



## THE ECONOMY AND POTENTIAL UNEXPECTED EMPLOYEE ISSUES



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The current economic downturn has seriously hurt local communities. This loss of revenue has direct consequences for local law enforcement agencies. One of the unexpected consequences is the potential for some police employees to find themselves in financial difficulty. This is most pronounced when the employee has been counting on income other than normal salary. Police agencies should assess their policies, look for ways to assist employees who experience severe difficulty, and be alert to possible misconduct.

**Some of the more common types of income compensation that appears to be coming to a halt or is being significantly curtailed include:**

- Loss of overtime for staffing to compensate for minimum manning
- Elimination of overtime special details such as DWI taskforces
- A drop-off of off-duty paid enforcement details including special events, highway construction and security
- Elimination of take-home vehicle privileges
- Curtailment of rent subsidy for living in an apartment complex
- Closer scrutiny of court appearances on off-duty time
- Elimination of stand-by overtime for selected units
- Furloughs intended to cut a percentage salary
- Private business income restriction or failure based on the local economic downturn

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There are some examples of police employees earning double their salary due to these other sources of income. Turning a blind eye to it and saying they simply shouldn't have allowed this to occur isn't a realistic response. These employees need our attention to avoid possible adverse consequences including family and personal stress, financial failure, or misconduct.

**Some potential problems all supervisors and fellow employees should be alert for include:**

- Abuse of scheduled duty shifts or court appearances when it conflicts with an off-duty paid detail
- Conflict of interests when the pressure by outside employers intersects with agency goals
- Double, or in some cases triple, dipping
- Manipulation of arrests to ensure overtime or court appearance
- Fitness for duty issues from sleep deprivation
- Inequality of paid detail assignments
- Domestic misconduct
- Excessive use of alcohol
- Insurance fraud
- Increased gambling
- Theft
- Accepting money for compromising testimony, not appearing in court, or manipulation of evidence
- Being paid to overlook or protect illegal activities

**Action steps:**

1. Revisit your agency's written policy on outside employment. This should require an annual written approval; delineation of acceptable paid enforcement detail assignments; restricting off-duty employment to a specified number of hours per week and on any given agency workday; a description of when or if the employee reverts to on-duty status when taking enforcement action; and identification of the burden of costs for court, injury or civil action.
2. Reexamine the services available through your jurisdiction's Employee Assistance Program. This might be the time when you should consider adding a financial counseling aspect. This could be accomplished using a community volunteer group of financial professionals.
3. Ensure that your employee's have an indemnification clause from outside employers.
4. Examine your position on Workers' Compensation when employees are working for outside employers and give reasonable notice to your employees what implications that might entail.
5. Provide closer and timelier scrutiny to overtime use.
6. Consider the use of annual financial disclosure forms for employees assigned to certain positions such as vice, narcotics, organized crime, intelligence groups and command personnel.
7. Develop a reasonable approach to the use of credit search options.

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