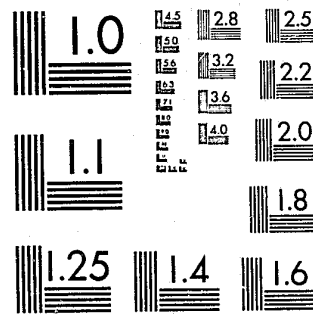


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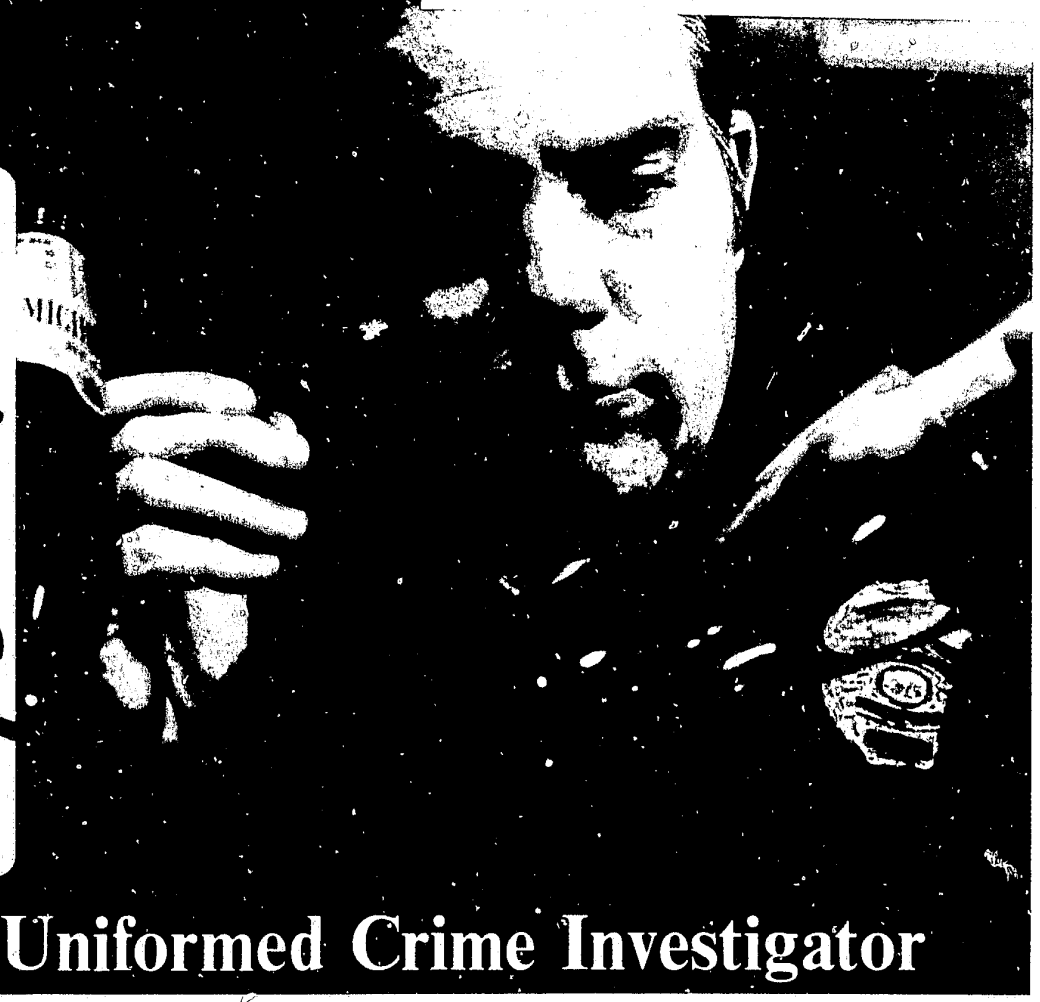
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The Uniformed Crime Investigator

FBI LAW ENFORCEMENT BULLETIN

MARCH 1984, VOLUME 53, NUMBER 3

93715

Operations

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ACQUISITIONS



The Cover: As a means to control rising crime rates and provide improved service to the community, one police agency developed a Uniformed Crime Investigator Program. See article p. 1.

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William H. Webster, Director

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The Uniformed Crime Investigator A Unique Strategy to Protect and Serve

By
LT. GENE N. BERRY
Commander
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"Cooperation and coordination are main ingredients to the success of the program."

93716

"The Uniformed Crime Investigator Program . . . can enhance public relations and bring the community and law enforcement agency into a shared light of total crime scene control and community responsiveness."

