

Fitness for Law Enforcement

"Philosophical and Practical Considerations"

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Fitness in law enforcement can be a very tricky subject. While most would agree upon the importance of developing and maintaining fitness; there is much debate how to achieve fitness goals with the demanding nature of police work. There is great need among individual officers for methods of attaining and maintaining fitness which are compatible with the unique demands and limitations imposed by the nature of the profession. In *Street Survival: Tactics for Armed Encounters*, a text which is considered by many in law enforcement to be the bible of officer safety training, the authors stated unequivocally: "Let's face an unfortunate truth; most officers are in terrible shape. The longer they've been away from the academy, the worse condition they're likely to be in. In most departments, physical training is strictly voluntary and little is said about poor condition." (Remsberg, 1980) However true, this is a state of affairs which we must confront and change, if not on an organizational level, then as individuals. The physical fitness of individual officers is a crucial element of not just the safety of the individual officer and their peer officers, but also the safety of the communities we serve.

This element of safety creates a legal and moral obligation for individual officers and their agencies to assure that fitness is attained *and maintained*. However, research indicates that as a whole law enforcement officers on average are not the models of fitness which our duties seem to cry out for. In fact, as we shall see, we are literally dying for lack of the health and fitness needed to survive in law enforcement. Not only does the specific threat of violent criminals cry out for us to be fit, but the long term effects of a career rife with stress, sleep deprivation, and often poor lifestyle choices such as smoking, alcohol abuse, and a lack of exercise all contribute to a crisis situation regarding our collective need for health and fitness. It is time for a change.

In the following material, we will look at the legal aspects of fitness in law enforcement, as well as our current levels of fitness in law enforcement based on sound research, and introduce some innovative and creative strategies that can be employed by individual officers who want to realize the goal of achieving and maintaining fitness. A key focus of the approaches discussed will be the idea of *functional fitness*. In the process I hope to challenge

some of the notions which you may hold as a law enforcement officer regarding how we can achieve fitness, whether you are an entry level officer responsible for responding to individual calls for service, or an organizational leader responsible for shaping policy. Additionally, we will address the notion of a *legal and moral responsibility* to maintain our individual fitness.

Fitness: A Law Enforcement Definition, a Law Enforcement Challenge

A thorough definition for fitness provided by the fitness industry refers to fitness as, “The physiological contribution to wellness through exercise and nutrition behaviors that maintain high aerobic capacity, balanced body composition, and adequate strength and flexibility to minimize risk of chronic health problems and to enhancement enjoyment of life.” (LeCuyer, 2001) While this is an excellent definition to provide a starting point for a discussion on law enforcement fitness, it fails to address key elements which are unique to the law enforcement profession. A fuller definition in the context of our unique profession should start where most of us began our careers.

The very first step for my own efforts to become a police officer began like so many others with a Physical Agility Test. Standing out on a field in front of an obstacle course, listening to a veteran officer and training sergeant of the agency I was applying for as he explained what the requirements of the course were. This test was prior to any written examination or psychological screening. The test was also prior to any background checks or oral review boards. The very first step, the very first question, was presented in the form of the Physical Agility Test. Though not implicitly stated, the question was simple: “Are you fit for duty?” This notion of having to perform a series of physical tasks as a qualification of even being considered for employment should not be taken for granted, as it points directly towards the need for a practical definition for law enforcement fitness. Very few front line officers, be they in patrol or in criminal investigation divisions, regardless of how badly they are in need of officers, as most of our agencies are, would consider it feasible or desirable to employ officers

who have not demonstrated a basic degree of physical fitness as measured by the Physical Agility Test. Yet the idea of an ongoing standard of fitness based on annual fitness evaluation testing can produce some pretty visceral reactions on the part of individual officers, and prompt discussions of “managing liability” among department policy makers.

Though most agree that it is reasonable to expect a police candidate demonstrate a basic level of fitness against a defined standard to *begin* our careers in law enforcement, it is not as accepted a notion to have to maintain that same level of fitness to *continue* our careers in fitness. This seemingly contradictory observation cuts to the heart of the issue of how we define fitness in law enforcement. Therefore, for both practical and legal reasons, our understanding of how to measure and define fitness in law enforcement necessarily must be directly tied to the *specific tasks associated with police duty*.

Fitness and the Law

As law enforcement officers who work to uphold the law, it is important to put our definition of fitness in the context of the law. The legal requirement for a performance based definition of fitness in law enforcement is rooted in the need to balance the requirements and protections established through the employment laws of our country, with *the reasonable performance expectations of the citizens who ultimately empower us with our authority*. This situation in effect creates a legal double edged sword which we must address.

