

**Impact of Fentanyl Exposure in Law Enforcement**

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# IMPACT OF FENTANYL EXPOSURE IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

## **Abstract**

The use of fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid, has become a significant concern in public health due to its association with a rising number of opioid overdoses and fatalities. Law enforcement officers face a heightened risk of exposure to fentanyl during their daily duties. This research paper aims to investigate the prevalence of fentanyl exposure among law enforcement personnel. To achieve this, a systematic literature review was conducted to gather and analyze relevant research articles, case studies, statistics, direct contact reports, and other sources related to fentanyl exposure in law enforcement. The research findings emphasize the critical necessity of increasing awareness and implementing preventive measures to minimize fentanyl exposure among law enforcement officers.

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### **Introduction**

Law enforcement is essential to any society and is responsible for maintaining public safety, upholding the law, and protecting citizens. Nonetheless, worries about the possible risks associated with law enforcement duties are part of the career. The field contains significant concerns and dangers about the functions and accountability of law enforcement officers. The individual must access all the potential problems associated with the job, including known and unknown threats from subjects. Another deadly force has silently moved into a credible threat role against law enforcement. Its name is fentanyl, an opioid synthetically produced that is more potent than most illicit drugs and is wreaking havoc in communities worldwide. Fentanyl has become apparent as a significant contributor to the opioid problem because of its frightening availability and terrible effects (Yousif, 2023). This research aims to examine the impact of fentanyl, including supporting documents from multiple sources. The research will provide examples of significant effects on law enforcement, including credible threats and dangers posed by this drug.

### **The History of the Opioid Epidemic**

Police officers may encounter a multitude of different dangers during any given shift. Traditionally, these included the risk of being assaulted, stabbed, or even shot. Unfortunately, yet another risk has emerged in recent years in the form of an opioid. Specifically, fentanyl. Law enforcement has been on the front lines on the war on drugs for decades. Illicit drugs such as cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin were often the targets. Although a new battlefield may

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find its roots in heroin, the challenges that are presented are quite different than simply avoiding a needlestick.

The United States currently finds itself in the midst of an opioid epidemic and law enforcement, once again, finds itself on the front line. Nearly 110,000 Americans died as the result of a drug overdose in 2022 (Mann, 2023). 80,926 of those fatalities were opioid-related (Joint Economic Committee Democrats, n.d.). This crisis has had tragic effects on communities all across the country. The effects can also be measured economically. The Senate's Joint Economic Committee Democrats (n.d., para.6) "finds that opioid-related costs rose to nearly \$1.5 trillion in 2020, a \$487 billion increase from 2019 and a 37% increase from 2017." Our communities demand and deserve action and law enforcement agencies must respond. Agencies that fail to answer this call may become irrelevant. An agency's success is incumbent upon its values being aligned with those of the community it serves (Long, 2017). This crisis has wreaked havoc on our nation. In order to achieve success, agency leadership must be able to recognize and adjust to chaos (Dugan, 2017). In order to effectively combat this ongoing crisis, law enforcement officers must first understand the nature of their enemy.

Opium is the foundation on which opioids exist. Opium is derived from the poppy plant and has been used medicinally for thousands of years (Rach, 2023). The first opioid, named after the Greek god Morpheus, was sourced in the early 1800s by a pharmacist's apprentice while attempting to discover a more controllable form of opium (Schmitt, 2023). This highly addictive substance, morphine, is the catalyst for a war still being waged only now deadlier than ever. Morphine is the key ingredient of all opioids, including fentanyl (Rach, 2023). The next pharmaceutical pain relief breakthrough came in the form of heroin. This substance was brought into the market in 1898 by the Bayer Company and addiction problems persisted still (Schmitt,

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2023). In the decades that followed, drugs like codeine and hydrocodone would emerge but maybe none more notorious than Purdue Pharmaceutical's OxyContin. Soon the horrors of addiction would be brought into the spotlight and the crisis that now exists would be born.

Documents from a 2001 meeting obtained by *60 Minutes*, through a court order, provide some degree of insight on how the problem became so widespread. The documents revealed that the Food and Drug Administration essentially allowed for the possibility of tens of millions of new pain prescriptions to be written by ignoring the lack of long-term use science and by changing Oxycontin's label to permit extended use at Purdue's behest (Whitaker, 2020). This highly addictive drug and its brethren were widely prescribed and used and, thus, the opioid epidemic was given life.

