



Police Officer Personal Protective Equipment

Police officers in our communities perform a challenging job. While protecting and serving, they may encounter unpredictable people. Perpetrators can perform activities that hurt communities, women, children, innocent bystanders, and our police officers. At any point in time, an officer could be seriously injured in the line of duty. During our National Police Week series, let's look at some protective equipment options to shield police officers from harm.

Protect police officers by emphasizing the importance of personal protective equipment (PPE) and planning for future developments. This means utilizing head-to-toe protection systems during a variety of activities. From driving a patrol vehicle to chasing a suspect, walking around a snowy or icy surface to day and night exposures, keep officers protected with the appropriate PPE. Police PPE needs to offer safety and protection for the officer, constructed of durable materials, all without compromising comfort and functionality.

Consider the activities of police officers:

- **Training:** Police officers should always wear approved hearing protection during firearms training. Eye protection should also be used during training. Police officers should be provided with ballistic head protection and an attachable face shield. Padded body protection consisting of chest, arm, leg, and groin protection may be provided as well.
- **Patrols:** Use durable boots with good treads and add ice-traction slip-on devices in poor weather. Supply body armor, duty gear, outerwear, and highly visible clothing.
- **Riot gear:** During high-risk events where crowd control is essential and officers put themselves in harm's way, utilize riot gear. This includes armor, headgear, shields, and lower-body protections. Consider chest protection units, tactical vests, and riot helmet equipment with face shielding, some with built-in radio communication.
- **Special environment considerations:** If a police officer enters an environment that is reasonably known to be harmful due to gases, smoke, or vapors they must use respiratory PPE. Full-face air-purifying respirators, commonly referred to as gas masks, should be fitted with mechanical pre-filters or combination cartridge/filter assemblies for use in areas where gases, vapors, dust, fumes, or mists are present.



- **Bloodborne pathogen exposures:** Be it rendering aid to the injured at a vehicle crash, handling an intoxicated subject, or the arrest of a sick suspect, there are a multitude of situations where officers may be exposed to the diseases carried by those they interact with. Exposure to an infectious disease is an extremely stressful incident for an officer. Wearing appropriate PPE, such as gloves and a mask will help prevent contracting a pathogen.
- **Future considerations:** There is a growing opportunity to use wearable technologies that can monitor officer health status including heart rate, breathing rate, and body temperature, and fabrics that are cooler to wear, provide improved fire protection, and higher visibility.

Personal protective equipment will not protect an officer if it is not used, and it cannot be used if it is not provided and made easily accessible. Law enforcement departments need to promote the use of PPE and ensure they provide the best equipment possible to protect our police officers. If you have any questions, please reach out to the Comp Alliance Loss Control team.

