

and, too, it is seen as a function of the administration to purchase and maintain high quality communications equipment. Thus we find that organizational and administrative aspects of telecommunication work are as apparently stressful as the inherent pressures of the job itself.

With the assistance of a measure of stressors within the organization, the design, development and implementation of a stress management program can be done more efficiently. From the data developed here, we can begin to develop the stress profile of a police telecommunicator. This worker is concerned, perhaps preoccupied, with the safety of officers for whom the communication is intended. The stress levels increase during the enactment of emergency dispatching. However, the pervasive experience of stress on the job is confounded by a variety of administrative and managerial components of communication work. Apparently, when supervision is perceived as less than adequate and the worker feels out of control with decisions effecting his or her welfare, stress increases. Add to this picture the possibility of equipment failures, ill-timed meetings and perceptions of fellow dispatchers not "pulling" their share of the work, what emerges is an overload situation which could be dangerous for officers in the field, dispatchers and the public.

Intervention Strategies

A detailed description of stress management procedures is beyond the scope of this article. However, the use of the Police Telecommunicator Survey or a similar instrument can greatly enhance the design and development of a stress management course which will then specifically target the vulnerable areas of the communicator group evaluated. In this case, with the delineation of two areas of stressors, a program could be developed to deal with the work stressors and administrative issues relevant to each particular agency. Stressors originating from the nature of the work task can generally be dealt with by implementing standard stress reduction procedures such as relaxation or biofeedback training, rational thinking techniques, stress inoculation procedures and health enhancement programs.³ On the other hand, the administrative stressors may more effectively be modified with certain restructuring strategies. For example, special programs for supervisors can enhance supervisory performance. Increasing staff even minimally can offset manpower shortages. Equipment problems can be dealt with mechanically and personnel can be brought into decision making in creative and helpful ways.

Summary

This article reports results of a pilot study which intended to assess stressors in police telecommunication work. While these results are reported to encourage the more



systematic evaluation of stressors within the communication area, generalization of these findings may be inhibited by the size of the communication group tested.

The sample tested here is quite small (N=32) and may not represent telecommunicators beyond the agency involved. At the time of this writing, additional agencies have consented to participating in validating the survey thus securing a larger sample of public safety communicators. In it gratifying to know that these requests have been met with enthusiasm. This, I interpret, is a sign

of the times: that stress management may now be considered an integral part of the telecommunicator training and inservice. And for all concerned that's good business. ■

- 1 / Symonds, M. Emotional Hazards of Police Work. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 30, 155-160. (1970)
- 2 / Spielberger, C., Grier, K., and Greenfield, G. The Major Dimensions of Stress in Law Enforcement, *Florida Fraternal Order of Police Journal*, Spring (1982)
- 3 / Kirk, W. The Stress Mess and What To Do About It. *National School Transportation Report*, V.12 #2, June, 1982.

