

Hydration Check

A practical tool for noticing how hydration may be affecting energy, focus, mood, and recovery.

LAW ENFORCEMENT WELLNESS



Hydration Affects Performance

You don't have to be running laps to feel the effects of dehydration. Even **mild dehydration**, as little as **1–2% fluid loss**, can hit you where it counts on shift.

Focus

Mental sharpness drops. Decision-making slows. You miss details you normally wouldn't.

Energy


Fatigue sets in faster. That mid-shift drag gets worse, and it's not always sleep deprivation.

Patience

Irritability spikes. Your tolerance for difficult calls, difficult people, and difficult days thins out.


Recovery

Muscle soreness lingers longer. Headaches become a regular post-shift companion.


 Bottom line: What feels like a bad shift might partly be a hydration problem. It's worth checking.

Check Your Baseline


Before you can fix it, you have to notice it. Run through these three honest check-in questions, right now, or at any point during shift.

 How much water have I actually had today?

Not coffee, not soda, not energy drinks, actual water. If you're struggling to remember, that's your answer. Most officers need 80–100 oz across a shift.

 Do I feel sluggish, tense, or foggy?

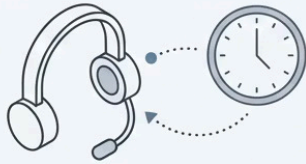
Check in physically. Is there a dull headache starting? Are your eyes heavy? Feeling more irritable than usual? These are common early dehydration signals, not just "stress."

 Have I had mostly caffeine instead of water?

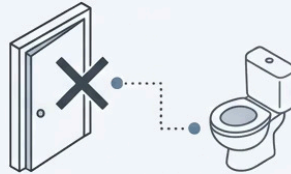
Caffeine is a mild diuretic, it pushes fluids out. If your intake is mostly coffee or energy drinks, you may be in a net negative on hydration before noon.

Common Shift Barriers

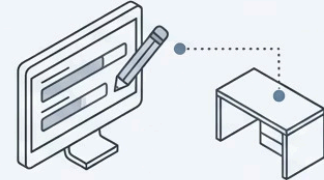
Most officers know they should drink more water. The obstacles are real, not excuses. Naming them is the first step to working around them.



1. Long calls — no break to drink



2. Limited bathroom access — holding it to avoid stops



3. Busy reports — desk time with no drink nearby



4. Caffeine stacking — reducing replacing water with coffee and energy drinks



5. Forgetting — simply not thinking about it during high-tempo shifts

⚠ Knowing your personal barrier is the first step. Which one hits hardest for you on shift? That's where your plan needs to start.

Build a Simple Hydration Plan

You don't need a complicated system. You need a plan that fits how your shift actually runs. Fill in what works for you, even rough targets are better than none.

Before Shift

Target oz / oz consumed before leaving:

What I'll drink in the first 30 minutes:

During Shift

My target per hour or per break:

Where I'll keep my bottle: _____

After Shift

What I'll drink in the first hour post-shift:

How I'll know if I'm recovered:

Water Bottle / Backup Plan

Bottle I'll use (size/type): _____

Backup if I forget my bottle:



A half-filled plan you actually follow beats a perfect plan sitting in your locker.

Pair Water With Existing Routines

The easiest way to build a hydration habit is to attach it to something you already do every shift. You don't need new time: just a new trigger.



Before Roll Call

Start the shift with a full bottle already in hand. One bottle before the briefing room clears puts you ahead before the day even starts.



After Coffee

Every time you finish a cup, follow it with a glass or bottle of water. One-for-one keeps caffeine from working against you.



After a Call

Before you clear or write your notes, take a few sips. Calls are natural reset points, use them.



During Paperwork

Keep your bottle on the desk while you write reports. Desk time is your best opportunity, don't miss it.



Before Driving Home

Finish any remaining water before you leave the lot. Starting recovery before you get home makes a real difference the next morning.

Closing Reminder

"You do not need a perfect plan. Start with one bottle, one routine, and one better choice."

Hydration is one of the lowest-effort, highest-return wellness moves available to you, no gym required, no special equipment, no days off. Every shift is a new chance to do it a little better than the last.

One Bottle

Pick a size and carry it every shift, no exceptions.

One Routine

Choose one trigger from the list and attach water to it today.

One Better Choice

Swap one caffeine hit for water. That's all. Build from there.

✔ Small consistency beats big effort. Stay hydrated. Stay sharp. Stay safe.

