

# **Public Perception of Physical Ability as an Important Characteristic of Law Enforcement Officers**

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Policing by its very nature requires the ability when necessary, to physically restrain, detain, and arrest individuals, violent and non-violent. Law enforcement officers are expected to maintain a certain level of physical fitness in order to sustain the endurance and muscular strength necessary to carry out the duties required of policing. Essential job functions include the direction of traffic for extended periods of time, removal of injured and/or incapacitated persons in rescue operations or from dangerous situations such as vehicle fires at crash scenes. House fires, subduing resistance from prisoners, chasing fleeing felons or escapees on foot, and carrying out riot and crowd control responsibilities are also routine duties required of officers. The use of force continuum delineates the appropriate law enforcement response for different levels of resistance. A need exists for a mandatory physical fitness standard that facilitates the proper application of force by an officer and allows for the physical ability to engage in routine as well as life saving services expected by the profession.