Resistance

Any change within an organization, especially a major field operational change, provokes some resistance and negativism among the rank and file, and this was true with the conceptualization of the Uniformed Crime Investigator Program. General investigative personnel feared encroachment upon their investigative techniques and that their expertise would be challenged. Most of all, they feared that UCI field work would generate additional case workloads for them. These were legitimate concerns, but concerns which have not materialized, even though our program is still in its early stages of development. This is why it is important for close working relationships to be developed between division commanders and among divisional personnel to keep the intent of the program intact. Program personnel and others involved must be encouraged to establish a coordinated and cooperative working relationship if the specific program objectives and departmental goals are to be met.

Contrary to the beliefs of investigators, case loads have not increased substantially. Instead, significantly more physical evidence is collected and more extensive initial investigations are conducted. Efforts by UCI officers have alleviated followup work for investigators and thus freed them for other duties. Also the work of UCI's has enabled investigators to follow up immediately on leads which have been developed.

Program Monitoring

First-line supervisors need to be thoroughly familiar with the program

and its objectives. They must also be made aware of the type and extent of training given to UCI's and the limitations placed upon them by their equipment and experience. These supervisors must establish liaison with other departmental units, especially the investigative personnel, and UCI officers themselves should be encouraged to institute "lines of communications" with other support groups.

The program has been monitored closely and suggestions and criticisms evaluated to increase the program's effectiveness. Monthly meetings are used to identify operational field problems, reinforce program goals, and raise the efficiency of the unit and its individual officers.

Equipment

Full departmental support and suitable equipment go hand in hand for a successful end product. A significant community program that will impact the reputation of the law enforcement agency must be properly prepared and equipped. Several other law enforcement agencies, county crime laboratory personnel, knowledgeable camera experts, and other individuals associated with private laboratories were solicited for equipment suggestions. The final result was that we were able to combine several well-informed opinions into a feasible equipment inventory. This, coupled with the training, would meet the objectives of the program.

Conclusion

The Uniformed Crime Investigator Program became operational in March 1983, and since that time, UCI officers are handling 125 to 150 incidents a month. While most of the UCI field work does not initially produce a sus-

pect, thorough preliminary crime scene work has produced excellent results in connecting perpetrators to a series of crimes.

The major impact of the UCI program has been realized in the property crime section of the Investigations Division. A large amount of physical evidence has been collected, and arrests have been made as the result of these investigations. Additional side benefits of the program are the availability of UCI officers who have specialized training to act as instructors for other field officers, which has a positive effect on the quality of work produced. The program can also be viewed as an enhancement for career development.

Society's expectations are high whether it concerns what individuals expect of themselves or from others. These expectations, combined with budgetary problems for the public sector, make our jobs difficult but not impossible. We must look within ourselves and organizations for new ideas. We have a commitment to our communities to provide the best service possible without asking for additional monies. If added financial help must be requested, then we must be constantly aware that the public will expect a fair and equitable return.

The Uniformed Crime Investigator Program can bring positive feedback to the department. It can enhance public relations and bring the community and law enforcement agency into a shared light of total crime scene control and community responsiveness.

FBI

**The Forgotten Victim
Stress and the Police
Dispatcher**

" . . . the immediate attention and decisive action required in law enforcement telecommunications is a source of critical stress for police dispatchers."

By
JAMES D. SEWELL, Ph. D.