Substance use disorder would spread by the thousands. Humans develop a tolerance for substances like opioids. Over time, more medication or higher doses are required to achieve the same desired outcome. Ignoring the oversight of a physician and taking more medication than prescribed is a dangerous and possibly a deadly path to go down. Eventually, the prescriptions will run out and most people will be left with few options. Many found themselves illegally purchasing prescription medication on the streets. This can be a costly endeavor. Consequently, heroin would re-emerge on the streets of the United States as a cost-effective alternative to the sought-after effects of prescription opioids. However, the manufacturers and distributors of heroin are not governed by any regulatory agency. Therefore, quality control is a serious risk that every customer assumes. Unfortunately, this risk is oftentimes deadly. Schmitt (2023, para.18) states, "A perfect storm of relaxed regulations, deceptive marketing, pharmaceutical lobbying, and aggressive prescribing spread addiction and drove up overdose deaths." Overdose deaths significantly rose between 2000 and 2013 beginning with prescription opioids and continuing

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with the resurgence of heroin use. However, the numbers skyrocketed in 2014 as a new enemy emerged on the battlefield. That enemy? A synthetic opioid better known as fentanyl. Fentanyl drove overdose numbers to new heights primarily because of its potency.

### **The Emergence of Fentanyl**

The dangers associated with opioid use have been discussed. These dangers apply to everyone in their traditional sense, including law enforcement officers. However, because of its form and potency, and the role that law enforcement plays, fentanyl presents an additional risk to those charged with combatting its illicit manufacture, distribution and use. The origin of fentanyl is similar to the that of the drugs previously discussed. It was the latest in a line of medications designed to relieve severe pain. Furthermore, like its predecessors, it carried the risk of dependency. This created a new business opportunity for a criminal element looking to profit from the misery of others. According to Mann (2023, para.6), “Public health experts say fentanyl, a synthetic opioid far more powerful than heroin, is responsible for the majority of drug deaths.”

Criminal enterprises now mass produce, traffic, and distribute fentanyl throughout the United States. The majority of illicitly used fentanyl is produced in clandestine laboratories outside of the United States. China and Mexico are the main sources of illicit fentanyl shipped into the United States (Housman, 2023). Essentially, this accomplished by trafficking fentanyl from Mexico into the United States that has been sourced from chemicals produced in China (Yousif, 2023). Fentanyl can be found in various forms but it is primarily found in liquid or powder form. Because of its high potency, far less of it is required to create the effects produced by other opiates or opioids. This creates an opportunity for larger profit margins for drug dealers. Drug dealing is a money-making endeavor. This substance allows dealers to expand their supply

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while minimizing the associated cost. Therefore, fentanyl is often mixed with other illicit drugs such as cocaine or heroin (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2023). Fentanyl can also be pressed into pills that mimic traditional prescription opioid medications that are sold illegally. This practice is extremely risky and users are often unaware that fentanyl is present in the product that they have purchased (CDC, 2023). Its powder form creates the largest risk to officers when its encountered. Minimum amounts can be lethal when ingested. This risk of accidental inhalation is particularly concerning. Fentanyl works in the same manner as other opioids. The human body naturally produces endorphins. Endorphins are hormones that make us feel better. They assist us with pain and stress relief. Fentanyl is used to produce these endorphins even when we do not need them. It binds to our endorphin receptors and the result is endorphins produced unnaturally. A chemical has prompted its release. That release creates the high feeling that those who are dependent seek. The risk involves a human's ability to breathe. Those suffering from an overdose are being deprived of oxygen and that can result in death. Excessive levels of fentanyl bound to these receptors inhibit the body's ability to react to low levels of oxygen or to high levels of carbon dioxide (Payette, 2017). The brain is no longer successfully communicating with the lungs. The result is catastrophic. The body does not know that it needs to breathe and therefore it doesn't. Law enforcement officers regularly encounter unknown substances, often in powder form. An amount similar to a few grains of sand can be deadly.

