

12-14-93

TO:CPT.REED
FROM:DEPUTY R.HECHT, #280
SUBJECT:ORCA PISTOL BELT SUSPENDERS

SIR,

I RECENTLY PURCHASED A PAIR OF PISTOL BELT SUSPENDERS MADE BY ORCA. THE PURPOSE OF THE SUSPENDERS IS TO HELP DEPUTIES THAT HAVE BEEN INJURED TO RELIEVE SOME OF THE WEIGHT OF THEIR PISTOL BELTS FROM AROUND THEIR HIPS.

I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE TWO REQUESTS CONCERNING AUTHORIZED WEAR OF THE SUSPENDERS.

FIRST, THAT I BE ALLOWED TO WEAR THE SUSPENDERS FOR AT LEAST A ONE MONTH TEST PERIOD. THE PURPOSE OF THIS TEST IS TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. DO THE SUSPENDERS HELP RELIEVE PAIN IN THE BACK,HIP, KNEE,ANKLE, ETC.
- 2.DO THEY INTERFERE IN ANY WAY WITH THE FUNCTION OF THE UNIFORM OR INHIBIT THE USE OF EQUIPMENT.
- 3.DO THEY BLEND IN WITH THE TOTAL UNIFORM.
- 4.ARE THEY AN OFFICER SAFETY CONCERN.
- 5.COMMENTS BY DEPUTIES,BY THE PUBLIC.

SHOULD THESE QUESTIONS BE ANSWERED SATISFACTORILY AND THE SUSPENDERS APPROVED, I SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING AUTHORIZATION:

- 1.ANY DEPUTY WITH A DOCUMENTABLE INJURY THAT WOULD BENEFIT FROM ALLEVIATING THE WEIGHT OF THE PISTOL BELT.
- 2.ANY DEPUTY SERVING IN A SPECIALIZED UNIT,REGARDLESS OF INJURY STATUS,SUCH AS K-9,MSU,BICYCLE PATROL,SWAT,ETC.
- 3.ANY DEPUTY WHO WISHES TO WEAR THE SUSPENDERS TO HELP PREVENT POSSIBLE FUTURE INJURIES.

THANK YOU,

RICHARD A.HECHT
P.C.S.D. #280

To: Captain Smith

SHERIFF OF PIERCE COUNTY
County-City Building
930 Tacoma Avenue South
Tacoma, Washington 98402

SUBJECT: Pistol Belt Suspenders

REPLY REQUIRED
YES NO

DATE
2-1-94

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Attached is a very good report from Deputy Hecht regarding the use of pistol belt suspenders. I am forwarding to you for review. Report should then go to Chief Stenck who has asked to see it.

I would approve this proposal.

Please Reply To: St. Michael Reed
Signature

**R
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Y**

cc: Deputy Hecht #280

DATE

SIGNED

29-Jan-1994

TO: LT. Reed

FROM: Deputy R. Hecht #280

SUBJECT: Follow up to ORCA Pistol Belt Suspenders Testing
and Autorization

Last month I proposed a test period and evaluation of the pistol belt suspenders made by ORCA. For the last four weeks I have been wearing them during my patrol shifts. Several other deputies have also worn them and their evaluations are included in this packet.

The deputies were chosen because of their varied experience in police work and for their difference in physical size. Listed below are the answers to the questions I proposed.

1. The suspenders, without any question, help to relieve the weight of the pistol belt from the lower back and hips. With a fully loaded pistol belt weighing approximately twenty pounds, there is no question that the full upper body is much more capable of bearing the weight over a twenty-plus year career, than just the lower back. There was some initial discomfort in my shoulders. This was simply my upper body getting used to bearing most of the weight. The discomfort went away after a couple of days.

2. The suspenders did not inhibit or restrict the use of any of the equipment that I carry on my belt. I was able to fully reach and operate my equipment without any interference. On only two occasions the straps hooked under my name badge and popped it off.

3. The ORCA suspenders match the rest of the ORCA duty gear perfectly. Viewed from the front they are barely noticeable and follow the lines of the uniform. When viewed from the back, they form a distinctive but not overwhelming "X". No one will comment on the beauty of the suspenders, however, they do not take away from the professional appearance of the uniform.