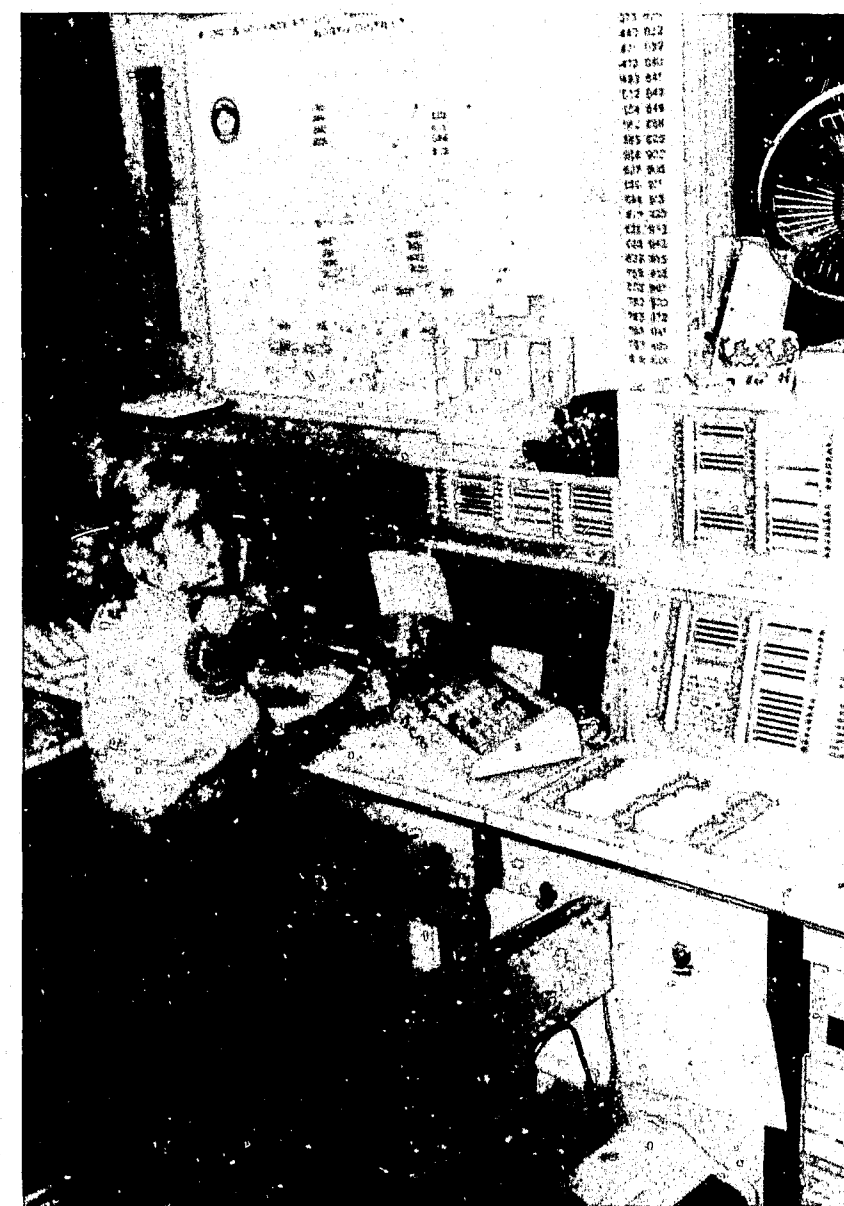
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Over the past several years, the law enforcement community, and to a degree, society in general have turned their attention to the serious phenomenon of police stress. Significant research has been undertaken to explain the problem, identify specific stressors confronting today's officers, and suggest proper methods of stress management.¹

At the same time, however, little attention has been focused on the stress experienced by the law enforcement support system, i.e., dispatchers, complaint clerks, clerical personnel, crime scene and evidence technicians, and other nonsworn personnel who are so critical to the success of the law enforcement mission.



93716



Dr. Sewell



Robert A. Butterworth
Executive Director

While the stressors experienced by these individuals may not be as life-threatening as those faced by sworn personnel on the street, emotional overload and physiological damage caused by this stress are just as real and as dangerous to all members of the profession.

Other occupations have taken significant steps to identify and address stress confronting their personnel. The experience of some can have implications for understanding that faced by certain segments of the police support system.

Stress in Air Traffic Control

The pressures brought on by the job of police dispatcher are not dissimilar to those experienced by the air traffic controller. David Martindale, for instance, describes a mock advertisement for the latter profession:

HELP WANTED: World's busiest airport seeks radar jockies for unusually stimulating, high-intensity environment. Must be able to direct at least 12 aircraft at one time and make instant decisions affecting the safety of thousands. No degree required, but prior experience as traffic cop, seeing-eye dog, or God helpful. Severe stress will jeopardize sanity and result in early termination from job, but employer will absorb cost of medical and psychiatric care.²

Martindale cites the research of Sidney Cobb of the University of Michigan and Robert Rose of Boston University, who compared the medical histories of 4,325 controllers and 8,435 pilots. Those researchers found that "not only was hypertension four

times more common among controllers, it also developed at an earlier age and was especially prevalent at busy fields. In addition, twice as many controllers suffered from peptic ulcers."³ In parallel research, Richard Grayson, a former president of the American Academy of Stress Disorder,

"... has examined many of the controllers in the Chicago area, and found remarkably similar symptoms: insomnia, loss of appetite, anxiety, irritability, and sexual dysfunction. Railroad dispatchers and sonar operators on nuclear submarines undergo similar stress, but their symptoms are seldom as severe. According to Grayson, air-traffic controllers have the highest incidence of peptic ulcers of any profession, ulcers aggravated by overtime work, high-density traffic, and fear of midair collisions."⁴

