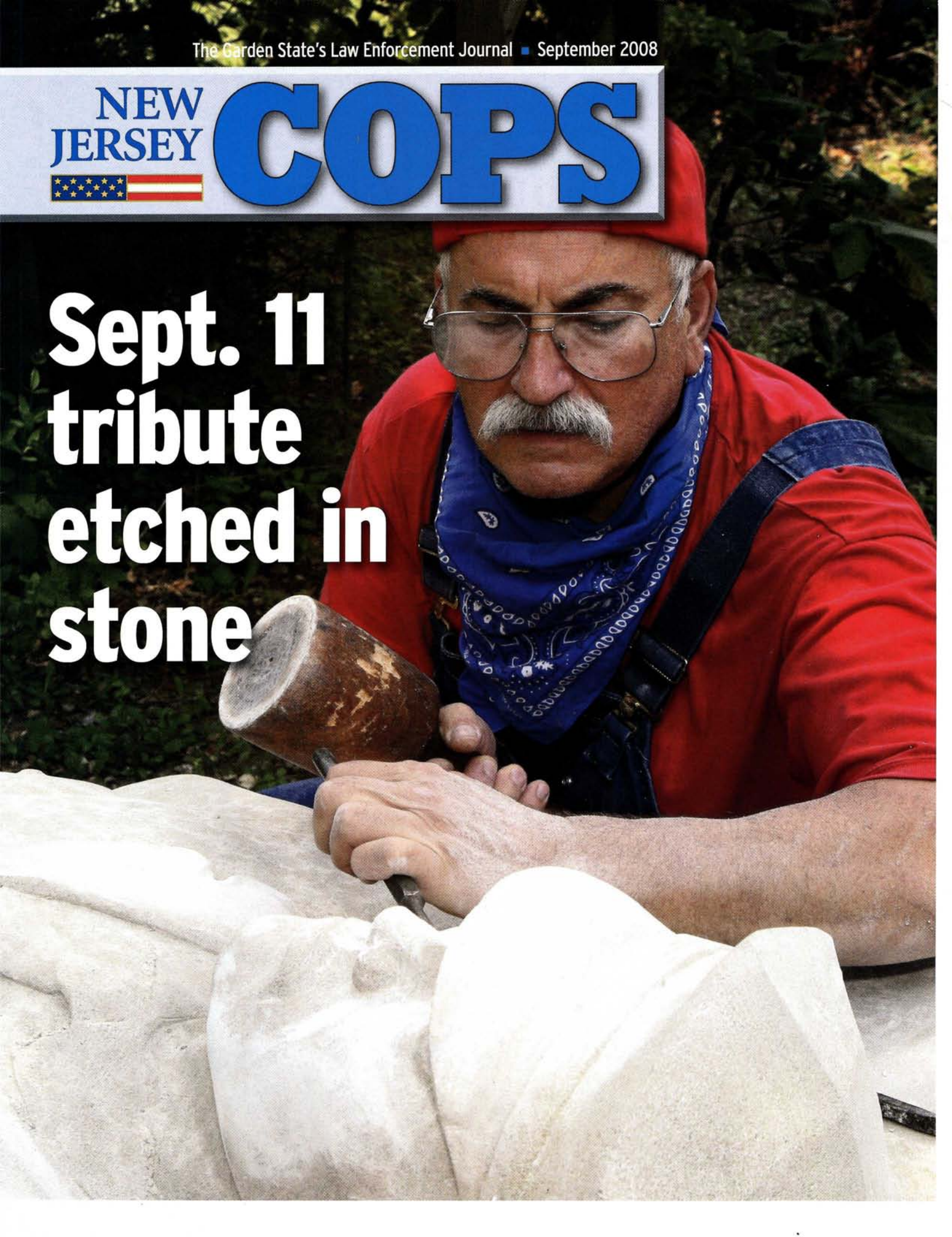


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# Higher gas prices may lead to more foot patrols

■ BY MATT BRZYCKI

The economic impact of escalating oil prices goes well beyond the sticker shock that's seen at the pump. The fact of the matter is that the greater cost of oil influences the cost of many other items – and not just that of oil-based products, either. For example, the cost of harvesting and transporting food is greater and this means that the cost of buying food is greater.

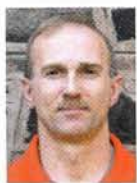
This ripple effect is also being felt by police departments across the country. A recent report revealed that the higher price of gas often exceeds the amount that's allocated in the line item of departmental budgets. In order to save money (and gas), many police departments are modifying some of their policies and procedures.

For one thing, departments may have their officers spend less time on cruising streets and highways and more time on stationary patrols. In addition, departments may deploy their officers on bikes, in hybrid cars/SUVs and/or electric-powered transportation such as the T3 Series Personal Mobility Vehicle (which is said to cost less than 10 cents per day to recharge). But the one change that might affect your role the most is that departments may have their officers leave their cars and get out on foot.

With no indication that there will be a significant drop in gas prices any time soon, more departments nationwide will likely adopt this type of policy. If your department decides to pursue the same tactic, are you ready to “pound the pavement”?

## WALK THIS WAY

From a physical standpoint, walking may sound fairly easy but it can take some getting used to, particularly if you've never been on foot patrol or haven't done so in a while. Remember, too, that walking a beat is much more difficult than walking the park. You have



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to remain highly vigilant, aware of your surroundings and prepared to respond to any number of situations. Plus, you'll be wearing a uniform which is somewhat restrictive and includes additional weight from your vest or body armor and duty belt (complete with sidearm, magazines, baton, radio and any other “extras” that you might prefer or your department might require). This may not sound like much but it can add up.

True, you won't be walking continuously for long periods of time; you'll certainly stop regularly to talk with members of the community. However, just being on your feet is more physically demanding than sitting in your police car.

## PREPARATION

So, how can you ready yourself for what may very well be the inevitable? It may sound simplistic but the best way of preparing to walk is to walk. Doing other aerobic activities can help, of course, but the best way is to walk.

Your preparation for being on foot patrol should also include some type of anaerobic efforts in the form of repeated sprints once or twice a week. Rationale: You never know when you might have to give chase or get somewhere fast on foot.

Strength training can be beneficial, too. If you improve the strength of your hips and legs, walking will require less effort. It's also a good idea to do exercises for your lower back since walking and/or standing for prolonged periods of time can fatigue that area. Furthermore, the lower back helps stabilize the torso.

As mentioned earlier, some departments may elect to send out officers on bike patrol. Not to insult anyone's intelligence but the best way of preparing to ride a bike is to ride a bike. Here again, your preparation should include anaerobic training (repeated sprints, this time on a bike) and strength training.

One other thing to keep in mind is that your fluid requirements will be greater



PHOTO BY ALAN GOLDBERG

Officer Mike Wood of the Princeton University Department of Public Safety on the T3.

when on foot patrol. Obviously, you'll sweat more walking a beat than sitting in a car. This is especially true during the summer months when your clothing and vest or body armor make it more difficult for your body to cool itself.

A related factor is your dark shirt/trousers and black footwear which absorb the sun's rays. Therefore, make sure that you stay well hydrated by drinking adequate amounts of fluids.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Be ready: Don't let the price at the pump leave you unprepared for any changes that may be made to your role as a police officer. ♥

*Matt Brzycki is the Assistant Director of Campus Recreation, Fitness at Princeton University. A former Marine Drill Instructor, he has authored, co-authored or edited 16 books on strength and fitness, including SWAT Fitness (available at [www.optacinternational.com](http://www.optacinternational.com)).*