the employer should be taking extra care to ensure that the employment screening process will withstand a legal challenge.

The employment screening procedure should have multiple assessment options and the interview is only one of the assessment options used to determine who the best candidate is for the position. When a screening procedure has multiple assessment steps the procedure will yield a more comprehensive screening procedure and will decrease adverse impact of a candidate compared to a one screening procedure (Piotrowski & Armstrong, 2006).

Before the interview process starts and until the final decision, interviewers should treat each candidate with dignity, respect, and politeness. Candidates should be told in advance how the procedure will take place and projected timelines for the next screening selection deadline. Never lose sight that the candidate is also interviewing the agency to decide if the agency is a place they want to work or be promoted; employment selection and promotion is always a two-way street (Antonellis, 2015).

**Interview Training**

During the interview process a myriad of content will be shared by the candidate with the interviewer(s). The interviewer(s) will be responsible for interpreting the content and evaluating the content to allow the interviewer(s) to properly score the candidate. Most organizations do not provide any type of interview training to the interviewer(s) who will be responsible for selecting the next employee or selecting the next promotion for the agency (McCarthy, Van Iddekinge, &

Campion, 2010; Terpstra, & Rozell, 1997). Given the importance, why are so few agencies unwilling to provide such critical training?

My research and other researchers reveal that most interviewers feel they do a great job at screening employment candidates. They don't feel they need training, they lack the time to participate in training, interviewers are not held accountable for their decisions, and all people tend to overestimate how much they know about interviewing (Antonellis & Flam, 2016; Camp, Schulz, Vielhaber, & Wagner-March, 2011). The reality is that most employees lack the advanced skills and knowledge to conduct interviews. A number of research studies have shown that providing interviewer training significantly increases the quality of the final selection (McCarthy, Van Iddekinge, & Campion, 2010; Terpstra, & Rozell, 1997; Woehr, & Huffcutt, 1994).

Interview training can be conducted using the lecture and discussion process and you can also incorporate the use of sample interview responses via a video, roleplaying process, or practice interviews. Some agencies not providing training have opted to develop a training manual to allow trainees to review and study the content on their own schedules. Recommended interview training may include some of the following topics:

- Note taking
- Interview bias
- Question scoring/rating
- Structured interview procedure
- Ethical decision making
- Legal requirements and considerations
- Hiring discrimination

- Use of behavior information rather than subjective impression

- Favoritism through coaching when asking questions

- Uncontrolled use of ancillary information (you should not be Googling, reviewing LinkedIn or Facebook for the candidates)

- Interview content/information management

- Steps to writing interview questions and prompting questions

- How to use interview questions already prepared

- Benefits of multiple interviewers

- Rapport building

- Discussion of job requirements

- Steps to avoid rating errors (Antonellis, 2015; Cook, 2016; König, Klehe, Berchtold, & Kleinmann, 2010).

One example could be to have a short video to show a hypothetical response to an interview question and have the trainees take notes and score the response to the question. Once all of the trainees have scored the question, an open discussion can take place as to what the trainees picked up from the response and why they felt it was important to how they scored the answer. In addition, a review of the note taking that was performed can be discussed in an open forum to ensure that the trainees are collecting and writing down the correct content during the interview while monitoring their own opinions and attitudes. The benefit of providing interview training will increase interviewer's skills and ability to elicit more critical information in an effort to make an accurate judgment who is the best candidate for the position.

**Conclusion**

The interview procedure for hiring new employees or promoting employees is a key organizational decision and if done poorly can have long-term negative results for the organization and the employees. A poorly conducted employment screening process places the employer at a greater risk for a legal challenge and given the majority of employment legal challenges go against the employer (Williams, Schaffer, & Ellis, 2013) it is suggested that the employer invest the time and resources into reviewing and improving the employment screening procedure. The goal of this article was to examine and consider the steps that an agency can take to improve their interview procedures to demonstrate a transparent, professional, structured, and fair process with the end result of selecting the best candidate for the position. The structured interview procedure has been shown to provide favorable results at predicting future job performance of candidates over the unstructured interview. The structed interview process has been shown to reduce legal challenges to the employment screening process.

Using the same set of questions, asked in the same sequence, better prepared interview questions with probing questions appear to be more important than other aspects of the interview process. It is recommended that providing interview training is the "gold standard" and that training provided to interviewers can reduce legal liability and improve selection reliability of the best candidate. Providing some level of employment screening training will also reduce the risk of personal bias negatively impacting the screening process. If we claim that our employees are the agencies most important resources, then we need to do a far better job at the front end during the interview and promotional interview by providing interview training. For additional information on the topics covered in this article, readers can use the list of references as a starting point.

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Dr. Antonellis has more than 20 years of fire/EMS experience, holding various positions including Chief of Department. In addition, he has more than 11 years of law enforcement experience in the State of Massachusetts as a police officer (part-time). Dr. Antonellis has a blend of experience working with union and management dealing with labor negotiations, contract administration, grievance management, and presenting testimony at legal proceedings. Dr. Antonellis has served on the faculty at 3 colleges teaching at the undergraduate and graduate level in addition to working in the curriculum development division. He has been teaching online for 10 years and more than 15 years in the traditional classroom. Dr. Antonellis has taught more than 100 graduate and undergraduate courses over the past 10 years. He has lectured to emergency service providers nationally and internationally.

Dr. Antonellis has severed as a freelance curriculum developer for American Heat Video out of Texas; he has also appeared in several training videos as a subject matter expert. He has authored and published more than 35 articles and three books. Dr. Antonellis authored a text book with PennWell Publishing, "Labor Relations for the Fire Service". He also co-authored a book, "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in Firefighters. The calls that stick with you."  Dr. Antonellis serves on the Editorial Board for Human Resource Research Journal, International Journal of Learning and Development, and Journal of Public Management Research.  Dr. Antonellis holds a MA degree in Labor and Policy Studies with a concentration in Human Resource Management, BS in Fire Science Administration, AS in Fire Science, and a AS in Criminal Justice.

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