



Public Safety Health and Wellness

Serving Those Who Protect Our Cities, Homes, and Lives

By the numbers...

15

Percentage of police departments requiring some type of college education for new officers in the year 2000

68

Percentage of felons sentenced to a period of confinement in State prisons in 2000

4.2

Number of injuries per 100 fires in the Northeast region of the U.S. in 2002—more than twice the rate of the rest of the country

28

Number of minutes between civilian fire injuries nationally in 2002

Sources: NFPA, Bureau of Justice Statistics

Inside this issue...

Aptitude Testing Still a Mainstay	2
Minimizing Back Injuries	2
The Skinny on Trans-Fat	3
PSMS and IPD	3
Calendar of Events	4

Featured Department

Perry Township Sets Standards High for a Healthy Department

by Christopher M. Costlow, M.S.

Indianapolis, Indiana –

Located in south central Marion County, Perry Township includes such communities as Beech Grove, Southport, and Edgewood.

The Perry Township Fire Department currently serves a population of 117,000 which encompasses 70 square miles. With this amount of area to cover, the department regularly partners with its neighbor to the north, the Indianapolis Fire Department (IFD), and Franklin Township Fire Department to the east. Three truck stops in the community create a potential increased risk of hazardous spills and the IFD provides HAZMAT support. Franklin Township offers dive rescue support, while Perry Township firefighters support them on their emergency runs.

Not only is the Perry Township Fire Department serving its community well (averaging 7,500 runs per year), but it has also made a commitment to serving its personnel well. This includes monthly meetings between the Department chiefs, the township trustee and the Union to keep everyone on the same page regarding the needs, happenings and requests of the Department. In addition, the Department is enhancing officer training through such programs as teambuilding and effective communication.

Department Sets Health Goals

Lieutenant Jeff Quinn serves as the Department's health and safety coordinator. He shares that one of the biggest departmental goals is to take continued steps to increase the health and wellness of their

personnel. "Firefighting is a young man's game. As we grow older we need to find ways to improve longevity and health. The easiest way to do this is through a wellness program," states Quinn.



One way the Department will do this is to implement a Department-sponsored fitness program that will provide assistance with firefighter training. The department currently has one peer fitness trainer and is seeking to certify a trainer for each shift. Another goal is to have a tobacco-free Department. For the last two years, the Department has only hired candidates who sign a tobacco-free contract. For current members, a free day off is awarded to those who test negative on an annual urine nicotine test. Since 2000, the Department has experienced a 10% drop in smoking levels. Only 15% of the Department currently smokes. The average in Indiana is 27%.

Medical Program Helping

The Department ultimately wants to follow the standards established by the IAFF and IAFC for a wellness-fitness program. This includes annual complete physicals, blood work, medical testing, and a

complete fitness evaluation. However, they have experienced significant benefits with their current occupational medical program which includes everything previously listed except fitness testing. Since implementing a more thorough medical program in 2000, the Department has seen the following improvements:

- Cholesterol levels have improved in 16% of personnel
- Treadmill testing has shown an improvement in aerobic fitness levels in 13% of personnel
- Those with five or more risk factors for disease have decreased by nearly 10%
- Disease has been caught in its early stages and brought under control in many individuals
- There has been an overall shift to fewer risk factors per individual over the years

All of this has been accomplished even as the average age of the Department has continued to increase. As a self-insured Department, these results will clearly help control costs for Perry Township, but more importantly, improve the quality of life of their public safety personnel.

Fast Facts on the Perry Township Fire Department

Chief	Ray Meredith
Pop. Served:	117,000
Area Protected:	70 square miles
# of stations	4 (5 in 2005)
# Personnel:	108 sworn
Average age:	41
Special Teams:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surface/ice water team • Extrication team



Public Safety Psychology News

Written Aptitude Testing Remains a Mainstay of Decision Making

by Jeffrey C. Savitsky, Ph.D., JD

Written multiple choice tests are much maligned. Nearly everyone thinks that they are unfair, potentially biased, confusing, and unnecessary. But, despite all the bad press, these tests continue to be a mainstay of public safety personnel decision-making.

Advantages of Written Testing

It is true that multiple-choice tests can be misused. Further, it is also true that there is a high potential for these tests to be biased and unfair. However, there are also many advantages associated with the use of multiple-choice entry-level tests. For instance, these tests can provide an inexpensive way for making a rough cut within a large group of applicants. If these tests are

developed and scored in an appropriate manner, they can provide departments with a method for identifying the group of applicants that should be considered further and evaluated through more in-depth measures of skill and potential.