### **Lethality of Fentanyl**

Since its inception, fentanyl has posed a greater risk to law enforcement officers throughout the nation. This is primarily due to the level of toxicity and its adverse side effects when ingested or received into the body. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse

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(2021, para.1), “Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid that is similar to morphine but is 50 to 100 times more potent.”. Exposures and overdoses are occurring more frequently due to the influx of narcotics being widely distributed through illicit street sales. With an understanding of fentanyl and its toxicity, we must understand the current environment and how it portrays on the individual user and the preemptive measures first responders are taking in order to combat exposure. Fentanyl has been introduced as a byproduct in various drugs and it presents itself in different consistencies, shapes and sizes. The Drug Enforcement Administration (2022), commonly known as the DEA, stated that “...clandestinely produced fentanyl is encountered either as a powder or in counterfeit tablets and is sold alone or in combination with other drugs such as heroin or cocaine.” (p.1). Due to this, fentanyl can be ingested in a variety of ways. It can be smoked, snorted, injected, or swallowed. According to USAFACTS (2024, para.5), because fentanyl is significantly stronger than other opioids, doses as small as two milligrams can be lethal.

Furthermore, with users unaware of how much fentanyl they are using, it is an especially dangerous combination. The DEA found that 6 out of 10 fentanyl-laced fake prescription pills contain a potentially lethal dose of fentanyl. Overdose deaths involving fentanyl continue to be the leading cause of death within the United States involving opioids. The latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), according to author Brian Tsai (2023, para.1), showed that “Drug overdose death rates involving fentanyl increased by 279% from 5.7 per 100,000 in 2016 to 21.6 in 2021.” The overdose rates for males were about 2.5 times higher than females for fentanyl, methamphetamines, heroin and cocaine. Being able to identify the symptoms of an individual who is suffering from the effects of fentanyl is essential for first responders, in order to effectively treat a person suffering from an overdose. The effects of the



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narcotic on the body are distinct. The DEA (2020) lists the effects that an opioid has on the body and “Fentanyl, similar to other commonly used opioid analgesics (e.g., morphine), produces effects such as relaxation, euphoria, pain relief, sedation, confusion, drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, urinary retention, pupillary constriction, and respiratory depression.” (p.2) By not acting in a timely manner to counter the drug, serious injury or death could be imminent. The proposed standardized operating procedures when encountering fentanyl vary from agency to agency; however, there has been a generalized consensus that first responders need to glove up and when available wear a mask. Due to the substance being more widespread, there is a greater tendency for law enforcement to encounter it. There have been several reports made through various media outlets that document officers being exposed to fentanyl. These encounters have been generated through traffic stops, search warrants and detainments.

Most recently, an officer from the Provo Police Department, located in Utah, suffered from fentanyl exposure from counterfeit oxycodone pills located during a drug bust. MacKimm (2023) detailed that officers on scene used the proper protective equipment; however, one of them began feeling the effects of fentanyl and self-administered a dose of naloxone and resulted in the officer being hospitalized for a short period of time before being released. The drug, when ingested is typically reversed by Naloxone. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (2022) states that Naloxone, commonly referred to as Narcan, is an opioid antagonist. The substance attaches itself to the opioid receptors and reverses and or blocks the effects of fentanyl. Narcan typically restores normal breathing to a person, if the individual is experiencing breathing issues, due to an overdose. If the individual is not suffering from an opioid overdose or does not have opioids in their system, Naloxone will have no effect. Narcan should only be administered when an

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individual is unconscious or suffering from the effects of fentanyl, which results in respiratory issues.

### **Debunking the Myth of Fentanyl Exposure**

The latest trend occurring more recently is debunking the myths that surround fentanyl exposures, primarily due to the effects it has played on law enforcement officers throughout the country. According to several media outlets, which extended their resources from various medical professionals, believe individuals who come into contact with fentanyl merely suffer from anxiety or panic attacks, rather than the actual substance itself. In a Police 1 article authored by Morgan McKenzie (2022, para.7), Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Harm Reduction Grant Fund Coordinator Sam Bourdon states that “a person can only experience fentanyl exposure if the substance is either ingested, smoked, snorted or injected,” therefore, exposure is not possible from just being in the same room where fentanyl has been smoked or simply touching the drug. Furthermore, Mackenzie (2022) reported that symptoms including hyperventilation, panic or disorientation are signs of a panic or anxiety attack. In several cases, individuals with symptoms are experiencing the “nocebo” effect, which means that if they expect adverse consequences or risks, then the body has a physiological reaction as if they were experiencing them. Dr. Daniel Colby, who is an assistant professor and co-medical director for the Department of Emergency Medicine at UC Davis Health located in Sacramento, California, addressed some common myths about fentanyl exposure. During an interview with Dr. Colby, Connolly (2022) reported that you cannot overdose on fentanyl by merely touching an object. The one case in which fentanyl can be absorbed through the skin is with a special doctor-prescribed fentanyl skin patch, and even then, it takes an hour of exposure.

