

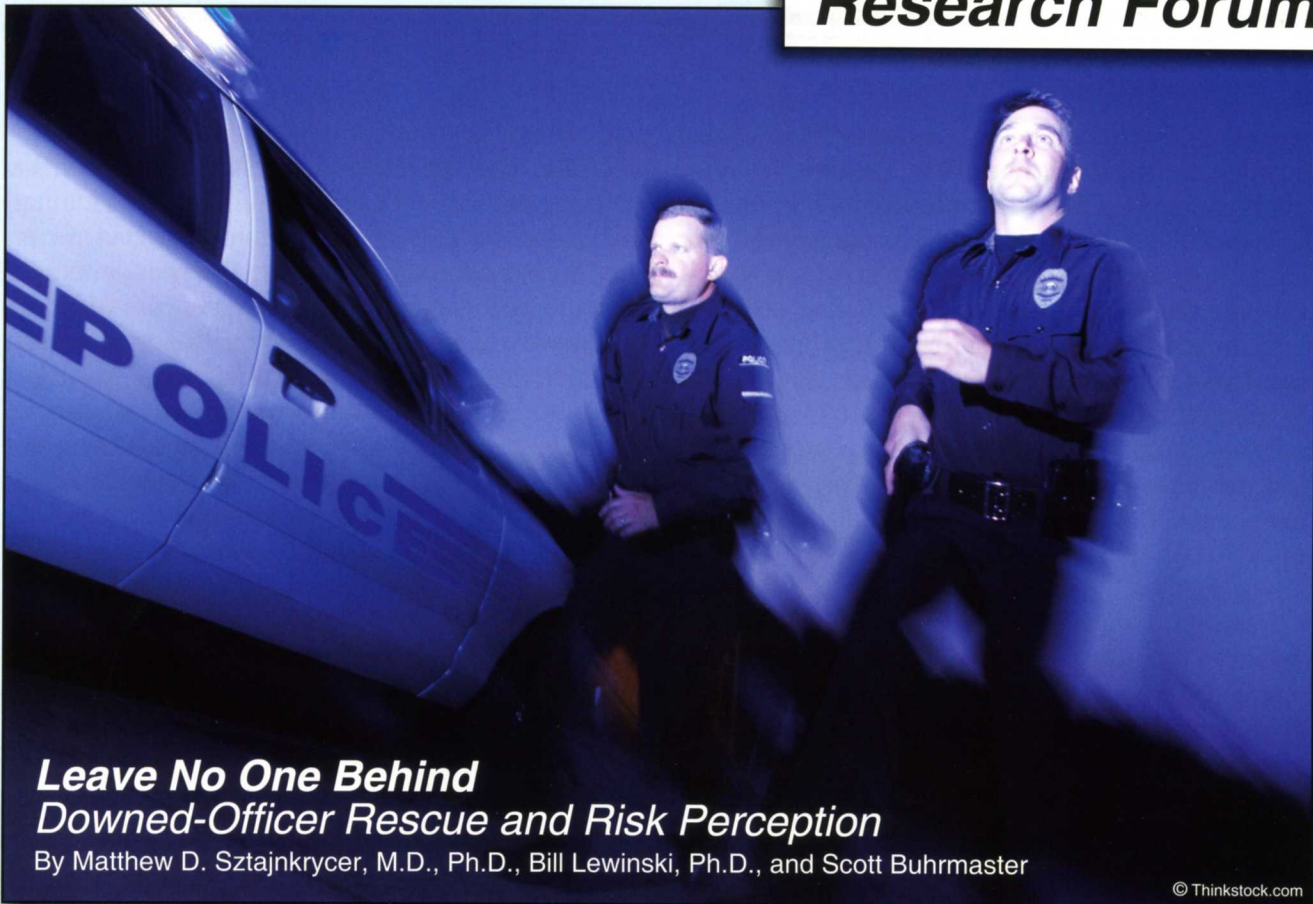
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Leave No One Behind ***Downed-Officer Rescue and Risk Perception***

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Human decision making is classically described as a conscious, analytical process. In this context, the rescue of a downed officer reflects the fundamental conflict between the need to do what is perceived as right for the injured officer versus the risk such action creates. The reality is that such calculated reasoning frequently does not occur.

In a previous scenario-based observational study, despite specific education in downed-officer risk assessment, all participating officers proceeded into the kill zone to rescue a downed officer.¹ This occurred even when the injured officer had wounds incompatible with life. When subsequently questioned about their decisions, most of the officers could not provide an explanation for their actions. Based upon these observations, it appeared that under circumstances of simulated

risk and perceived stress, these officers formed their decision-making strategies via a different process than an idealized conscious analysis.

To understand law enforcement officers' perceptions of risk and uncertainty in the context of downed-officer rescue, the authors surveyed 1,703 members of the law enforcement profession over a 1-month period (January 17-February 16, 2009). They present their findings to help improve officer education and training in the hope of minimizing the risk associated with these incidents, thereby saving the lives of those who willingly place themselves in harm's way.

STUDY OVERVIEW

Half of the respondents reported having participated in formal training on downed-officer rescue in the previous 5 years. Ninety-nine advised being

