Re-Evaluation of the Physical Abilities Readiness Evaluation

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While police work is primarily sedentary, police officers are required to frequently engage in near maximal workloads for short periods of time during incidents of a critical nature. The Physical Activities Requirement Evaluation (PARE) was designed as a physical employment standard in 1988 for the RCMP. To examine the elements of the PARE that are most related to the role of police officers in the field, the present study surveyed a group of subject matter experts, and the incumbents concerning the present elements embedded within the PARE, and potential changes that could be made to improve the extent to which the PARE reflected the true physical requirements of police work.

Methods:

This research project consisted of three distinct phases: 1. instrument development; 2. subject matter experts and instrument modification; and, 3. incumbent survey. Following instrument development, 20 subject matter experts (SMEs who were Division Fitness and Lifestyle Advisors) completed the survey and their feedback was then used as a basis for discussion and revision of the instrument. Surveys were distributed to a representative sample of RCMP members across Canada immediately after they completed their PARE. There was a 96% response rate with 844 completed surveys being returned.

Questionnaires were distributed to each region of Canada based on the number of members serving in the region. Overall, the regular members surveyed are considered to be a good cross-section of RCMP members from across the country including 11.2% from the Atlantic Region, 28.3% from the Central, 27.3% from the Mid-West and 32.1% from the Pacific Region.

Results:

Of the 844 completed surveys returned 15% were female, and 85% male. Age distribution included 18.6% in the 20-29 year old range, 39.6% in the 30-39, 33.7% in the 40-49 and 8.7% in the over 50 range.

Regular members' ratings of the ability of individual elements of the obstacle portion of the PARE to realistically represent the tasks required of police officers in the field.

	Too…	Percentage of responses					Too…
The matt jumps	Short	2.2	13.3	73.9	7.9	2.8	Long
The stairs	Few	3.4	17.1	71.2	6.6	1.7	Many
The low hurdles	Low	2.7	14.9	76.8	4.5	1.1	High
The vault	Low	4.5	16.1	74.8	3.6	1.1	High
The controlled falls	Few	0.8	10.5	70.7	11.5	6.5	Many
The run length	Short	3.9	13.9	74.2	6.2	1.8	Long

Subject Matter Experts' ratings of the ability of individual elements of the obstacle portion of the PARE to realistically represent the tasks required of police officers in the field.

	Too…	Percentage of responses					Too…
The matt jumps	Short	5.3	10.5	84.2	-	-	Long
The stairs	Few	-	16.7	83.3	-	-	Many
The low hurdles	Low	-	16.7	83.3	-	-	High
The vault	Low	10.5	42.1	47.4	-	-	High
The controlled falls	Few	5.6	5.6	50.0	22.2	16.7	Many
The run length	Short	-	15.8	78.9	5.3	1.8	Long

Regular members' ratings of the ability of *individual elements* of the push/pull portion of the PARE to realistically represent the tasks required of police officers in the field.

	Too…	Percentage of responses					Too…
The push segment	Light	2.3	19.7	70.6	5.6	1.8	Heavy
The pull segment	Light	3.3	21.8	69.9	5.3	0.8	Heavy
The controlled falls	Few	1.2	13.4	69.4	11.1	4.8	Many
The duration	Long	1.6	14.1	79.1	4.4	0.8	Short

Subject Matter Experts' ratings of the ability of *individual elements* of the push/pull portion of the PARE to realistically represent the tasks required of police officers in the field.

	Too…	Percentage of responses					Too…
The push segment	Light	-	22.2	77.8	-	-	Heavy
The pull segment	Light	-	27.8	72.2	-	-	Heavy
The controlled falls	Few	-	5.9	64.7	23.5	5.9	Many

Discussion:

Length of the course: The obstacle portion of the PARE takes approximately 25 seconds per lap for a total of 2 minutes and 30 seconds, covering 340 meters. Member responses suggest agreement with the obstacle portion with over 85% finding the run relevant or very relevant (R/VR), and the length appropriate. SMEs were in agreement with 94.7% rating length as very relevant or relevant.

Controlled falls (following the vaults): 80.0% of respondents reported the controlled falls to be R/VR, although 17.3% suggested modifying this element. In the open comments, 30.1% of all those responding (n=156) suggested deleting the controlled falls, while 42.2% of the SMEs reported the controlled falls to be irrelevant or very irrelevant (I/VI).

Height of the barrier: In the PARE, the height of the barrier is set at 0.9 m (3 feet). Presently, 82.2% of respondents suggest retaining the barrier, although 20.6% suggest the barrier was lower than it should be. SMEs report the barrier to be relevant, although 52.6% suggest that it is too low.

Push/Pull section. The 'fight segment' of the PARE lasts approximately 70 seconds (25 seconds for each of the push and pull, and 20 seconds for the controlled falls), and while longer than the average encounter, is well within the realm of possibility. Respondents (84.5%) report this item to be relevant of very relevant, while SMES were overwhelming in support.

The controlled falls (between the push and pull activities): While offering some face validity, as a police officer could very well fall during the apprehension of a suspect, as part of tussle, or in gaining control or fighting with a suspect, both SMEs and respondents were critical of this element.

The resistance for the push/pull section: Present data supports the mass encountered in the push and pull segments. Within the present 95.7% were in reasonable agreement with the weight while 87% suggest retaining these elements. The SMEs were overwhelming in support of retaining the push and pull, with no single entry suggesting the elements were I/VI.

Conclusion

Current data provides strong support for the present configuration in the PARE. While consideration should be given to the enhancement of the PARE, the current and previous task analysis do support the test in its actual format and representative or very representative of police work in the 21st century.

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