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# LAW ENFORCEMENT AS AN OCCUPATION

## CHAPTER 17

UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

## **CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: LAW ENFORCEMENT AS AN OCCUPATION**

### **POSITIVE ASPECTS**

In almost all oral interviews for police officer selection, the candidate will be asked, “Why do you want to be a police officer?” Some typical responses illustrate the positive aspects of law enforcement.

#### **VARIETY**

“I like the variety of work experiences.” Many law enforcement officer candidates can think of nothing worse than having to accept and work at a desk job. They like the variety of assignments available in a typical law enforcement career, and often like working non-typical hours and schedules.

#### **COMMUNITY CONTACT**

“I like working with people.” Person-to-person contact characterizes police work. Officers meet new people all the time. They learn to seek information, calm down the emotionally upset, and question suspects. They must bring about law compliance, often with no more than a five- or six-minute contact with a person. Officers contact people who come from all walks of life and have all kinds of beliefs. This can be exciting, refreshing, and educational.

#### **ACCOMPLISHMENT**

“I like to see accomplishments.” A motivated officer can often follow a case from beginning to end. This may involve gathering evidence, finding a suspect, taking the case to court, and seeing the guilty party convicted. A well-planned raid or arrest, the reduction of certain types of crime, or a properly investigated accident can all evoke feelings of confidence and self-worth.

#### **SATISFACTION**

“I like to feel my work is worthwhile.” Perhaps nothing can be more satisfying to an officer than to know that what he or she does for a living is important. Although this can be a general attitude—a feeling that one is helping to protect society—it is often more specific. The life saved, the hazardous situation defused, the criminal arrested, all bring satisfaction from within, feelings that it is all worthwhile.

#### **RESPECT**

“I want to be looked up to and respected.” Although the verbal abuse can make one wonder, most people have respect for law enforcement officers. Law enforcement demands a special kind of person, and most people understand the demands of the profession.

## **NEGATIVE ASPECTS**

As with many other occupations, law enforcement makes certain undesirable demands on its participants. While not all police assignments or locations are accompanied by the same problems, the student should consider the following negative aspects of law enforcement before seeking employment within the profession.

### **HOURS AND SCHEDULES**

The demands of public safety mandate that officers do shift work and work non-typical schedules. An agency may use straight rotating shifts, rely on a system of seniority to bid for certain shifts, or attempt to match manpower needs with crime patterns. A change in assignment usually means that the working schedule changes. This can lead to physical problems such as fatigue and stress, as well as potential family problems, and often interferes with attempts to attend school or work part time.

### **FINANCIAL**

Although wages have risen significantly in the past decade, many officers have found it necessary supplement their income by working part time. Wages must be negotiated with politically sensitive government leaders dealing with limited budgets and taxing ability. Law enforcement officers cannot legally strike in most of the United States. Although benefits and retirement pay are provided, the percentages paid by the government employer are dropping due to taxpayer demands and premium increases. Of real concern to individual officers is the possibility of a lawsuit against them that is not covered by some form of liability insurance.

### **PHYSICAL**

Of primary concern to all law enforcement officers is the high risk of death or injury. Approximately 100 officers are killed by violent means each year, and one of every five officers working patrol will sustain an injury annually. Stress results from the risks and seriousness of the police function. The resulting suicide rate for law enforcement officers is greater than that of the general population. Alcoholism is a too-common result of job-induced stress. Some State worker's compensation laws now recognize high blood pressure and heart attacks in police as occupationally caused. With the average life expectancy in the U.S. being 78.7 years, the reported life expectancy of a peace officer is approximately 76 years for male officers. However, there is currently limited research available that supports or agrees upon actual life expectancy of officers. Several studies looking at this difference have found that it is due to the high amounts of stress, which keep the natural adrenaline levels in the body at higher-than-average levels. This causes degeneration of vital tissues, such as the heart muscle, thus leading to a heart attack.