Others have also explored the phenomenon of stress within the air traffic control (ATC) function. Hurst and Rose, for instance, found that simultaneous peak traffic, i.e., the number of aircraft controlled over a limited period of time, was the most significant source of stress and "most potent index of workload at the ATC environment."⁵ Additionally, Crump's search cited workload as the most obvious source of stress for the controllers and further identified stress as originating from the duration of radio communication, number of planes expected, number of planes controlled, and pressures of time.⁶

Stress in Law Enforcement Communications

The police dispatcher experiences occupational stress which par-



Officer Crew



Melvin L. Tucker
Chief of Police

allels that of the air traffic controller. With significant time pressure, the dispatcher, too, is required to direct the activities of multiple field units; receive, assimilate, and dispatch information from a variety of sources; and effectively communicate with officers and citizens. To analyze effectively the resulting stress and implement programs of recognition and management, it is first necessary to identify those unique stressors which affect the communications environment.

Second-class Citizenship

It is not unusual for communications personnel to perceive themselves as "second-class citizens" within their department. Field needs receive administrative attention and priority in both personnel and budget, and even line officers are quick to criticize and slow to recognize the actions of these vital support personnel. The frustrations of this stressor are generated not only from field personnel but also from administrators and supervisors who are perceived to lack knowledge about the role and functions of a professional communications center.

Insufficient Training

In spite of efforts by professional organizations, such as the Associated Public Safety Communications Officers (APCO), training for communications operators is still primarily on the job. In too many departments, such training is conducted by senior personnel without benefit of a formalized training program, such as that fostered by a field officer training guide. Consequently, the operator lacks the training—and perceives the deficiency—which is necessary for the most efficient operation of the communica-

tions center and assures maximum safety of officers on the street.

Multiple Calls

As in the case of the air traffic controller, "simultaneous peak traffic" on the radio is a particularly significant source of stress for police dispatchers. Heavy volume of radio traffic and incoming telephone calls occurring within a short period of time place extreme physical and psychological demands on the individual operator.

Required Decisions

In his research on ATC stress, Crump identified one source as the number of required decisions, particularly "when a controller's decision-making capacity is stretched to the maximum."⁷ Similarly, the immediate attention and decisive action required in law enforcement telecommunications is a source of critical stress for police dispatchers. The potential life-threatening nature of many calls and the sense of urgency connected with handling people's problems magnifies the pressures created by multiple calls and constraints of time.

Anticipation

Like police officers who must experience their peers handling exciting or dangerous calls in another zone, the dispatcher responsible for communications must also endure the stress of anticipation and vicarious fear. As anticipation and concern build, the dispatcher feels as if he must reach through the microphone to determine the officer's status and confirm his safety.

Antiquated Systems

An out-of-date radio system, coupled with antiquated support systems,

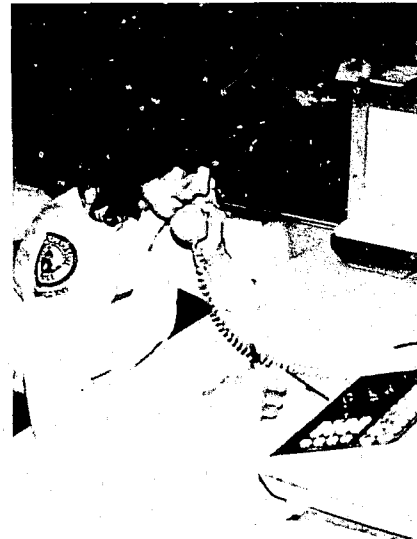
such as an inadequate intrastate criminal information center, can cause the dispatcher as much stress as the officer on the street. The frustrations caused by the limitations on such a system and the fear of potential danger to officers and citizens as a result can be significant.

Low Control

Occupational stress research has identified as highly stressful those situations where a person is in a low-level job in the office hierarchy and has little control over the working environment. Unlike sworn personnel who exert more discretion and control over their responses to requests for police service, communications personnel are limited in the flexibility of their response to public and officer demands. In spite of the potential for "stark terror" associated with crisis situations, the routinization of communications work, coupled with boredom and lack of personal development in the job, fosters the sense that a dispatcher is an automaton with little, if any, control over his working life.

Confinement

One of the stress reducers for many officers, and an adjunct to control of the job situation, is the ability to get out on the road, out of the car, out of the office—in other words, to avoid the physical confinement of many contemporary jobs. The communications officer, however, has no such luxury. Periodic escapes from the confinement of the communications center are limited and can be taken only when traffic slows to a minimum. Consequently, pressures and frustrations build up without an easy "release valve."