In term of defining the legal criteria which is used to select and retain, or terminate, an officer based on fitness; the key governing laws stem from the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1991, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA). In a review of relative case law and legislation, the Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research (CIAR), an agency which has worked with law enforcement agencies in the development of fitness programs since 1976, it was determined that fitness in law enforcement must, by definition, be directly related to the tasks specific to our work (Bennett & Hess, 2007). Specifically, the Cooper Institute suggests that agencies be concerned with fitness because it directly relates to:

- The ability of officers to perform the *essential functions* of their jobs.
- Minimizing the risk of excessive force situations.
- Minimizing the known health risks associated with the public safety job.
- Meeting the legal requirements to avoid litigation and have a defensible position if challenged in court.

Though the aforementioned employment laws provide stringent guidelines protecting certain classes of citizens, law enforcement agencies have not only the right, but also the obligation to consider the stated factors. In summation, the Cooper Institute asserted,

“If job relatedness is established and documented, then fitness tests, standards and programs *can* discriminate against anybody. It is important to implement test/standards/programs that do discriminate between those *who can and cannot do the job* regardless of age, gender, or handicap condition.”

This may seem counterintuitive to some in our litigious and “liability averse” culture, but in truth, the very life and death nature of law enforcement duty makes fitness among all officers a necessity, not a nicety. Not only can the selection, retention, or termination of law enforcement officers be based on meeting certain fitness standards, agencies can actually be held monetarily responsible when they fail to hold officers to these standards. For example, in the case of *Parker v. District of Columbia* (1988), a jury awarded \$425,046 to a man shot by a police officer who he was arresting. The court noted: “Officer Hayes simply was not in adequate physical shape. This condition posed a foreseeable risk of harm to others.” (Bennett & Hess, 2007) In similar fashion, noted researcher and author Thomas R. Collingwood stated: “The public’s expectation of a responding officer in a situations requiring physical effort, especially in a use of force situation, is the ability to provide the requisite service. They expect and deserve a fit officer because in a situation with injury and life and death consequences having those physical capabilities can minimize those threats.” (Collingwood, 2004)

Put in the context of the both the expectations of the public and our peers regarding the performance of our duties, fitness in law enforcement can be defines as *the ability to perform*

the frequent and critical tasks required of law enforcement officers. These specific tasks were defined by Collingwood as a result of 15 years of research based on 34 performance and validation studies performed on more than 5,500 officers. The *frequent and critical tasks required of law enforcement officers* identified by the study indicates law enforcement officers must be able to engage in: walking, running short and long distances, running up and down stairs, running over uneven terrain, heavy lifting and carrying, jumping or vaulting over obstacles, climbing fences and stairs, dodging around or crawling under or through obstacles, dragging objects, extracting or dragging victims, pushing heavy objects such as cars, bending and reaching, using restraining devices, using hands in feet in self-defense, and other long and short term uses of force.

Now most of us can remember engaging in some or all of the above type activities at some point in our careers, if not some time last week, which would lend us to consider the need to be able to perform these activities a fair basis for defining fitness in law enforcement. However, given this definition of fitness, and your own personal assessment of your fitness, do you feel confident that currently you can safely and effectively perform these defined duties? Do you think ALL of your peer officers within your agency could perform these duties? Though many officers progress to duty positions which may require less direct contact with situations of a highly demanding nature, few of us in law enforcement, even upon reaching the level of detective or administrator, will not still have to engage in some direct contact with the criminal elements within our communities.

There is also a less explicit element of fitness in law enforcement which, although not part of a practical health and fitness industry definition of fitness, must be considered. Given the stated legal elements of the definition due to the life and death consequences of being fit for duty, we can start to see in our present discussion an inherent *moral obligation* to be fit, not only in order to be able to protect ourselves, but also to help safeguard our citizens and fellow officers. How many of us would want to be responsible for the serious injury or death of a fellow officer or citizen because we lacked the physical fitness needed to carry out the above defined duties? A closely related element to be considered is effect of our fitness, or lack there

of, on public opinion. Not only should we be able to literally keep the public safe, do we not also have a moral and legal obligation to make the public *feel safe*. As we progress in our discussion of how to best define fitness in law enforcement, to the research concerning the current state of our health and fitness in law enforcement, let us not forget that there is much more at stake than just our own health.