Tests Must Measure Essential Job Skills

In order to be useful, multiple-choice tests must measure the correct skills and abilities. This means that the test should only be used if it has been validated for the types of skills and abilities that are essential for job success. For instance, IPSP has developed a telecommunicator test and our research on this position suggests that a job-relevant test should measure the skills and abilities as follows:

- a) Remember numbers
- b) Remember words
- c) Listen and accurately transcribe information
- d) Understand facts and apply principles

Perform a Transportability Study

A department should only use a test if it has been validated for use by that department. This means that whenever a department wants to adopt a new test it must first conduct a "transportability" study. This type of study can be accomplished through an easily done survey which establishes the relevance of the testing materials for success in a specific position. Too many departments make the mistake of borrowing a test from another department or buying

an off-the-shelf test without first ensuring its appropriateness. Obtaining a test in this manner exposes a department to potential legal liability. Disappointed applicants may claim that they were excluded for irrelevant and non-job related reasons.

Public safety departments that utilize multiple-choice tests should also ensure that the tests are administered in a fair manner. Allegations of unfairness can be reduced by utilizing the testing company to administer the test. IPSP provides this type of service because we believe that it protects a department against claims that certain individuals were allowed to see the test before others.

Dr. Savitsky is the director of the Institute for Public Safety Personnel, Inc. Call at 1-800-892-IPSP.



Your Health and Fitness

Minimize Your Risk of Back Injury With These Preventive Steps

by Nolan Bastien

After the common cold, back injuries are cited as the most common reason for absenteeism in the general workforce. About 8 out of 10 adults are estimated to experience a back injury in their lifetime, and about 10 percent will suffer a re-injury.

Contributors to Back Pain

The most contributing factors are force, repetition, and posture. Force is measured as the amount of effort needed to complete a task. Repetition refers to the number of times a given movement is performed. Posture is the quality of posture when you're sitting or standing and the position that you're in when performing a job. Adjusting these factors can minimize the majority of back pain risk.

Adjust Your Workplace

Look around your work area and adjust those factors that you can to minimize back pain.

For example, when driving, adjust the seat so that your arms remain flexed—not reaching for the steering wheel.

Be Aware of Your Posture

If you stand for long periods, rest one foot on a stool or small box from time to time. While you stand, hold reading material at eye level. Don't bend forward to do deskwork. Sitting for long periods of time can also cause low back pain. Take your wallet out of your back pocket when you sit because it disrupts the balance of your hips. Adjust your chair so that the feet stay flat on the floor and so the curve in the lower back is supported.

Lift properly

Try to keep heavy objects as

close to your body as possible. Keep your feet shoulder width or wider apart for leverage and stability. Bend at the knees, not the back, to pick up a heavy load from the ground so that the legs are used more. Try to balance



the object so both sides of the body are equally stressed. Otherwise, switch sides every so often. Don't attempt to lift heavy objects. Ask for help as needed.

Stay Fit

Regular exercise is your best defense for avoiding back pain.

Not only will it increase overall fitness, but it will burn off the extra pounds that add stress to your back. Core strength (abdominal/low back muscles) is most important when it comes to prevention. Warm up the back muscles before a bout of heavy lifting.

Flexibility plays a huge part in preventing lower back pain. The biggest target area of stretching should be the hamstrings (back of thighs). Flexibility in the hamstrings helps promote an anterior pelvic tilt, which in turn causes lumbar extension creating corrective and supportive benefits.

It's been said that a little prevention goes a long way, and if it helps avoid chronic low back pain it's well worth the trouble.

Nolan is a student intern for Public Safety Medical Services.



Public Safety Medical News What's the Skinny on Trans-Fats?

by Ellen K. Walsh, P.A.-C

Staying abreast of the latest dietary guidelines seems like a full time job. If it seems like your head is spinning with conflicting information on what to eat and what to avoid, you are in good company. Going to the grocery store now requires label reading, calculation, computation and can easily lead a person to throw up their hands in frustration and head for the ice cream. One of the latest terms to surface is trans-fat.

Trans-Fat Defined

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, trans fatty acids, or trans fats, are made through the process of hydrogenation that solidifies liquid oils. Hydrogenation increases the shelf life and flavor stability of these oils and foods that contain them. Trans fat is found in vegetable shortenings, in some margarines, crackers, cookies, snack foods and other items. Naturally occurring trans fats are found in meat and dairy products.

Trans-Fats May Increase Risk of Heart Attack and Stroke

We have known for a long time to avoid saturated fat, that is, the kind of fat that is found in animal products such as meat and butter. Saturated fat can raise LDL (the bad cholesterol) and contribute to the build up of cholesterol and other substances in artery walls. That build up can increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. Studies have shown that trans fat, even when made from vegetable oil, also raises LDL and has the added disadvantage of lowering HDL (the good cholesterol). As a result, trans fat has the potential for increasing risk of heart attack and stroke even more than saturated fat.