### **EMOTIONAL**

The peace officer is required to view and deal with scenes of violence and hatred almost daily. He/she is also expected to aid the injured and mutilated, and to investigate crimes such as murder, assault, rape, and child abuse. The peace officer is trained to look for, and see, the worst in our society. Because of the uniform and badge, the officer is the constant subject of attention, most of it negative. Due to this attention, many officers limit their social contacts to other police officers, withdrawing

from exposure to other people in their community. Such limited social contacts can be psychologically harmful.

Some officers develop the so-called John Wayne Syndrome to protect themselves emotionally. This kind of officer can be characterized as cynical, overly serious, emotionally withdrawn, cold, and authoritarian. Not only do such officers withdraw from society, but they may have few interests or concerns outside of work and become emotionless even when dealing with their own family members. They become “super cops” who may rationalize the excessive use of force or aggression against others in order to protect society. Many law enforcement agencies now have programs and professional counseling to attempt to assist officers in dealing with these emotional problems.

## FAMILY LIFE

All of the above problems can lead to domestic strain. A typical reaction is for the officer, out of love for the spouse, not to talk about the undesirable aspects of his or her working day. No reference is made to the accidents, the victims, or the ugly side of the occupation. With this line of communication closed, it is easy for others to close. The ties between husband and wife require constant communication. If communication stops, oftentimes hostility builds, causing domestic disputes, spouse abuse, and finally divorce.

The spouse of a law enforcement officer often needs to learn to deal with the problem of jealousy. The uniform and badge tend to expose the officer to situations that produce stress between spouses who do not trust each other. It is interesting to note that one of the biggest problems involving the integration of women into law enforcement is the opposition of wives who do not want their husbands to have to work with a female partner.

Some officers tend to be overly harsh and restrictive when dealing with their own children. The officer, not wanting his own child to become a delinquent or a victim, becomes overly controlling and demanding. This type of officer often overreacts to the normal, experimental juvenile behaviors of his own children.

## **JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

There are over 780,000 individuals employed in federal, state, county, and city law enforcement occupations. It is often possible to combine other interests with a law enforcement career. For example, an outdoorsman can become a forest ranger or wildlife resource officer, a flying enthusiast can become a police helicopter pilot, a scientifically minded person can become a forensic specialist, scuba divers and mountain climbers can use their skills for search and rescue, and artists can help catch the most dangerous criminals through sketches of suspects.

As law enforcement has become more progressive, many civilian staff positions have opened up. Agencies need budgetary specialists, public relations experts, educators, and administrators. The need for officers in the public sector has not diminished in recent years, and the profession will continue to require qualified applicants. The use of private security firms and personnel is likely to grow even more quickly.

Of special interest are the job opportunities available to women. The advent of equal rights has moved female officers away from parking meters and juvenile units into all aspects of police work, including patrol, supervision, and administration. Although women have traditionally handled secretarial and clerical duties, studies demonstrate that women can be effective law enforcement officers. The presence of female officers in domestic disturbance situations has been shown to reduce

tension, and community relations are improved with more females employed. The public often finds it easier to deal with a female officer. The LEAA's 1977 report indicated that "in general, male and female officers performed similarly. They used the same techniques to gain and keep control, and were equally unlikely to use force or to display a weapon."

## **MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS AND TESTING**

### **CITIZENSHIP**

All Utah peace officers are required to be citizens of the United States. In most cases, the individual must also be willing to reside within the jurisdictional limits of the employing law enforcement agency.

### **CHARACTER**

All law enforcement officer applicants are subjected to a background investigation to determine the character of the applicant. This is necessary to ensure the basic honesty and credibility of the potential officer, and to meet the expectations of the community. The background check includes an investigation into the individual's reputation, credit rating, driving record, and conviction records.

Applicants cannot be addicted to intoxicating liquors, narcotics, or habit-forming drugs. A felony conviction or a conviction for *any crime involving dishonesty, unlawful sexual conduct, physical violence or the unlawful use, sale, or possession of a controlled substance* can disqualify an applicant. Serious traffic offenses or the habitual breaking of any laws can also disqualify an individual. Agencies try to avoid hiring individuals who would bring discredit to their organization.

### **WRITTEN TEST**

Most written tests for law enforcement applicants are police aptitude tests. They test whether an applicant has skills such as reading comprehension, noticing patterns, and problem solving. The tests are usually multiple-choice and may last several hours. Scores below a certain level will often disqualify the candidate immediately.