### **Real World Story**

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I was on routine patrol after leaving a call for service with my sergeant. The call was about recovering narcotics, where two deaths from overdose have occurred at this specific residence. My sergeant responded and requested that I respond as a safety officer. Once on scene, the narcotics were suspected of being fentanyl, and proper protocol was followed for safety. I, along with my sergeant, left the scene, and he proceeded to our office to secure the drug evidence. In approximately four minutes, a deputy at a traffic stop advised that the sergeant pulled up on him and requested additional Narcan. I was already responding in that direction to assist the unit at the traffic stop. Once on scene, I began to assess my sergeant, and his response to the question was limited to zero response. I requested my dispatch provide me with an ETA on the ambulance, and the response to the scene was unreasonable. I determined to transport my sergeant to the local hospital.

While en route to the hospital, I had my dispatch call the emergency room and advise them of the possible exposure. During the transport, I attempted to have my sergeant engage in conversations. My sergeant's speech was slurred, and he was barely responsive to the question. My sergeant seemed confused about what happened and what call for service he was leaving. Once at the hospital, my sergeant was turned over to the medical staff for further observation. During the incident, three doses of Narcan were administered, and two of them were administered by my sergeant within minutes. My sergeant quickly identified that he was experiencing an incident of exposure. The swift ability to identify the symptoms potentially saved his life, which is essential for every officer to understand. The second factor that aided the life-saving measures was having the tools available within seconds. This moment was triumphant, based on the fact that my sergeant had a full recovery from this incident. The quick response, the tools necessary, and their availability were detrimental to the successful outcome.

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### **Leadership Role in Risk Management Strategies**

With the current trend of fentanyl exposures in America, it is vital that leaders in every police organization prioritize the safety of their officers by developing and implementing risk management strategies to minimize these exposures. To do this, they must allow for adequate training, correct protective equipment, and utilize effective communication protocols to minimize exposure to their officers while performing their daily duties. Suppose leaders continuously communicate and emphasize the importance of safe fentanyl handling measures to their employees. In that case, they will help show your employees you care about them while inspiring them to stay committed to your fentanyl handling procedures. This is important as it will get more people on board with following the guidelines put in place while getting them to buy into what you are asking of them. This will help in keeping your staff safe by minimizing potential fentanyl exposures and accidental overdoses from occurring.

Some agencies fail to adequately train and educate their officers on fentanyl exposure and those organizations are at the greatest risk of having an exposure or accidental overdose occur within their agency. This is a major issue as it shows a lack of leadership and portrays an environment where the agency's leaders are only thinking about themselves, and those at a higher command staff level, while failing to care for their employees, working at or near the patrol level, who are at the greatest risk for exposure to fentanyl. Law enforcement personnel deal with calls related to narcotics, or people under the influence of narcotics daily and fentanyl has proven to be highly prevalent in the drug world. Understanding the essentials for agencies so they can better provide best practices for handling fentanyl presence and adopt policies and procedures to protect their officers. Law enforcement officers deal with significant risk daily in everything they do, and the constant risk of fentanyl exposure should be addressed so that the

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risks and stress of dealing with it are minimized. According to the DEA (2021), as little as two milligrams of fentanyl, the small amount that fits on the top of a pencil, is considered a potentially deadly dose.

Effective and credible leaders lead by example. They not only make sure their employees are doing what is asked of them, but also show they are willing to do what they expect of their subordinates. By doing this, you are showing you are a competent leader who others will want to follow, strive to be like or role model themselves after, and will not want to disappoint. By doing what you ask of your employees, you are also putting yourself in a better position to hold them accountable. People are more receptive to feedback and better understand reasons for potential disciplinary action being taken when they fail to do what you are asking if you follow your own directions. If you see someone failing to follow the department's policy and procedures put in place, you need to address and correct it. The same goes for all the leaders within your organization. There needs to be a clear understanding with your department about the lethality of fentanyl and it needs to be communicated that the procedures in place are for the safety of everyone and there is no tolerance for failing to follow them.

It is up to the leaders of an organization to make sure everyone knows what they need to do when they encounter fentanyl and the steps to take when an exposure or accidental overdose occurs. Influential leaders will take the necessary steps to make sure when a situation revolving around fentanyl occurs, that everyone remains calm and reacts appropriately. This comes with having confidence and the necessary equipment to handle the situation. Leaders who implement continuous effective training and provide the proper equipment for their staff show they care about the safety of their employees while building their confidence to deal with situations as they

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arise. The following areas are essential parts to be covered by your organization to help minimize the risks of accidental overdoses and exposures to your officers.