4. Officer safety is always a first concern with a new product. Deputy Gene Allen determined that the suspenders could provide a handle for an aggressor during a struggle. He also said that they are no more a safety hazzard than any other part of our uniform that is already worn.

5. During the month or so of testing, I did not receive any comments from the public concerning the suspenders. I am also not aware of any other deputy hearing comments from the public. Many other deputies remarked on the suspenders. Most of the deputies that saw the suspenders asked "when can we get those" and "are those available from property" and "when were those authorized?" These remarks were all made with fervor and excitement.

The deputies that saw the suspenders were from all aspects of the department. From patrol to supervisors to narcotics to the PIO. Other deputies who saw the suspenders were initially sceptical. Mostly due to the appearance of something new. Once I explained what they were for and how they functioned, they too became very supportive of the idea.

Many if not most police officers will eventually have some sort of back pain during their careers. Back pain can be caused by many things. Injury from a vehicle accident, a struggle, sitting long hours in an uncomfortable car and then being called to action, going from zero to 100 in the blink of an eye. Other things can contribute to back pain like being overweight and in poor physical condition.

Back pain and the other annoyances caused by wearing twenty pounds of equipment around the hips will always be a problem for police officers. The pistol belt suspenders will help alleviate these problems allowing deputies to have longer and healthier careers.

I would like to recommend that at a minimum the following groups be authorized to wear the suspenders.

1. Any deputy with a documentable injury that would benefit from alleviating the weight of the pistol belt.

2. Any deputy regardless of injuries, serving in a specialized unit such as K-9, MSU, Bicycle, SWAT, Narcotics, etc.

If there is anyone you would like to have evaluate the suspenders, please let me know.

Thank you,



Deputy Richard A. Hecht #280

Rich,

I'm writing you this note about the "duty belt suspenders" that you let me use as part of your test.

I have a herniated disc in my lower back. I have had this for several years. It is something that I live with, and sometimes the weight of the duty belt on my back is very uncomfortable.

I have often thought that suspenders of this type would help people like myself, with back problems.

The suspenders you let me try took the weight off of my lower back, and redistributed it to a stronger area. At the end of my shift, my back was not tired, and I had no pain in my lower back area.

I understand that there is a concern for the appearance of these suspenders. I believe that the Pierce County Sheriff's Department should be on the "cutting edge" of new ideas which benefit the deputies. These suspenders are not overly attractive, however, they do not detract from the professional appearance of the uniform. The benefit they provide to the individual deputy, out weighs any minor appearance flaws they might have.

I further believe that if the department adopts these suspenders, that down the road a more attractive model may be developed. But first we must show interest.

Sgt. David D. Adams #38

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'D. Adams', with the number '138' written to the right of the signature.

I N T E R O F F I C E M E M O R A N D U M

Date: 01-Jan-1994 09:04pm GMT
From: Eugene Allen
ALLEN ER
Dept: PCSD Traffic
Tel No: 593-4970

TO: Michael Reed

(REED)

Subject: Uniform Suspenders

Rich Hecht recently gave me a set of suspenders to wear with my duty uniform. He told me that he purchased them to test them out and see if they were compatible with our equipment. He asked that I wear them and give him, and you, an evaluation on them.

My first worry about them was that they would simply displace the discomfort we people of minimal girth experience as a result of heavy equipment belts worn night after night or day after day for those that work during the hours of non-darkness. I thought that the suspenders would pinch our chest against the protective vest, or weigh down our shoulders too heavily.

Nope. As it turns out the suspenders act to displace weight instead of discomfort, and eliminate the need for that habit we all have of hiking up our belts to relieve the pressure they put on our collective hips and backs. Having worn them for only 1 1/2 shifts and realizing that I was, for once, unmindful of the pinching of my duty belt and equipment, I give the suspenders a very big thumbs up in the area of utility and mission accomplishment.

So far as aesthetics are concerned, I have found that although they are not exactly a beauty augmentation device, they certainly do not detract from the professional look of our uniform. The suspenders are well made and fit securely to the duty belt.

