

# Stress Management in Law Enforcement



# Stress Management in Law Enforcement

FOURTH EDITION

Edited by

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and

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*For my wife, Elena, the kindest and sweetest woman I have ever known, and  
our children, Lorraine, Kseniya, and Illia, and grandchildren,  
Matthew, Branden, and Anna.*

—Leonard Territo

*To Chief Raymond Velboom and his wife, Julie Scott, who faced  
tremendous adversity with incredible courage, unbelievable optimism,  
unfailing resilience, and unflinching class.*

—James D. Sewell



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# Preface

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There is considerable evidence suggesting that more law enforcement officers are likely to be killed by job-related stress than are killed by criminals. For every police officer slain by an assailant in the line of duty, countless others succumb to the insidious, long-range effects of job-induced pressures, including alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence, post-traumatic stress disorder, cardiovascular disease, and even suicide.

The stress imposed by the physical hazards of policing is well known. Few occupations require employees to face the kinds of dangerous situations that police officers may encounter as part of their daily routines. Popular television shows have familiarized viewers with the more obvious dangers police officers encounter in protecting society from the lawbreaker, especially hot pursuits, exchanges of gunfire, stop-and-search situations, domestic violence calls, violent political demonstrations, and “active shooter” attacks.

Yet, it is not simply the physical dangers that impact law enforcement personnel. The continual observation of incidents of injury, death, and inexplicable acts of cruelty can, over time, take a terrible toll on the psychological and emotional well-being of police officers. Consequently, we frequently see law enforcement personnel suffering from mental and emotional illnesses that include depression, addictive behaviors, suicidal ideation, post-traumatic stress disorder, burnout, and, on a long-term basis, cumulative career traumatic stress.

This book is divided into eight sections in which we address matters of intense current interest among law enforcement personnel and students of the profession. These articles and research papers, written by leading scholars in the field of job-related stress in policing, have been carefully selected, and, as a result of our relationship with many of the experts in the field, a number have been written specifically for previous editions as well as this fourth edition of *Stress Management in Law Enforcement*.

Both editors have been extensively involved in higher education and in training and writing about police stress for well over 45 years. Over that time, we have witnessed major changes in the ways law enforcement agencies and their leadership respond to this critical problem. Since police stress became a focus of academic and professional concern in the mid-1970s, we have seen the creation and expansion of progressive programs specifically addressing issues associated with job-related stress. Throughout this time, training in this area has also been vastly improved and, consequently, has resulted in saving the careers and even the lives, physical and mental health, and emotional well-being of many police officers.

We recognize that a wide variety of groups are interested in the topic of police stress. To this end, we have designed this book toward meeting the interests of four principal audiences:

- Academicians who have a scholarly interest in police stress and who may also teach the subject;
- Law enforcement administrators who must deal with the negative effects of stress on their officers on a daily basis;
- Police officers who work on the streets and are regularly exposed to the stress to which we have already alluded; and
- Students of law enforcement who wish to understand and carry out research relating to the impact of stress on law enforcement officers.

For those who use this book from an academic perspective, each of this volume's eight sections also includes a list of critical terms and, with each individual article, a list of discussion questions which can be used by instructors to enhance the engagement of students in the classroom, as well as to foster the creation of examination questions in academic classes.

As indicated below, these eight sections blend together to offer a comprehensive view of the issue of law enforcement stress and its various causes; the nature of its impact on the individual members of an agency and their families; and methods by which stress can be mitigated and agency and individual responses improved. In summary, then:

**Part One—What Is Stress and What Does It Mean for Cops?** This section provides the reader with an orientation and introduction to the topic of stress and some of its principal psychological, physiological, and behavioral consequences. It acquaints the reader with basic concepts and terminology relating to stress and adds physiological and theoretical frameworks to the study of stress, especially that experienced by law enforcement personnel.

**Part Two—How Do the Worst Professional Experiences Affect Cops?** This section focuses on those features of police work that often expose officers to vicarious trauma as a result of critical incidents in which people are violently killed or injured or children exploited and abused. This regular and consistent contact with people in the time of their pain can foster a vicarious response on the part of responding personnel and lead to overt manifestations of post-traumatic stress disorder and, for career officers, cumulative career traumatic stress, including career burnout. Even routine operational assignments, such as shift work, can have a long-term stressful impact on line personnel, and its effects must be acknowledged.