### **Training**

Department administrators should educate all officers who have the potential for exposure to fentanyl while performing their duties. Leaders of each organization should be adapting training methods with specific content related to officer experience and the evolving nature of fentanyl risks. This allows for an adaptable approach to the training environment that will help address the active challenges associated with fentanyl exposure. To do this, leaders need to be able to explain why they are implementing the training and the importance of doing what is trained. Effective communication on this process is essential if they want their officers to understand and know the dangers of not following department policy and procedure when it comes to dealing with fentanyl.

By training your officers to properly handle fentanyl, you are minimizing exposure risks, reducing additional stress they might feel while dealing with a fentanyl-related incident and building their confidence to handle it. Proper and continuous training will help keep your officers safe, reduce stress and officer burnout, and provide them with the means to effectively perform the requirements of their duties. Dr. Larry Long (2017, 11:17) quoted Jack Welch as saying, “Giving people self-confidence is by far the most important thing you can do because then they will act.” With this in mind, departments should provide training that covers recognition and safe handling of fentanyl, proper usage of safety equipment or PPE, and exposure protocols, as it fits with their policies and procedures. Training should be conducted during every officer’s FTO period, and the department should provide annual in-service training for all officers on the issue. It would be beneficial for department leaders to stress the importance of their officers attending

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additional training courses, that are often provided by experts and outside agencies, to help them learn more about fentanyl trends and other ways they could better deal with the drug.

Organizational members who attend outside training will also be able to provide updates and new tactics learned for dealing with fentanyl to other department members. This will help in developing updated approaches and practices that should be addressed with your agency, as we need to adapt to the changes as they become apparent. Good leaders understand change is a constant with everything and will be willing to adapt their approaches, policies, and procedures, knowing it will benefit their agency while keeping their employees safe.

Trends related to fentanyl are constantly changing, and when information on the drug or classes related to the topic are presented, they should be communicated to department members promptly. Utilizing electronic communication is one way to keep everyone in the organization up to date. However, in-person conversations with road supervisors providing updates, often during daily briefing sessions, would be a more beneficial way of making sure the information is shared. If practical, it works best if road supervisors are able to sit down with their employees in smaller groups or individually to discuss recent trends and changes to policy and procedures, while explaining the reasoning for why any changes are being made. This will allow everyone to express their concerns or thoughts on the matter and help verify that every officer is aware of what is going on and is on the same page.

Training your officers on the following areas, while explaining to them the importance of each point, is vital for everyone to understand the proper procedures to minimize the inherent risks associated with fentanyl:

- Recognition and forms of fentanyl.
- Knowing when there is potential for the narcotic to be present, given the situation.

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- Safe handling of the narcotic for officer and community safety while at a scene.
- Safe evidence collection and processing.
- Proper use and disposal of PPE.
- What to do if an exposure occurs.
- Proper administration of Narcan.

### **Recognition**

Educating your officers on what to look for, how to identify fentanyl, and how it can be absorbed is crucial for mitigating the risk of accidental exposures. Fentanyl is found in many different forms and is often found mixed with many other narcotics. The highly dangerous drug can enter one's system through inhaling, ingestion, transfer through mucosal areas, injection, and when in a liquid form it can be absorbed through the skin. Knowing this helps to understand why PPE is so necessary when handling it. Officers should understand that fentanyl is something we will all likely come across while searching vehicles and suspects, as well as responding to the ever-increasing amount of overdose-related medical calls.

Knowing the drug is likely to be present is important but also understanding the indicators of a potential exposure and what to do in that situation is vital. Recognizing the signs of a potential exposure is critical, so training your officers on the signs a person might show if exposed. People exposed to fentanyl might show the following symptoms, according to the CDC (2020):

- Constricted pupils
- Muscle rigidity or spasms
- Hypertension (low blood pressure)
- Lethargy



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- Labored breathing
- Passing out or becoming unresponsive
- Becoming unresponsive

This knowledge should also be shared with your community by utilizing local and social media while being discussed during community forums to help educate them on the topic.