Police dispatcher takes citizen report.

Inadequate Interpersonal Communications

In a field called "communications," it is surprising that the interpersonal communications between field officers and dispatchers is so limited. As is the case in many people-oriented professions, the efforts at communication skills are too often reserved for the public, and frustrations and conflicts between uniformed and support personnel are allowed to build without resolution.

Citizen Contact

The stress caused by dealing with citizens who themselves are under stress is, of course, intense. The dispatcher must deal with persons exhibiting a wide variety of emotions—from hysterical fear to anger to pain—allowing only a professional response and often without necessary training. The reactions are particularly complicated when citizens, unfamiliar with the system, provide inaccurate, incomplete, or inadequate information to communications personnel.

Lack of Professional Development

To most people, the ability to grow professionally and personally mitigates many of the distressful aspects of a job. In police communica-

tions, however, the opportunities to grow are limited. Little inservice training and few educational opportunities are offered for communications personnel, and the career path is limited to a few supervisory and senior worker positions. Although the advancement to a sworn position is often offered as an incentive, the actual number of such promotions, particularly in large departments, is probably small.

Dealing with Dispatcher Stress

Successful efforts in preparing officers to deal with stress suggest a general response which could be effective for communications and other support personnel. Training in proper diet and regular exercise, of course, is critical to enable anyone to deal with the effects of occupational stress. Relaxation training, particularly when it can be used on the job, may be especially productive in allowing communications personnel to reduce their stress level during and after high-intensity periods.

However, some special efforts are necessary to increase the ability of communications personnel to cope with the stresses of their job. First, more adequate training is necessary to increase a dispatcher's understanding of the job role and appropriate responses to occupational pressures. Such structured training should include extensive procedural instruction in the use of radio and telephone equipment, role play to increase knowledge of specific situational responses, field training with patrol and investigative personnel to ensure mutual understanding of needs and problems and familiarity with the geographics of the department, and ad-

vanced training in specialized areas, such as telephone crisis intervention.

The facilitation of interpersonal communications is equally important to reduce stress experienced by communications personnel. With their perception of "second-class citizenship," it is critical that sworn and support personnel have regular exchanges which can mitigate the pressures caused by interpersonal conflict. Because of a human reluctance to communicate, administrative or structured encouragement may be necessary. As important, the department's administration cannot take any action which serves to discourage good police support relations.

Involvement in the departmental decisionmaking process is also necessary to reduce stress. Communications personnel, like all staff, must believe they have a voice in the direction and policies of the agency. For this reason, it is important to include dispatchers as part of interagency task forces, policy development and quality of work life working groups, and personnel selection and benefit committees.

The development and encouraged use of temporary "escape" facilities for communications personnel is also important in controlling stress. A breakroom located away from the communications center and equipped with food and beverage machines, comfortable furniture, and even exercise equipment can, with appropriate supervisory control, be extremely beneficial.

Other administrative efforts may further impact the occupational stress of communications personnel. The use of standard, nonrotating shifts or the increase in time between rotations



Dispatcher requests units to respond.

can reduce some of the physiological and psychological impact of shift work. The routine assignment of dispatchers to a specific shift or group of officers can be useful in improving the familiarity of working personnel and reducing the stress of working with "unknown quantities." A recognition by administrators of the personnel, budgetary, and equipment needs of an effective communications system is equally critical in eliminating some of the long term morale and effectiveness issues which contribute to the stress of the communications environment.

Finally, the dispatcher, like other staff, must perceive promotional alternatives within the agency. Step pay plans, such as those used for patrol officers, may be one alternative to meet the financial needs of these support personnel. Professional and personal development through department-sponsored education and increased inservice training offers another valuable incentive to reduce the effects of occupational stress. Additionally, the expanded use of communications personnel in paraprofessional positions, including walk-in report writing, telephonic investigations, and other nonsworn activities suggested by programs such as the Integrated Criminal Apprehension Program

(ICAP) and Managing Criminal Investigations (MCI) offers further professional growth and can stymie burnout and boredom effectively.

In summary, stress within law enforcement affects not only sworn personnel but also their civilian support system. The first step in dealing with the problem is to identify the unique stressors. Once described and acknowledged, administrators can begin effective programs of management and control through aggressive and innovative actions. **FBI**

Footnotes

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⁵ Michael W. Hurst and Robert M. Rose, "Objective Job Difficulty, Behavioral Response, and Sector Characteristics in Air Route Traffic Control Centers," *Ergonomics*, vol. 21, No. 9, 1978, p. 707.

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END