There may be a question of officer safety that comes up with the addition of a piece of equipment such as this. I will readily admit that the suspenders provide a handle that someone could potentially hold onto in a struggle with a deputy, but the duty belt as is already provides a number of protruding surfaces and devices that someone with a notion to do so could grab hold of an pull on. The suspenders don't add any sort of safety issue problem that is not already a factor in the way our equipment is currently worn.

Lower back problems continue to be a nemesis of street cops. The mere act of sitting for long periods as we do coupled with the weight and awkward positioning of our equipment is the sure fire recipe for injury. The addition of the suspenders that Deputy Hecht is evaluating into our uniform inventory will go a long way toward helping alleviate current injuries, and prevent future ones.

Deputy ER Allen
PCSD #196

DT MAS EN 10-20-10

I N T E R O F F I C E M E M O R A N D U M

Date: 17-Jan-1994 10:52pm GMT
From: Joseph Boyle
BOYLE J
Dept: PCSD Patrol
Tel No: 593-4970

Subject: UNIFORM SUSPENDERS

MEMO TO: DEPUTY RICH HECHT, #280

THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRY YOUR UNIFORM SUSPENDERS. WHEN I PUT THEM ON I IMMEDIATELY FELT LIKE I HAD DIED AND GONE TO CHIROPRACTIC HEAVEN.

THE SUSPENDERS IMPROVED THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE WEIGHT OF THE EQUIPMENT I WEAR ON MY DUTY BELT.

RICH, I WORE THE SUSPENDERS FOR TWO DAYS. THEY WERE GREAT! IN MY OPINION, THE SUSPENDERS ARE A HEALTH ISSUE. IF THEY CAN BECOME AUTHORIZED EQUIPMENT WITH OUR DEPARTMENT, THOSE WHO ELECT TO WEAR THEM WILL BENEFIT FROM DECREASED BACK PROBLEMS.

WE CURRENTLY HAVE AT LEAST ONE DEPUTY WHO IS ON SICK LEAVE FOR BACK PROBLEMS. THE BACK IS A SENSITIVE AREA AND IT IS A PROBLEM AREA FOR MOST INDIVIDUALS. IT IS NOT A MATTER OF "IF", IT IS A QUESTION OF "WHEN" A DEPUTY WILL SUFFER FROM SOME FORM OF BACK PROBLEM.

ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO REDUCE LOSS OF WORK TIME BECAUSE OF BACK PROBLEMS, IS A BENEFIT NOT ONLY TO THE DEPUTY, BUT TO THE DEPARTMENT.

YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN KNOWING THAT I HAVE TALKED TO SEVERAL OFFICERS WITH T.P.D. THEY TOO HAVE NOTICED IMMEDIATE BENEFITS FROM USING THE SUSPENDERS. T.P.D. NOW ISSUES THE SUSPENDERS TO THOSE OFFICERS WHO ELECT TO WEAR THEM.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS MATTER, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME.

THANKS,

JOE BOYLE, #259
PAGE: 596-9120

LT. REED,

REGARDING: GUNBELT SUSPENDERS

I WORE THE GUNBELT SUSPENDERS WHILE ON DUTY FOR ONE 10 HOUR SHIFT OF MY NORMAL TRAFFIC DUTIES. I FOUND THEM VERY COMFORTABLE. ALSO I NOTICED THAT MY UNIFORM PANTS DID NOT BUNCH UP IN THE BACK FROM THE WEIGHT OF MY GUN BELT AS THEY USUALLY DO. I DID NOT FEEL THE NEED TO HIKE UP MY GUN BELT WHENEVER I EXITED MY PATROL CAR EITHER.

I HOPE THIS CAN BE USEFUL IN YOUR SURVEY.

THANK-YOU,
D. SHIN 260

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Shin 260', written in a cursive style.