Consider the following scenario. If a neighbor calls 911 because a woman next door is being badly beaten by her intoxicated 230 pound body builder of a “boyfriend”, how much confidence will that citizen have if the officer who responds to the call is obviously grossly overweight? Worse still, if the responding officer is then observed by the reporting citizen while receiving the losing end of a violent struggle with that same suspect, and the encounter ends with the subject successfully fleeing from the officer, how will that effect the citizens confidence in not just that individual officer, but their entire local agency? Even if the subject is arrested several blocks away, after being completely dominated and apprehended in a secondary physical struggle with a very fit officer, the damage done to public perception of the agency has already been done at the location of the initial incident.

A Law Enforcement Fitness Report Card

The example given in this domestic violence scenario may be more anecdotal than scientific, but I think most of us would agree that this not only can happen, but does happen every day in agencies throughout the country. Research, sadly, is consistent with this notion of the out of shape, overweight officer as being a common denominator in many of our agencies. Based on a study conducted from 1950 to 1990 (Volantini, 1997), the following findings were reached:

- The average life expectancy of a retired male police officer in the United States is 66. This is 15 years less than the average American. Nearly 50% of all officers *will die with 5 years of retirement!*

- 80 percent of respondents were classified as overweight, with a full third being classified as obese. This is notably higher than the 60 to 65 of the civilian populace classified as overweight.
- 30 percent of law enforcement officers overindulge in alcohol use/abuse, as compared to 10 percent of the general public.

The study found that the poor health and fitness level of law enforcement officers was largely due to failure to properly address “modifiable risk factors”. Officers seem to succumb to life threatening lifestyle habits and choices such as a poor diet, smoking, and drinking excessively, while often totally abandoning any form of exercise, including even recreational physical activities. This lethal combination of circumstances and choices leads officers to suffer from heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and other health maladies, at a substantially higher rate than the general public. Summing up the “doom and gloom” statistics well, by *current* estimations based on surveys conducted and reported by PoliceOne.com and its partner organization, the Force Science Research Center:

The US LEO is 25 times more likely to die from CVD (Cardio Vascular Disease) than from the actions of a criminal.

With statistics like these, one would think that officers and agencies would be ready to take immediate action and declare a war on the health and fitness woes of our profession. Yet many still hesitate to take action to improve their own health. Having defined the goal (fitness), and acknowledging that statistically we largely fall short of that goal, what can we do to motivate ourselves to achieve and maintain fitness?

Individual Fitness Strategies for Law Enforcement

The quest for individual fitness can begin from a widely varying array of starting points. Some of you may be officers who have not worked out regularly since your initial training at the academy. Others may workout regularly, but just aren't getting the results you are looking for, and are finding it hard to keep the weight off, even though you have remained dedicated to

working out. In both cases, it is important that you take advantage of the health care benefits of your agency, and take the time to have a thorough physical check to assure you are prepared to begin challenging yourself physically. If you are a member of a large agency, this may be a free benefit provided through a wellness program. If not, and you have limited or no health benefits, there may be some out of pocket expense involved. Regardless, it is important you not skip this step, as it is a crucial safe starting point for beginning an exercise regiment.

LE Fitness Motivational Considerations

Before we address the physical elements of a good workout plan and set of lifestyle habits, it is important that we begin by addressing the single most important ingredient to achieving success in your pursuit of fitness: Motivation! Without addressing this psychological factor, no exercise program will succeed, and within weeks or even days of beginning, we may backslide into sedentary inactivity, or worse still, fail to even begin any form of exercise. To get our minds right, consider some of the things we tell ourselves which prevent us from staying dedicated to a regular exercise regimen. Have you ever thought or openly stated one of the following?

“I am just too tired to workout. Between shift work, court appearances, and family responsibilities, I just don’t have the time or energy to workout.”

“I would like to eat better, but no place is open during the hours which I work that has anything healthy to eat. All that is available is fast food.”

These are probably the two most common excuses used to convince ourselves why we can’t take proper care of ourselves. If you have ever thought something similar, I would ask you this: At your agency, are there not officers at every level, who take the time to workout regularly. How many of these officers do you know who *make the time* to take care of themselves? Have you ever seen an officer who brought something they packed to eat, so they could be certain of

proper nutrition, even while working the long nighttime hours of duty? Do not even the fast food restaurants in most every city have “healthy choice” menus, which give you options such as chicken, salad, and other low calorie options to chose from rather than the regular burger and fries and a coke. Doesn’t most every menu offer diet soft drinks? Of course the answer to these questions is yes. So the real question is how to convince ourselves to take the time to commit to a regular workout program? How do we convince ourselves to give up smoking, or to seek help with alcoholism, or face the other obstacles to health or fitness?