The POST Entrance-Level Test is required and ensures that individuals entering the law enforcement field have adequate reading, writing and mathematical skills. (This is also the test required for all Highway Patrol Trooper applicants, even those who are already POST certified.)

The test takes about 1½ hours to complete, and consist of four parts:

1. Reading comprehension
2. Incident report writing
3. Grammar
4. Mathematics

There is a fee each time the test is taken.

## PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

Each applicant must be in good health and able to withstand the rigors of the occupation. Agencies use their own physicians for the examination. They are particularly interested in vision problems, hearing abilities, back problems, and any evidence of potential future medical problems that could be aggravated by law enforcement duties.

## PHYSICAL AGILITY TEST

Independent of the physical exam, the applicant is required to pass a physical agility test designed to show that he/she can successfully engage in the physical activities required in law enforcement. Most agencies require women to complete identical requirements with men. The example test announcement material that concludes this chapter includes many of the types of agility test activities found in most agencies.

## ORAL INTERVIEW

Almost all agencies require an oral interview conducted by a panel of administrators and supervisors. A typical interview may last up to 30 minutes and is very comprehensive. The interview is structured, so that all applicants will be asked the same questions. Although the answers are important, the oral communication skills of the applicant, his/her ability to analyze questions, and reactions to pressure will all be observed and noted.

The first question asked is often, "Why do you want to be a peace officer?" After discussing this question, the applicant may be asked if he/she could shoot someone in the performance of his/her duties, and may then be asked questions about his/her interests, attitudes and feelings about minorities, etc. This is usually followed by situation questions, wherein the applicant will be given a law enforcement scenario and asked to explain how he/she would handle the situation. The interviewers will be looking for common sense, awareness of non-arrest alternatives, and a lack of prejudice in the applicant.

## CERTIFICATION

After a new peace officer is hired, Utah law mandates that the officer complete a 440-hour basic training program taught by Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST). The academy must be completed by new officers before acting as a peace officer. Upon successful completion of the course, which involves testing in various police skills, the officer is certified by the State of Utah. The training and testing will be in areas such as first aid, knowledge of the law, defensive tactics, firearms, and physical conditioning.

Certification is maintained by completing 40 hours of in-service training each year. This training must be approved by POST and is often taught by POST-approved individual agency instructors. Certification reduces the risks of liability by establishing that minimum standards of training have occurred. It also tends to standardize law enforcement practices statewide and increase professionalism.

Physical fitness is a critical element of the academy requirements. The POST testing program involves the following:

- Vertical jump (jumping and explosion power)
- Strength test (push-ups)
- Muscular endurance (bent-knee sit-ups)
- Cardiovascular endurance (1.5-mile run)

Each candidate is tested on his/her first day at the academy. Candidates performing below an acceptable level (i.e., where training would be unlikely to produce required results by the end of the session) are eliminated from the academy. Another test is given at the halfway point, and again the candidate may be eliminated from the academy depending upon his/her improvement from the first test. (See the chart of basic fitness requirements below.)

## **APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT**

If the decision to pursue a law enforcement career has been made, the next step is to make application with those agencies for which the candidate would be willing to work. It is usually advantageous to apply with several different agencies because of strong competition and a limited number of openings. A candidate may want to consider the following points when deciding which agency he/she would like to work for:

- Pay scale and benefit package
- Promotion possibilities
- Geographical location
- Primary law enforcement functions
- Size of agency
- Agency policies (outside employment, use of vehicles, residency requirements, etc.)

Law enforcement agencies use a number of different selection processes. The following material indicates some of the various qualifications and tests involved in recruiting a new officer.

## AGE

Utah law allows for the certification of peace officers as young as age 21, although many allow candidates to start the testing process at age 20. In the time between high school and hiring, the potential peace officer should seriously pursue law enforcement-related jobs and education, or enlist in the military with emphasis on law enforcement. Many agencies will hire dispatchers, cadets, records clerks, non-sworn jailers, and others at age 18. Weber State University, Salt Lake Community College, and Southern Utah University all offer law enforcement degrees, while the University of Utah offers a criminology certificate in its Sociology Department. Police Officer Standards and Training Basic Academy courses are also offered at Salt Lake Community College and Weber State University.

