

What You Can Do

- **Take a nap**-between 20-35 minutes in length prior to the start of a shift but be careful, a nap that is between 35-90 minutes long could actually make you sleepier.
- **Make exercise a priority**- 30 minutes/5 days a week at a minimum but try not to engage in a strenuous workout within 2 hours of trying to sleep.
- **Keep your bedroom dark, quiet, and cool**-Try not to have a lot of distractions in the bedroom, such as a television, etc. If you sleep in a noisy environment, try using a white-noise machine to mask some of the noise.
- **Maintain a bedtime routine**-Go through a similar routine right before going to bed every time (brush your teeth, stretch, play a game of solitaire, etc.). Your body will learn to associate the routine with being sleepy.
- **Cut out caffeine**-Stop your caffeine intake at least 6 hours before trying to go to sleep.
- **If you can't get to sleep**-Get out of bed if you cannot get to sleep within about 15 minutes of lying down. Engage in a somewhat boring activity and try again when you do feel sleepy.

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Sleep Disorders



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Officer Specific Statistics

Sleep disorders are especially common in shift workers, including police officers. Studies have found that nearly 40% of police officers suffer from some form of sleep disorder.

According to a survey by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, among officers in the US and Canada:

- 53% get less than 6.5 hours of sleep daily (compared to 30% of the general population)
- 91% report feeling fatigued "routinely"
- 14% are tired when they start their work shift
- 85% drive while "drowsy"
- 39% have fallen asleep at the wheel

NOTE: Experts recommend that adults get between seven and eight hours of sleep per 24 hours to maintain good health and optimum performance.

What Happens When You Don't Get Enough Sleep

- The ability to maintain speed and road position on a driving simulator is significantly reduced when the normal awake period is prolonged by just 3 hours.
- As people try to fight through periods of fatigue, the body goes into "microsleeps" where you literally fall asleep anywhere from 2 to 10 seconds at a time-no matter what else is going on.
- As little as 2 hours of sleep loss on just one occasion can result in degraded reaction time, cognitive functioning, memory, mood, and alertness.
- Fatigue is 4 times more likely to cause workplace impairment than alcohol and other drugs.



Be sure to consult with your physician if you are struggling with an ongoing sleep disorder to ensure there is not a medical reason for the disturbance.

Resource: [Tired Cops: The Importance of Managing Police Fatigue](#) by Bryan Vila

Dr. Bryan Vila is a former 17-year veteran street cop in Los Angeles and now directs the Simulated Hazardous Operational Tasks laboratory in Washing State University's Sleep & Performance