The answers to these questions can come from a desire to not want to be another “dead within 5 years of retirement” statistic. To decide that we want to see our children graduate from school, and get married. Or maybe to just get a little angry when we think about that one punk who got away, who wouldn’t have just a few years earlier in our careers. A combination of love for our families, and pride in our work, can be the internal incentives we need to move beyond the excuses, and become “that guy” that other officers see in the gym several times a week “taking care of business”. However we chose to defeat our tendency to make excuses, and take responsibility for our health and fitness, this mental process is an essential first step to beginning an exercise regimen, or in keeping yourself motivated to stay in one if you already working out, but finding it harder to stay dedicated. Whatever the reasons you find, you must convince yourself that your health and fitness is worth the time and effort, and make the choice to commit to regular exercise and a healthy diet.

Another common mental barrier to routine exercise can be boredom with our current or past methods of working out. The same old run, the same old free weight routine. Simply finding new and innovative ways to exercise and achieve our fitness goals can give us the motivation to recommit to fitness. The “same old, same old” can be defeated in many ways, as we shall see.

Individual Workout Strategies

Having made the choice, and made the time, and hopefully successfully motivated ourselves, how do we take the more concrete action of designing an exercise regimen that is

right for us? As law enforcement careers can span decades, the workout plan that is right for a new officer working the streets for the first 5 years of his career may not be right for a veteran officer who is finishing out the last 5 years of his career and looking forward to retirement. Although the *intensity* of the workout plans may vary based on the relative age and needs of the individual officer, there are four basic components which all health and fitness programs should address (LeCuyer, 2001):

- Aerobic capacity and conditioning
- Muscular strength and endurance
- Flexibility
- Body composition

These components all contribute to definition of fitness specific to law enforcement. If we revisit the definition of law enforcement fitness as being able to accomplish the *frequent and critical tasks* of law enforcement covered at the onset of our discussion, we see that running both short and long distance, as well as running over uneven terrain, were defined as critical tasks. The idea of a cop chasing a bad guy after a vehicle pursuit, or after showing up to the scene of a disturbance, is deeply ingrained in both cop culture and popular culture alike. Very few reality TV shows such as *Cops*, or fictional movies, don't involve scenes of a "foot chase". Running is likely the single most important element of a physical fitness program for law enforcement, as it is unmatched in its ability to expand our aerobic capacity, and is directly related to our duties.

For some officers who have a low initial degree of fitness, a running program may have to begin with a "walk / jog" phase to build a safe foundation for a more strenuous running program. The CoolRunning.com site has a very popular, safe, and effective running plan labeled "The Couch-to-5k Running Plan". This is an ideal start point for the sedentary officer, as running is literally the foundation of fitness for law enforcement. Not only does it help develop the heart health which the statistics sited earlier demonstrate is so lacking and needed among law enforcement, it can help us gradually develop the fitness and energy we need to engage in

the muscular strength and endurance component of fitness training, as well as help improve our body composition by burning calories.

If an individual officer had to decide on one form of exercise to help develop fitness, defeat the effects of stress, and maintain his or her bodyweight; running would clearly have to be the right choice. Running is so essential that not only is it part of most Physical Agility Tests required to become an officer, it is also one of the primary forms of measuring the continuing fitness levels among agencies who have ongoing Fitness-for-Duty Evaluations (FFDE). This idea of engaging in the activity which closely relates to our duties is referred to as the SAID (Specific Adaptation to Imposed Demands) principle in fitness terms (LeCuyer, 2001). Sometimes more simply stated as the rule of *specificity*. Again, the idea is to develop and measure fitness against the standard of the *frequent and critical tasks* of our profession. It is this principle which makes running an essential part of LE Fitness.