## HEIGHT/WEIGHT

Most agencies have done away with minimum and maximum height and weight limitations for legal reasons. Instead, the applicant must perform up to a minimum standard on a physical fitness test and pass a physical examination, as determined by a physician. In order to become certified, a candidate must pass a strenuous set of physical condition standards while attending the academy.

## EDUCATION

All Utah law enforcement agencies require at least a high school diploma or equivalent. It is likely that at least some college education will be required in the future, as agencies become more progressive. Some agencies give bonus points in the selection process for education years in excess of the minimum, or increased pay for various college degrees. Federal law enforcement agencies require a college degree.



## UTAH PEACE OFFICERS STANDARDS AND TRAINING (POST) PHYSICAL ASSESSMENT

Applicants who do not waive the physical assessment test are responsible for appearing at the scheduled physical assessment test listed on the schedule at the end of this booklet.

The physical assessment test will be administered at the POST Academy Gym Located at SLCC Miller Campus 410 W 9800 S Sandy, Utah.

Applicants who are waving this test based on the requirements listed in this handbook must submit the PHYSICAL ASSESSMENT TEST WAIVER form and pertinent documentation before the application deadline. We reserve the right to reject your documentation and require you to take the physical test if we determine your application for waiver does not meet our requirements.

### DESCRIPTION OF PHYSICAL ASSESSMENT TEST EXERCISES

**It is extremely important that you begin to prepare for the physical assessment tests immediately in order to meet the qualifying standards.**

#### SIT AND REACH

**PHYSICAL ABILITY BEING ASSESSED: FLEXIBILITY DESCRIPTION:** The subject assumes a sitting position on the floor with the legs extended directly in front and the back of the legs pressed firmly against the floor and subject's feet pressed against the front of the flexibility box. The subject should bob forward three times and then push the mark with both hands held together as far forward as possible on the top of the box and hold. The subject should not knock or push the park forward further than the tops of his/her fingers will reach.

#### PUSH-UPS

**PHYSICAL ABILITY BEING ASSESSED: STRENGTH DESCRIPTION:** The subject assumes a front-leaning position with the hands placed where they are most comfortable. The back, buttocks and legs must be straight from head to heels. Begin the push-up by bending the elbows and lowering the entire body until the tops of the upper arms, shoulders and lower back are aligned and parallel to the floor. (A fist may be placed under the subject's sternum and should be touched, Return to the starting position by lifting the elbows. During the test the subject cannot rest the body on the ground. It is possible to rest, but one cannot relieve pressure for the upper body while in the resting position, If the subject does not keep the body straight or lock the elbows completely, that repetition does not count. The score is the number of push-up completed in the one minute.

#### SIT-UPS

**PHYSICAL ABILITY BEING ASSESSED: MUSCLE ENDURANCE DESCRIPTION:** The subject lies on the back with the knees flexed at a right angle. A partner kneels at the subject's feet and presses down on the subject's insteps to keep the heels in contact with the floor. The hands must remain in contact with the head and the fingers cupped behind the ears. When ready the signal "go" is given and the subject sits up to touch the knees with the elbows breaking the vertical plane. Without pause, the subject returns to the starting position just long enough for the shoulders to touch the mat and immediately sits up again. The score is the number of sit-ups that can be completed in the allotted time period. Norms have been computed for one-minute period for men and for women.

#### 1.5 MILE RUN

**PHYSICAL ABILITY BEING ASSESSED: CARDIOVASCULAR FITNESS DESCRIPTION:** The exercise involves measuring the time spent in running 1.5 miles. The distance covered in a specific amount of time is then used to determine the fitness category of the individual. This test requires a nearly exhaustive effort. It is assumed that the individual has had the proper medical examination and has been cleared for an exercise program.

