

Occupations and Workplaces

Police

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What do police do?

Police officers, law enforcement officers, security officers, and people in related positions may be called to any number of work environments, and perform a variety of tasks.

The main duties of a police officer, among others, are to:

- Respond to emergency calls such as crimes, accidents/incidents/collisions, fire, violent situations, and natural disasters.
- Patrol assigned areas to maintain public safety.
- Enforce laws and regulations.
- Control traffic during emergencies, road work, etc.
- Investigate crimes and incidents.
- Arrest suspects.
- Perform traffic stops and direct traffic.
- Perform first aid.
- Educate the public on crime prevention and safety.

What are some health and safety issues for police?

Police work is among the most dangerous and requires special training. Some hazards of police work include:

Biological hazards

- Exposure to contagious and infectious diseases from people, animals, needles, and other sources.

Chemical hazards

- Exposure to [opioids](#) or other substances.
- Exposure to pollutants from vehicular traffic, such as [carbon monoxide](#).
- Exposure to combustion by-products, such as from fires.
- Exposure to chemicals emitted from spills or other incidents.

Ergonomic hazards

- [Standing](#) or [sitting](#) for long hours.
- Pain from physical overexertion and prolonged or [awkward body postures](#).
- Fatigue from [shift work](#).

Physical hazards

- Exposure to [extreme working conditions](#), [extreme temperatures](#) (including extreme cold and heat) and [UV radiation](#).
- [Noise](#).

Psychosocial hazards

- Psychological [stress](#) or trauma.
- [Working alone](#).
- [Workplace violence](#) or harassment, and harassment from the public.

Safety hazards

- [Slips, trips and falls](#).
- Risk of injury from the various locations where police may be called to: fire, explosion, unstable structures and surfaces, falling objects, or [working at heights](#), [road traffic](#), [water](#), [confined spaces](#), large crowds, etc.
- Danger of driving at high speeds, often in difficult traffic or [weather](#) conditions.

What are some preventive measures for police?

Biological hazards

- [Wash your hands](#) frequently and follow other [good hygiene practices](#) to reduce the chance of illness.

Chemical hazards

- Follow [precautions for first responders](#) when opioids or related substances are suspected.
- Use [personal protective equipment](#) or other barriers for the task.

Ergonomic hazards

- Exercise regularly to keep fit and reduce the risk of injury.
- Learn and follow safe [lifting](#) techniques.
- Take breaks, as appropriate, from awkward positions or repetitive physical tasks.
- Follow a recommended [shift work](#) pattern and protect yourself from the hazards associated with shift work.

Physical hazards

- Follow safety procedures for working in the cold or in the heat.
- Use sun protection, such as sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or more.

Psychosocial hazards

- Follow safety procedures for [working alone](#), or for avoiding working alone wherever possible.
- Maintain regular radio communication with colleagues.
- Learn about [stress](#) and post-traumatic stress, and consider a debriefing session or counselling after a critical or traumatic event.
- Learn and follow company violence and harassment prevention policy and procedures.

Safety hazards

- Have extensive safety and skills training (firearm use, use of force, etc.).
- Be aware of traffic hazards and always be cautious of moving vehicles (exercise extra caution when stopping vehicles or directing traffic in busy roadways). Keep vehicles in your field of vision whenever possible.
- Exercise caution when driving (wear seatbelts, be cautious when crossing intersections even when the siren is on, etc.)
- Always be aware of your surroundings and on the alert for dangerous people or situations. Call for backup, when needed.

What are some good general safe work practices?

Ensure that you are trained and informed on how to avoid the various health and safety hazards of your job. Read about these:

- [Chemical hazards](#) and [WHMIS](#).
- Blood borne diseases (such as [HIV/AIDS](#), [Hepatitis B](#), [Hepatitis C](#), etc.).
- [Needlestick](#) injuries.
- Proper selection, use, maintenance and storage of [personal protective equipment](#).
- Preventing [slips, trips and falls](#).
- [Fire safety](#).
- [Fall protection](#).
- [Safe driving](#).
- [First Aid](#).
- [Violence and harassment](#).

Always:

- Follow the established safety procedures for your profession.
- Know how to [report a hazard](#).
- Follow [good housekeeping](#) procedures.

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