After an officer has developed a base level of running ability, or after years of regular running which may seem to have begun to be less effective at controlling your body weight; a running option exists which can dramatically increase the benefits of running in a reduced amount of time, while even more closely mimicking the demands of our job. This form of running burns more calories in less time, and can be less destructive on the body's musculo-skeletal system than traditional forms of long, slow running. Before I specifically name and detail the running technique I am speaking of, consider the following. Have you ever made a traffic stop, and had the driver of the vehicle calmly exits his car and announce, "Officer, I am so sorry, but I think I have a warrant for my arrest. I really don't feel like going to jail today, so if you will give me a minute, I'd like to warm up, and then flee from you at a nice steady pace for several miles." This may seem ridiculous, but if you think about it, this is exactly what conventional running routines for many officers are fashioned after. A good warm-up followed by a long steady run at a moderate pace, followed by a cool down. Though a long steady run can burn calories, and is a good foundation for overall fitness, it clearly doesn't mimic the manner in which we will have to employ running in a field situation. Specificity, remember? Similarly, years of long slow running can wreak havoc on our feet, knees, and lower backs, or just simply bore a runner into inactivity. So let me introduce to you an outstanding alternative.

Speed Play for Cardiovascular Excellence

A specific method of aerobic interval training called Fartlek training is based on the idea of running at broken intervals of speed and distance. Fartlek is a Swedish term which literally means “speed play”, according to Time-to-Run.com. The difference between this type of training and continuous training is that the intensity or speed of the exercise varies, meaning that aerobic and anaerobic systems can be put under stress. The degree of intensity of this form of “speed play” can be varied based upon the fitness level of the participant, as well as the officer’s energy level during any given workout. A 2007 study at Canada’s prestigious Laval University in the field of Sports and Exercise found that alternating intensity throughout your training helps you lose weight faster than moving at a steady pace – this is one of the main principles of Fartlek training. Not only does this help us properly prepare for the specific demands of our duty, it is a more efficient means of achieving our body composition (weight management) goals. During the study Professor Jean-Pierre Despres of human nutrition at Laval University put the benefits of speed play in context by stating, “Losing as little as 5 to 10 percent of your body weight (as a result of Fartlek and/or aerobic interval training) will reduce your visceral-fat stores by 25 to 40 percent.”

In general, Fartlek training involves periods of intense effort alternated with periods of less strenuous effort in a continuous workout. Fartlek sessions can be conducted on city streets, running trails, or even on uneven off road terrain. In general, an officer may set aside a given amount of time to run, say 20 minutes. The session might begin with a short warm up of about three minutes, and then involve the officer alternating jogging at an even pace, with sprinting irregular distances based possibly on the selections of random landmarks. For example, the officer might say, I am going to run full out from that car to the next light pole a couple of blocks down the street, then jog until I catch my breath. Even walking for short distances of recovery can be utilized, and then followed by more jogging and more random sprinting. Now does this in any way sound similar to how we might run in the performance of our duties in pursuit of a suspect? Not only does Fartlek training closely match the exact nature of our work,

it can produce better results in terms of health, fitness, *and athletic performance* while engaging in shorter more intense workouts. A parallel benefit is that the variety and flexibility of this form of running can be more mentally enjoyable than simply running mile after mile, week after week, at a set pace. Though it does require a base level of fitness as can be obtained through “The Couch-to-5k Running Plan” mentioned earlier, the two approaches combined together can be just the tools needed to help officers achieve exceptional fitness.

With this approach to aerobic fitness training, when balanced with the idea that fitness in law enforcement should be defined by and directed towards the accomplishment of the *frequent and critical tasks required of law enforcement officers*, we can begin to see the evolution of the idea of *functional fitness* I mentioned in the introduction. Now that we have covered some options regarding how to best apply this principle to the aerobic capacity and conditioning fitness component, the question arises how to apply the same idea to the component of muscular strength and endurance.

Innovations in Muscular Strength and Endurance Training

For most, when we discuss muscular strength training, the image of large racks of metal free-weights comes to mind, along with the traditional strength training exercises such as the bench press, squat, biceps curls and the like. Those “body building” and “power lifting” exercises can produce results, and can be both a pleasant and productive form of strength training for some officer. However, we also have to consider if these forms of training produce the best results in the context of the needs of our profession. Additionally, many officers may suffer from chronic injuries associated with heavy weight lifting, which can result from poor technique and/or attempting to “lift” excessive amounts of weight. Either as a result of our own egos, or maybe a high school gym coach yelling in our ears to “push” the limits of our health and safety, conventional strength training has left many an officer in need of a safer and more effective approach to strength training for law enforcement.