The American Heart Association offers these tips to lower your fat intake:

- Use naturally occurring, unhydrogenated oil such as canola or olive oil
- Look for processed foods made with unhydrogenated oil rather than

hydrogenated oil or saturated fat.

- Use margarine as a substitute for butter, and choose a soft (liquid or tub) margarine over harder, stick forms.

Use margarine with no more than 2 grams of saturated fat per tablespoon and with liquid vegetable oil as the first ingredient.

In addition, the American Heart Association's Nutrition Committee advises that "healthy Americans over age 2 limit their intake of saturated and trans fat to less than 10 percent of total calories. Healthy people should adjust their total fat intake so they don't gain weight. To lose weight, it's helpful to limit total fat to no more than 30 percent of calories." That translates to limiting your daily intake of fats and oils to about 5-8 teaspoons.

The following is a list from the U.S. Department of Agriculture of some common foods and the amount of trans fat they contain.

Trans-Fatty Acids in One Serving	
Food	Grams/ serving
Vegetable shortening	1.4-4.2
Margarine (stick)	1.8-3.5
Margarine (tub)	0.4-1.6
Salad dressing (regular)	0.006-1.1
Vegetable oils	0.01-0.06
Pound cake	4.3
Doughnuts	0.3-3.8
Microwave popcorn (regular)	2.2
Chocolate chip cookies	1.2-2.7
Vanilla wafers	1.3
French fries	0.7-3.6
Snack crackers	1.8-2.5
Snack chips	0-1.2
Chocolate candies	0.04-2.8
White bread	0.06-0.7
Ready to eat cereal	0.05-0.5

Ellen is a Physician Assistant for Public Safety Medical Services.



Odds and Ends IPD Transitions Have Been Confusing to Some

by Mike Russell

Recently, there has been some confusion as to the status of physical exams for the Indianapolis Police Department (IPD). This is due to the fact that Health Directions has closed its doors. Health Directions had previously been providing physical examinations to the IPD. Additionally, many have asked what our involvement has been in this transition.



New Wellness Screener for City

In October of 2003, the City entered into a contract with Spectrum Health Systems to perform on-location wellness screenings for City Employees—including the IPD. To date, this is the wellness service that is available to IPD officers. Physical examinations are not being performed. Public Safety Medical Services is not contracted to perform physical examinations for IPD officers, nor has it taken the place of Health Directions.

PSMS Serves IPD Special Teams

Public Safety Medical Services **does** perform physical examinations and medical surveillance for IPD Special Forces and has been since 1998. Dr. Moffatt has personally been serving them since 1990. These teams include SWAT, SCUBA, HAZMAT, Bomb Squad, K-9, Horse Patrol, Firing Range, and Special Assignments. We are also contracted by the City to perform pre-placement examinations for officers applying to these teams.

Additionally, we administer the applicant Public Employee

Retirement Fund (PERF) Exams and are contracted for Fit-for-Duty and Return-to-Work Evaluations for non-duty related (non-workers compensation) conditions.

While the wellness services provided by Spectrum do not include a comprehensive physical examination, the City has provided an excellent screening package with take-home resources.

We hope this clarifies our relationship with the IPD. Please contact me with any further questions at 317.972.1180.

Quotable

“Trust men and they will be true to you; treat them greatly and they will show themselves great.”

—**Ralph Waldo Emerson**
(1803 - 1882)

Our Mission

Public Safety Medical Services seeks to provide public safety agencies and municipalities with expert medical, psychological, and fitness evaluations.

We inspire healthier and more productive lives through innovative programs delivered with pride, integrity, and dedication.

Public Safety Health and Wellness, a bi-monthly publication of Public Safety Medical Services, is committed to enhancing the well-being of public safety professionals.



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Serving Those Who Protect Our Cities, Homes, and Lives



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Medical
Services**

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What's Happening Public Safety Calendar of Events

LAW ENFORCEMENT

March 17

Event: Criminal Case Management
Location: Public Agency Training Council, Indianapolis
Contact: PATC, 800.365.0119

May 3-7

Event: Law Enforcement Information Management (LEIM) Conference
Contact: Tom Robey of IACP at 703.836.6767

June 26-30

Event: National Sheriffs' Association annual conference
Location: Seattle, WA
Contact: NSA at 703.836.7827



FIRE SERVICE

March 10-11

Event: Line of Duty Death Prevention Summit
Location: Tampa, FL
Contact: National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, 301.447.1365



April 26-May 1

Event: Fire Department Instructors Conference (FDIC)
Location: Indianapolis, IN
Contact: FDIC, 973.251.5040



April 26-28

Event: Fire-Rescue Med 2004
Location: Las Vegas, NV
Contact: 800.934.1957



OTHER NEWS

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Indiana Hazmat District 5
Peru Fire Dept.
Tipton Fire Dept.

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