**Part Three—What is the Impact of Foreign Wars on Cops?** This section addresses America's protracted wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have taken their toll on American law enforcement personnel serving in military reserve and National Guard units that have been activated for service. Police officers returning from a combat deployment and combat veterans seeking first-time employment as police officers both face the

potential impact of psychological issues resulting from their combat experiences. Perhaps more frightening, recent research indicates an increased risk of suicide among returning combat veterans and among police officers. Additionally, law enforcement in the future will find itself dealing with wartime veterans as consumers of police services as those wartime experiences manifest themselves in homelessness, domestic violence, substance abuse, and violent behavior acted out “on the street.”

**Part Four—How Does Stress Impact the Cop’s Family?** This section examines the toll extracted on spouses, children and relatives of law enforcement personnel as a result of the stressful aspects of police work. The alarmingly high rate of marital discord too often includes violence in the police family, events which can sometimes sadly culminate in the murder of a family member by the police officer, followed by the officer’s suicide. Other less extreme effects on the family include chronic family bickering and divorce; disruption of the family-centered activities due to irregular work schedules; and school and adjustment problems among the children of law enforcement officers.

**Part Five—What Is Really Killing Our Cops?** In statistics on the cause of police fatalities, we often focus on the number of personnel killed in violent confrontations with offenders or the number killed in traffic crashes. Yet, in reality, far more officers are killed as a result of the impact of stress-related cardiovascular disease and, more likely, suicide. In this Part, our authors focus on the extent of the issue and on factors contributing the officer decision to kill him or her self. With a better understanding of the problem, we can more easily identify methods by which suicides can be prevented and the physical and mental health of officers improved.

**Part Six—What Are the Tools That a Cop Can Use to Better Handle Stress?** In this section we discuss the methods by which individual officers may better handle the stress of their law enforcement world and enhance the resilience needed to emotionally survive “on the job.”

**Part Seven—What Support Is Available for Cops?** This section examines some of the individual techniques and more successful and innovative programs recognized as providing emotional support for officers under stress. Such programs include increased stress training in handling post-traumatic stress disorder, enhanced professional counseling for officers and their families, and the effective use of peer support.

**Part Eight—How Can Bosses Better Help Their Cops?** This section reflects on the role of the organization and agency managers in identifying, confronting, and reducing stress among an agency’s law enforcement personnel. This Part examines situations in which the agency failed in its response to the needs of its personnel, as well as offering leadership and policy enhancements to ensure success in effectively dealing with this critical issue.

In this fourth edition, then, the editors have brought together the work of over 40 authors, academicians, and researchers to share their knowledge of police stress. Most important, they further discuss ways to mitigate its impact and improve the mental and physical health of law enforcement professionals. If on completing this

text, our readers have gained a greater understanding of the critical issues in law enforcement stress, are able to recognize the special role of resilience in combating the impact of stress, and can identify individual and organizational steps that can be taken to protect police personnel and their families, then our professional and academic mission will have been accomplished!

# Acknowledgments

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We wish to express our thanks and indebtedness to the many distinguished scholars for allowing us to use the results of their hard earned labors. Without their dedicated efforts this book would have never come to fruition. We also wish to thank the many publishers who allowed us to use the materials from their books and journals. However, we wish to give special thanks to a number of individuals who wrote research papers specifically for this book. These are: Dr. Laurence Miller, psychologist in private practice in Boca Raton, Florida; Dr. Michael Arter, Associate Professor, Pennsylvania State University at Altoona; Ms. Ann Perko, J.D., and Ms. Karen Oehme, J.D., Director, Institute for Family Violence Studies, The Florida State University; Dr. Ellen K. Marshall, Human Services Department, Delaware Technical and Community College; Dr. Richard L. Levenson, Jr., psychologist in private practice, New York City; Dr. John M. Violanti, Research Associate Professor, University of Buffalo, New York; Mr. Allen Kates, trauma expert, author, and journalist; Ms. Shawna Marie Green, Department of Community and Family Health, and Dr. Roger A. Boothroyd, Department of Mental Health Law and Policy, University of South Florida; Sister Anne Dougherty, O.S.F., D. Min. and Senior Chaplain, Tampa Police Department; Dr. Carol Logan, Police Psychologist, Austin, Texas, Police Department; Ms. Teresa Tate, Founder, Survivors of Law Enforcement Suicide (SOLES).