**TAKING THE TEST:** On the day of the testing, it is recommended applicants abstain from smoking or eating for a minimum of two hours preceding the test. It is advisable to allow adequate time prior to the test for stretching and warm-up exercises. An important consideration at the end of the run is the "cool down" period. Applicants should not stand around immediately after the run, but should walk for at least five minutes to prevent pooling of the blood in the lower extremities, which reduces the return of the blood to the heart.

## CERTIFIED REGISTER AND EXAM WEIGHTS

Applicants who successfully complete all DSMC testing will be placed on a certified register ranked by their respective test scores. Test scores will be based on 100 points weighted as follows:

### Deputy Sheriff

TEST COMPONENT	WEIGHT
Written Test	20
B-PAD Video Simulation	40
Oral Interview	40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>
Preference Points	2.5, 5, or 10 points added to test scores

### Correctional Officer and Protective Services Officer

TEST COMPONENT	WEIGHT
Written Test	20
Oral Interview: • Behavioral Questions • Situational Questions	80
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

#### ORAL INTERVIEW

#### BEHAVIORAL AND SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS

In this interview, applicants will be asked about their past accomplishments and achievements.

Applicants will be required to respond to several “behavioral incident” questions. A behavioral incident refers to an actual incident in the past that illustrates the applicant’s behavior. These questions are designed to assess the applicant’s problem –solving and interpersonal skills.

For the Correctional and Protective Services Officer categories, applicants will also be required to respond to several hypothetical scenarios. These questions are designed to assess the applicant’s communication, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills.

#### B-PAD

#### VIDEO SIMULATION EXERCISE (B-PAD) – DEPUTY SHERIFF APPLICANTS ONLY

This test requires the applicant to view and respond to a series of law enforcement-related scenarios on a video screen. Each scenario contains a problem such as a hostile or emotionally distraught person. The applicant’s responses will be videotaped. That tape will then be reviewed and scored by a panel of raters.

## **HIRING PROCESS**

### **Background Investigation**

When the Law Enforcement Agency has or anticipates job openings, they will issue a conditional offer of hire to the top ranking persons on the merit register. After a conditional hire offer is made, the Law Enforcement Office conducts a comprehensive background investigation. The investigation includes, but is not limited to, past work history, a criminal history check, a credit history check, and a polygraph examination. As openings become available, applicants will be invited to a Law Enforcement Office background interview. If there are any problems of concern relative to the background investigation, these matter will be discussed with the applicant during the meeting with the Background Board. The Law Enforcement Office may request the removal of a candidate's name from the register if they do not meet qualifying standards or otherwise fail a background investigation.

### **Medical Evaluation**

Applicants who are being considered for hire will be required to successfully complete a medical examination performed by a County designated or contracted physician. The Law Enforcement Office may request that a candidate's name be removed from the merit register if they fail the medical exam. A qualified candidate with a disability, as applicable under the Americans with Disabilities Act, may request reasonable accommodation that would allow them to perform the essential duties of the job. The Law Enforcement Office will consider requests for reasonable accommodations.

### **Hiring procedures**

When vacancies become available, the Law Enforcement Office submits a request for a list of candidates from which they may select. The Law Enforcement Office will certify the number of candidates the Law Enforcement Office is entitled to, pursuant to state statute and Law Enforcement policies. Current policy allow certification of three candidates for each opening available. The Law Enforcement Office may select any candidate from those certified for the vacancy.

**NOTE:** No candidate is guaranteed employment. Selections are subject to the discretion of the Law Enforcement Office. Candidates not selected will remain on the register for future consideration unless the Law Enforcement Office requests a candidate's name be removed for good cause or until a new merit register is established.

### **Probation**

Each newly hired sworn office will serve a twelve-month probationary period, which may be extended for time spent in the Utah Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Academy. All Probationary employees must successfully complete all POST requirements as condition of continued employment. Following the successful completion of the probationary period, the employee is accorded all status and rights of a sworn office covered by the Deputy Sheriffs- Merit System.

## PROBATION INFORMATION

### P.O.S.T. PHYSICAL ASSESSMENT QUALIFICATIONS

During the probationary period each candidate, who is not Utah State peace officer certified or certifiable, will be required to pass the physical assessment test as follows:

- During the first week of employment at or above the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile as a part of the pre-testing.
- During the Academy mid-term test at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile or levels that show some improvement.
- During the Academy final test at or above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile.