Enter the idea of functional fitness training. This form of strength and endurance training involves whole body functional strength and endurance training, combining core strength (abdominal and lower back); through the use of body weight exercises and/or the use of non-conventional strength training tools such as the Russian Kettlebell, as well as some unconventional Olympic style free weight training routines. Though the concept may sound complex, the actual routines can be extremely simple, take less time than conventional free weight based strength training, and involve the use of much less or no specialized equipment. Like Fartlek training, functional fitness based workouts can be tailored to the specific needs of each individual officer. The CrossFit program is considered by many, me included, to be one of the premier sources of information regarding the development of functional fitness. The CrossFit Website describes its approach to training as being directed towards “constantly varied, high-intensity, functional movement. Functional movements are universal motor recruitment patterns; they are performed in a wave of contraction from core to extremity; and they are compound movements—i.e., they are multi-joint. They are natural, effective, and efficient locomotors of body and external objects. But no aspect of functional movements is more important than their capacity to move large loads over long distances, and to do so quickly.”

The specific routines can be highly tailored in terms of duration and intensity, based on the relative fitness level of the individual officer. I personally have used the principles listed above, as well as material provided through the CrossFit and other functional fitness resources, to develop a number of strength training routines, all of which can be completed in 30 to 45 minutes, and which condition the entire body, while paying special attention to the development of *core strength*. The Russian Kettlebell is the key implement in one of my three main routines. This excellent tool is comparatively inexpensive (less than \$300 for a set of two) and can be used anywhere. For officers in small agencies which do not have a gym available, this can be a very cost effective option, as opposed to spending up to thousands of dollars on conventional free weights gym equipment. This may also appeal to officers who simply don't wish to workout at their agencies, or in public gyms where they may run into the very people they have previously put in jail. A similar cost effective option is a routine based on the use of

only the most rudimentary pieces of free weight equipment as part of a circuit type workout. A free weight workout I utilize which requires very limited Olympic style strength equipment is based on the Randy Couture Workout developed by former UFC Champion Randy Couture. The entire workout can be viewed on YouTube.com by searching for "The Randy Couture Workout". The individual exercises associated with Kettlebell workouts can also be found on YouTube and the aforementioned CrossFit web site. The value of this form of training is that it incorporates core strength training at every level, while incorporating whole body functional fitness. All while taking considerably less time than conventional "body building" type workouts. With a little research and creativity, officers can tailor a routine to meet their training needs and available time.

One last option to consider is taking up a hobby that involves less formal, but equally beneficial, physical activity. For those who played sports in the past, taking part in a regular game of basketball, or softball with members of your agency or local community can be a great way to further enhance your fitness. Though not as efficient a method of exercise as a regular workout program, participation in recreational sports can still be an excellent compliment to a good workout program. They can also be a way to motivate ourselves to start working out regularly. For those who have engaged in organized sports in the past, it is a great way to make the transition from the couch to the gym, as past involvement in sports might inspire us to get back in shape.

Another recreational sport which has become increasingly popular in the last decade is the phenomenon of Mixed Martial-Arts of MMA. Most of these programs are based in a combination of one or more of the arts of western boxing, wrestling, Muay Thai, and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. MMA is comprised of techniques which can help an officers defend themselves when confronted with the truly violent criminals, while simultaneously developing all of the stated components of fitness. Like other traditional recreational sports activities, MMA can also develop less tangible but equally beneficial fitness attributes such as balance, timing, agility, and overall coordination. Many officers have started to form MMA workout groups comprised of officers who have experience and skills they wish to share with their fellow officers in an

environment devoid of civilian participants. This can be important, as many officers don't want to train next to citizens who they may not know or feel comfortable training with. Not only is this one of the most practical ways to develop a *critical task specific* degree of fitness, it helps prepare officers for possible encounters with violent criminals who have themselves begun to train in MMA to attempt to achieve an advantage over law enforcement officers.

In Conclusion

Regardless of the specific exercise plans we select to utilize to achieve individual fitness, it is important to realize that we have not just a personal, but a legal, moral, and ethical duty to maintain our fitness. If conventional forms of exercise have lost their appeal, I hope some of the functional fitness strategies I have provided help motivate you, the individual officer, to attain and maintain robust health and fitness. Not only do we have a duty to stay fit for the communities we serve, but we also owe it to our families. No wife, husband, mother, father, son, or daughter wants to see their loved one become another mortality statistic such as those presented earlier. With the training options provided, we can be very efficient in the use of even the most limited time and exercise resources, and achieve the fitness which can literally save lives. Officers in larger agencies may have access to in house gyms, wellness programs, and even personal trainers. However, as agencies struggle with budgets, legal ramifications of ongoing fitness requirements, or any other roadblocks to providing these health and fitness resources; we must all accept personal responsibility to assure we stay physically fit so that we can "make it home safe" after every shift.

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