Typing and other numerous clerical services were also provided by our hardworking secretary Sharon Ostermann, whose constructive comments and long hours of work are very much appreciated. We also wish to thank her assistant Shari Allen, whose dazzling speed on the computer keyboard helped to keep us on schedule.





# About the Editors

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**Dr. Leonard Territo** is presently a Distinguished Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at Saint Leo University, Saint Leo, Florida, and Professor Emeritus in the Department of Criminology at the University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida. He was previously the chief deputy (undersheriff) of the Leon County Sheriff's Office in Tallahassee, Florida. He also served for almost nine years with the Tampa, Florida, Police Department as a patrol officer, motorcycle officer, and homicide detective. He is the former chairperson of the Department of Police Administration and director of the Florida Institute for Law Enforcement at St. Petersburg Junior College, St. Petersburg, Florida.

In addition to writing nearly 50 articles, book chapters, and technical reports, he has authored, co-authored and edited twelve books, including *Police Administration* (9th edition); *Criminal Investigation* (12th edition); *International Sex Trafficking of Women and Children: Understanding the Global Epidemic* (2nd edition); *Criminal Investigation of Sex Trafficking in America*; *The International Trafficking of Human Organs: A Multi-Disciplinary Perspective*; *Crime and Justice in America* (6th edition); *Police Civil Liability*; *College Crime and Prevention and Personal Safety Awareness*; *Stress and Police Personnel*; *The Police Personnel Selection Process*; *Hospital and College Security Liability*; and a crime novel, *Ivory Tower Cop*, which was inspired by a true story. His books have been used in more than a thousand colleges and universities in 50 states, and his writings have been used and referenced by both academic and police departments in 16 countries including Australia, Barbados, Belarus, Canada, Chile, China, Czechoslovakia, England, France, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, Poland, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Spain.

His teaching awards include being selected by the Florida Criminal Justice Educators Association from among 200 Florida criminal justice educators as the Outstanding Criminal Justice Educator of the Year. He was also selected as the Outstanding Teacher of the Year by the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of South Florida. He has been given awards by both the Florida Police Chiefs Association and the Tampa Police Academy for his years of teaching and meritorious services; he was given an award for Distinguished Scholarly Publications by Saint Leo University, Saint Leo, Florida; he has been selected for inclusion in *Who's Who in American Law Enforcement*, and he has recently been given a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Department of Criminology at the University of South Florida.

**Dr. James D. Sewell** retired as Assistant Commissioner of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement in February 2005, following a 32-year career with university, mu-

nicipal, and state law enforcement agencies in Florida. Since his retirement from active law enforcement, he has provided training, strategic planning, and management consulting services to a number of law enforcement and social services agencies, not-for-profit organizations, and professional associations.

Dr. Sewell received his B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. in Criminology from The Florida State University. His 1980 dissertation, "The Development of a Critical Life Events Scale for Law Enforcement," began his focus on the impact of stress on police officers. He has published two textbooks and over fifty journal articles and book chapters, principally on law enforcement management and law enforcement stress. He holds Diplomate status within the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress and is a Board Certified Expert in Traumatic Stress and in Stress Management by that body. He has served as an adjunct faculty member in Criminology and Criminal Justice at both The Florida State University and the University of South Florida.

Dr. Sewell is a graduate of the Florida Criminal Justice Executive Institute Chief Executive Seminar (Eighth Class) and F.B.I. National Academy (114th Session) and is a Life Member of both the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Florida Police Chiefs Association (FPCA). In 2010, he was named to the FPCA's Wall of Honor for contributions to the Association and the law enforcement profession, and, in 2014, he was inducted into The Florida State University Alumni and Friends of Criminology Hall of Fame.