### P.O.S.T. PHYSICAL ASSESSMENT QUALIFICATIONS

#### 40<sup>TH</sup> PERCENTILE REQUIREMENTS

##### MALES

AGE	SIT & REACH (inches)	MINUTE PUSH-UP	ONE MINUTE SIT-UP ONE	1.5 MILE RUN (time)
20-29	16.5	20	38	12:51
30-39	15.5	18	35	13:36
40-49	14.5	13	29	14:29
50-59	13.5	12	24	15:26
60+	12.5	12	19	16:43

##### FEMALES

AGE	SIT & REACH (inches)	MINUTE PUSH-UP	ONE MINUTE SIT-UP ONE	1.5 MILE RUN (time)
20-29	19.5	9	32	15:26
30-39	18.5	7	25	15:57
40-49	17.5	6	20	16:58
50-59	17.0	6	14	17:54
60+	15.5	6	6	18:44

## 50<sup>th</sup> PERCENTILE REQUIREMENTS

### MALES

AGE	SIT & REACH (inches)	SIT-UPS (one minute)	1.5 MILE RUN (time)	AGE	PUSH-UPS (one minute)
20-29	17.5	40	12:12	17-21	32
30-39	16.5	36	12:51	22-26	30
40-49	15.5	31	13:53	27-31	28
50-59	14.5	26	14:55	32-36	23
60+	13.5	20	16:07	37-41	22
				42-46	18
				47+	17

### FEMALES

AGE	SIT & REACH (inches)	SIT-UPS (one minute)	1.5 MILE RUN (time)	AGE	PUSH-UPS (one minute)
20-29	20.0	34	14:55	17-21	13
30-39	19.0	27	15:26	22-26	11
40-49	18.0	22	16:27	27-31	10
50-59	18.0	17	17:24	32-36	10
60+	16.5	8	18:16	37-41	8
				42-46	7
				47+	7

## DUTIES OF NEWLY HIRED SWORN MEMBERS

### DEPUTY SHERIFF

1. Conduct street patrol.
2. Conduct investigations into possible law violations – make arrests.
3. Conduct searches of individuals, vehicles, and buildings.
4. Act as a public relations representative for the Office.
5. Testify in court.
6. Control and direct traffic, issue citations.
7. Interview suspects, witnesses, and victims.
8. Physically protect himself/herself and others from harm.
9. Provide information and assistance to the public.
10. Write reports.
11. Operate various equipment, devices, and apparatus.

### CORRECTIONAL OFFICER

1. Ensure prisoner information is correct, such as name, age, place of birth, physical description, scars, marks, tattoos, etc. Notify appropriate personnel when inaccuracies are discovered.
2. Detain persons enumerated in the State Laws.
3. Fingerprint and photograph prisoners according to laws and procedures.
4. Deliver judicial papers directed to a prisoner.
5. Segregate prisoners in accordance with established classification and administrative procedure.
6. Supervise daily activities of prisoner population in housing units, keeping them safe and secure in accordance with policies, procedures, and post orders.
7. Record any occurrences in jail and/or unit during tour of duty, using computer programs and forms provided.
8. Complete formal computer reports of any incidents when directed, and in accordance with policies, procedures, and post orders.
9. Fulfill all orders and commands from supervisory personnel.
10. Learn and follow the policies and procedures of the Salt Lake County Metro Jail.

### PROTECTIVE SERVICE OFFICER

1. Patrol County facilities and work areas.
2. Respond to emergencies, calls for assistance, and alarms.
3. Investigate reports of criminal activity – make arrests.
4. Provide information and assistance to the public.
5. Conduct surveillance.
6. Enforce parking laws.
7. Protect participants at public meetings and provide crowd control at large events.
8. Provide escort and transportation of County funds.
9. Take custody of court defendants while waiting for transportation to the jail.
10. Testify in court.
11. Take custody of lost or unsecured property.
12. Check County facilities for safety violations and pedestrian hazards.
13. Write reports.

**For further details, check with your local law enforcement agency.**