FEMALE

To: LT. Reed

SHERIFF OF PIERCE COUNTY
County-City Building
930 Tacoma Avenue South
Tacoma, Washington 98402

SUBJECT: Suspender REPLY REQUIRED YES NO DATE 1-17-94

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I tried out the suspenders that 280 is showing around. For the last year or so I have had lower back pain from time to time. These supports made a dramatic decrease in weight off of my hips & lower back. They did not get in the way of my gear nor, other than the shift of weight, did I notice that they were on. I think that they are an advantage and the long term benefit will pay for their usage.

Please Reply To: T. Jensen #276
Signature

**R
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Y**

DATE _____ SIGNED _____

MEMORANDUM

TO: LT. REED
FROM: DEPUTY WASSON #284
DATE: 01/14/94
SUBJECT: GUNBELT SUSPENDERS

I had an opportunity to wear the gunbelt suspenders for two days. The suspenders helped alleviate the pressure from my hips, making the gunbelt more comfortable to wear. When exiting my patrol car I did not have to readjust the gunbelt. The suspenders kept the gunbelt from falling down. When I ran with the suspenders it prevented the gunbelt from bouncing and tugging at my waist. Therefore, providing more support for my lower back. In my opinion the suspenders provide numerous advantages and if they were available I would certainly utilize them. I would recommend implementation of this item as an optional part of our uniform.

R. Wasson #284
R. Wasson #284

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Conference: STAFF MEETINGS

Topic title: Minutes 06/15/94

Note title:

Lines: 159

Author: LESA::PACE Sherry Pace

Number: 105.0 Created: 15-Jun-1994 10:36am


Replies: 0

PIERCE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT
STAFF MEETING
June 15, 1994, 10:30 a.m.

PRESENT: Sheriff Shields; Chiefs French, Murphy, and Van Gieson;
Majors Poythress and Blanchard; Captains G. Smith, Edmunds
and Gibbs; Lieutenant Reed; Legal Advisor Adams; PIO
Benson; Deputy Haltunen; and Sherry Pace.

SHERIFF'S REPORT

Sheriff Shields presented Deputy Dann Kain with a plaque from the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs. The plaque was awarded to the Pierce County Sheriff's Department Cadets, Post #440, for the Crime Prevention/Community Relations Project of the Year for 1993. Deputy Kain said this is the second year in a row the Pierce County Cadets have won this award. The Cadets have performed outstanding service to the Sheriff's Department and the citizens of Pierce County.

 OPERATIONS BUREAU REPORT

As a follow-up to a Command Staff meeting discussion regarding suspenders, Deputy Richard Hecht attended today's staff meeting wearing a pair of the suspenders so staff could see what they look like. Deputy Hecht said he has been wearing them off and on since January and that about seven deputies on each side of the county have worn them for a short trial period. Deputy Hecht said the suspenders help distribute the weight of the equipment worn by a deputy and help to alleviate and prevent back problems. After some discussion, it was decided that suspenders would be authorized as optional equipment for commissioned officers and that the Department will pay for them. Chief French will draft a memorandum regarding this.

Aluminum Marine Construction (ALMAR) of Tacoma was the only bidder for the Sheriff's patrol boat. It is being recommended that we accept the bid.

A contract has been drafted for a second CJRO for Clover Park. We have received authorization to overhire by one deputy, so we will have a deputy available to fill that position. University Place has a funding request in their budget for a CJRO, so we may have an officer there also.

PIERCE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

JULY 18, 1994

MEMORANDUM NO. 94-34

SUBJECT: SUSPENDERS

Effective immediately, employees who wear gun belts are authorized to use what is commonly referred to as "suspenders" (similar to the Orca product). They are designed to prevent and remediate the deleterious effects of carrying the weight of a gun belt and its equipment. Some suspects may try to grab them in an attempt to control or assault the officer.

The Department will furnish suspenders at no cost to employees who elect to use them. Once supplied, an employee is expected to wear them with their gun belt, except for court appearances or other "formal" occasions. Division commanders are responsible for identifying employees who want to use them, ordering them through the requisition process, and paying for them within their existing budgets.

Please see your division commander or supervisor if you have any questions.

JOHN H. SHIELDS
SHERIFF OF PIERCE COUNTY

JHS/MF/pz