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TM-I9-95 ALTERNATE PATROL HEADGEAR

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TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

Submitted by
Canadian Police Research Centre

June, 1995

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With today's concerns about protection from ultra-violet radiation from the sun, the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police evaluated wide-brimmed hats during the summer of 1994, as an alternative to the traditional "forage cap". The results of their evaluation, as well as an excerpt from an article about the hat chosen by New Zealand Police to replace their conventional police helmet, are contained in this report.

RÉSUMÉ

De nos jours, la protection contre les rayonnements ultraviolets du soleil préoccupe beaucoup. Le service de police régional de Hamilton-Wentworth a évalué des casquettes à large rebord au cours de l'été 1994, comme remplacement de la casquette traditionnelle. Les résultats de leur évaluation, ainsi qu'un extrait d'un article portant sur le couvre-chef choisi par la Nouvelle-Zélande pour remplacer leur casque de police classique, figurent dans ce rapport.

INTRODUCTION

Not only the Canadian police community is considering changes to traditional headgear. An article in the November 1994 issue of the American publication "Law and Order" referred to the New Zealand Police switch to a wide-brimmed "Akubra-style" hat that replaces their traditional "bobbies' helmet". Alan Harman, the author, noted that officers will have a choice between the new hat and their previously-issued forage cap.

Mr. Harman stated: "The general public and more than 850 staff members were surveyed before deciding on the headgear. Of the officers surveyed, about 44% said they preferred the wide-brimmed hat while 43% wanted the forage cap. Only 6% said they wanted to keep the bobbies' helmet. When asked the type of wide-brimmed hat they preferred, 57% of officers selected the Akubra style."

"The survey of the public showed most preferred the forage cap over the wide-brimmed hat. More than half of the civilians surveyed didn't like the helmet on women officers and 33% didn't like it on men."

At the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police / Operational Research Committee (CACP/ORC) meeting held in Halifax in 1993, the subject of an alternative to the police forage cap was proposed by Chief Middaugh of the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police Service. The relevance of a new police hat is due to several concerns. The present "forage cap" is expensive, uncomfortable, and offers no protection from the sun to the ears and back of the neck. Today there is concern about the harmful effects of ultra-violet (UV) radiation on those who spend much of their time outdoors, especially in the summer.

In the summer of 1994 hats were issued to about thirty Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police officers working in several locations - the marine unit, foot patrol and cruiser patrol. The results of that evaluation follow.

EVALUATION

1. The average percentage of on-duty hours of wear is approximately 75%;
2. 95% of the responses indicated the new hat provided better sun protection than the presently issued forage cap;
3. 100% indicated the hat was lighter than the forage cap but 10% found the hat to be somewhat hot in warm weather;
4. 17% indicated the hat had poor stitching and the service badge came off;

5. 5% indicated a concern with the hat not maintaining its shape;
6. 67% had concerns about the appearance of the hat as part of the working uniform, with the remainder quite satisfied with the look;
7. 39% of the responses indicated the public reaction to the hats was not favourable, 28% had mixed reaction, and the remainder approved; and
8. 67% of the responses indicated that this particular hat should not be a permanent replacement for the forage cap. 11% indicated it should be a summer replacement and the remainder were in favour of the hat as a permanent replacement.

The following additional comments are a sample of those included in the responses to the questionnaire:

- a) safety hazard with chin strap,
- b) too hot and too casual,
- c) don't need tassels - formal Stetson preferred,
- d) looks out of place, does not match uniform,
- e) colour and material wrong,
- f) feminine look,
- g) superior to old type hat,
- h) stylish, sharp encouraged public to approach,
- i) like to try another style,
- j) need Stetson and compatible colour,
- k) not professional,
- l) don't want to wear any hat,
- m) looks like a golf hat, need different style.

As a result of this operational evaluation, the trial hats were not distributed further within the organization. There appears to be a need for a professional styled police hat that could replace the current forage hat.