

**CHAPTER 3**  
**PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL FACTORS AFFECTING LAW**  
**ENFORCEMENT VEHICLE OPERATIONS**

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## CHAPTER 3

### PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL FACTORS AFFECTING LAW ENFORCEMENT VEHICLE OPERATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION. California Highway Patrol cadets receive comprehensive emergency vehicle operations training and acquire extensive driving experience as patrol officers. It is imperative that all departmental personnel never assume they are immune from becoming involved in a crash which could lead to serious bodily injury, disciplinary action, civil liability, and potential criminal liability.
  
2. CONTRIBUTING FACTORS. The following human factors can contribute to peace officers becoming involved in crashes:
  - a. Driving Skills.
    - (1) Average driving skills are inadequate for the operation of a patrol vehicle. Peace officers must learn to drive safely in routine and emergency situations while performing their duties. This requires a unique set of driving skills that must be learned and practiced.
  
  - b. Psychological Factors.
    - (1) Peace officers must be aware that psychological factors have an effect on their ability to drive safely. The following are attitudes and emotions that can influence judgment and decision-making:
      - (a) Excitement.
      - (b) Impatience.
      - (c) Aggression.
      - (d) Overconfidence.
      - (e) Lack of confidence.
      - (f) Fear.
      - (g) Peer pressure.
      - (h) Self-righteousness.

(i) Preoccupation.

c. Physiological Factors.

(1) The attitudes and emotions of a peace officer can elicit a physiological response which can have an adverse effect on the ability to drive safely. The following are potential physiological responses:

- (a) Increased adrenaline flow.
- (b) Rapid pulse.
- (c) Rapid breathing.
- (d) Tunnel vision.
- (e) Loss of sensory perception.
- (f) Deterioration of decision-making ability.
- (g) Temporary loss of fine motor skills.