### **Handling**

Safe handling of fentanyl is essential for law enforcement agencies due to its highly potent opioid nature that presents a significant health risk to anyone in contact with the substance. The safest way of handling fentanyl is by providing your officers with proper training and having protocols in place to minimize the risk of accidental exposure during the handling of narcotics or evidence collection procedures. The safest approach to this is by educating your officers about the fact that most narcotics today are often laced with the drug and to use proper personal protective equipment (PPE). A simple start to this is that agencies should enforce and implement policies that require officers always to wear gloves when searching a vehicle, residence, or persons with the thought that the potential for exposure is high. If officers come across a narcotic substance, they should have it in their minds that the potential of fentanyl being present is very high and should handle it correctly and safely. For officers to do this, you must educate them on proper evidence collection, how to use and dispose of PPE, and provide them with the equipment. Every officer should be issued nitrile gloves for instances when they must handle a narcotic substance or paraphernalia.

When fentanyl is suspected of being located, another officer should be on scene to assist with the collection of the narcotic, with both officers being issued and carrying Naloxone (Narcan) in case there is an accidental exposure. Field testing should be discouraged as officers

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have access to more safety equipment at their office evidence processing area. The items collected should be placed in a plastic container or bag which can be sealed for safe transport of the substance, it is important so there are minimal concerns of potential exposure and evidentiary issues. While handling the substance, during evidence processing and testing, it is important to have a minimum of two officers present. All officers should be trained on how to properly handle the narcotic and know what to do if accidental exposure occurs. It is important to be cognizant to not touch your eyes, mouth, or nose during and after handling it until you can properly clean yourself. Before placing your evidence, it should be properly labeled with a bright-colored warning sticker, so anyone handling it is aware of the potential risk.

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Using the proper PPE is crucial when handling fentanyl due to its high potential for critical health risks. PPE protects against accidental exposure by minimizing the chances of inhalation and skin contact for the officers. This is why it is so important that officers receive adequate training on how to properly put on, use, and dispose of their PPE. The following PPE and safety equipment are examples of what should be made available, used, and trained on for proper use for your officers:

- Powder-free Nitrile gloves
- Wrist/arm protection such as sleeve covers
- Gowns
- Disposable filtering facemasks or approved respirators
- Goggles or face shields that will fit while wearing a facemask
- Sharps container
- Narcan (multiple doses)

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Whenever handling a deadly substance, your officers should know, through proper training, when specific PPE should be worn and used properly.

### **Exposure/Post Exposure**

When there are concerns that fentanyl may have been transferred, your officers need to thoroughly wash and rinse contaminated areas of the skin that were exposed. The most effective way of decontaminating exposed skin is going to be by taking a shower, which should be completed as soon as practical. Any contaminated clothing should be removed, bagged, and sealed until it can be washed. If exposure was made to the eyes you should immediately remove yourself and others from the area and the exposed party should wash their eyes for a minimum of 15 minutes. Dispatch and a supervisor should be informed of the situation and EMS should be called to the scene.

Suppose an officer starts feeling, or seeing symptoms in a co-worker. In that case, they immediately need to advise dispatch to have EMS respond to their location, remove parties from the contaminated area, and administer Narcan to the person exposed. A supervisor should also be made aware of the situation when it is practical. If breathing becomes difficult, they should provide them with oxygen to help keep their oxygen levels up while waiting for EMS. It is important that if there is ever an exposure where someone is showing symptoms of an accidental overdose, they are brought in and provided professional medical attention. If an exposure or accidental overdose of fentanyl occurs it should always be documented and a supervisor be made aware for so the party can be monitored and work compensation purposes.

Another simplistic practice that should be done is cleaning your surfaces where the fentanyl is on or near. Surfaces should be washed with soap and water, while continuing to wear

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proper PPE, so there is a minimal risk of exposure to others who come in to process their evidence later.

### **Conclusion**

Fentanyl is a growing concern throughout communities around the world. Due to its inception, it has caused added deaths dealing with the opioid crisis. These numbers have spiked dramatically in recent years. This global impact has burdened the economic resources for the law enforcement and medical fields. Effective means of communication and providing awareness of fentanyl can substantiate or mitigate the added risk of exposure. Members of the law enforcement community can build this through educating and training objectives for not only community members but also their staff and additional first responders. This research paper supports the need for progressive measures to combat the fentanyl crisis to ensure officer safety and reduce overdose deaths. Law enforcement working together with their communities can play a crucial role in mitigating the impact of fentanyl and protecting the well-being of their communities.

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