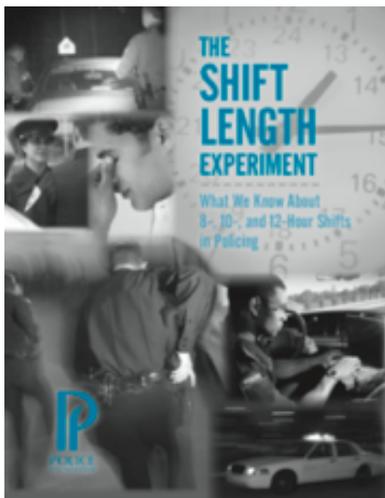


# 5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SHIFT WORK



In a survey of 160 law enforcement agencies over 30 years ago, it was reported that almost 25% had implemented 9-, 10-, 11- and 'even 12-hour' schedules (Stenzel & Buren, 1983). Since this 1983 study, data on shift practices in law enforcement were scarce and so the Police Foundation, with National Institute of Justice (NIJ) funding, surveyed 300 departments on shift length. Considerable changes were identified, including a large increase (from 25% to 60%) in the use of shifts longer than 8-hours, and in the number of agencies using a combination of schedules simultaneously.

Frequent shift rotation (more than twice yearly), fell from 65% to about 25% during that period. With many agencies adopting shift schedules without the advantage of scientific evidence, the Police Foundation conducted the first of its kind experiment to test the impact of shift length on fatigue, safety, performance, and overtime in two law enforcement agencies where officers were randomly assigned to 8-, 10-, and 12- hour shifts for six months. The findings provide important insights for law enforcement administrators.



## 1

Despite evidence of potential negative impacts, compressed work schedules (longer but fewer work days) have become increasingly popular among law enforcement officers and agencies.

Table 2. Shift Length by Agency Size

Number Sworn Officers	Time One November 2005				Time Two November 2009			
	8 HR Agencies (%)	10 HR Agencies (%)	12 HR Agencies (%)	Total	8 HR Agencies (%)	10 HR Agencies (%)	12 HR Agencies (%)	Total
50 to 100 (small)	68 (41.2)	37 (22.4)	47 (28.5)	152	54 (32.0)	33 (19.5)	52 (30.8)	139
101 to 200 (medium)	34 (41.5)	27 (32.9)	16 (19.5)	77	23 (26.7)	19 (22.1)	22 (25.6)	64
201 + (large)	13 (32.5)	14 (35.0)	6 (15.0)	33	11 (24.4)	15 (33.3)	5 (11.1)	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>115 (40.1)</b>	<b>78 (27.2)</b>	<b>69 (24.0)</b>	<b>262<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>88 (29.3)</b>	<b>67 (22.3)</b>	<b>79 (26.3)</b>	<b>234<sup>b</sup></b>

<sup>a</sup> For Time One, there were a total of 5 (1.7 percent) agencies with 9-hour shifts and 3 (1 percent) agencies with 11-hour shifts; 17 (5.9 percent) agencies employed multiple shifts.  
<sup>b</sup> For Time Two, there were 14 (4.7 percent) agencies with 9-hour shifts and 16 (5.3 percent) agencies with 11-hour shifts; 4 (1.3 percent) agencies employed 13-hour shifts and 32 (10.7 percent) agencies employed multiple shifts.

## 2

Ten-hour shifts resulted in increased sleep, improved quality of work life, and reduced overtime compared to standard 8-hour shifts (regardless of time of day of the shift).



## 3

Officers on 12-hour shifts reported being less alert and sleepier on the job than those on 8- or 10-hour shifts, suggesting diminishing returns as shift length is increased beyond the 10-hour period.

## 4



To improve officer safety and wellness, agencies should also consider the need to ensure sufficient time between shifts (about 12 hours) to allow time for sleep, transportation to and from the job, eating, and decompression.

## 5

Unlike in many other high-risk industries (aviation, trucking, etc.), the work hours for law enforcement personnel are not regulated, and off-duty work and overtime can increase fatigue and the risk of accidents if not closely monitored. When officers are at risk, so too is the community.



The Police Foundation is the oldest nationally-known, non-profit, non-partisan, and non-membership-driven organization dedicated to improving America's most noble profession – policing. The Police Foundation has been on the cutting edge of police innovation for 45 years since it was established by the Ford Foundation as a result of the President's Commission on the Challenge of Crime in a Free Society.