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# With hot tea & masks, traffic cops brave pollution, winter

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**New Delhi:** Traffic personnel in the city face constant exposure to toxic fumes from petrol and diesel vehicles as well as the biting winter chill.

For sub-inspector Sarita Shukla, who is posted at the Tughlaq Road Circle near the Indira Gandhi Memorial area, one of Lutyens' Delhi's busiest stretches surrounded by roundabouts, wide arterial roads and frequent VIP movement, the day begins early.

Shukla, who has put in over three decades of service with Delhi Police, was recently assigned traffic duty this winter. She leaves her Dwarka home around 5.45am to report for her 7am to 3pm shift. Due to reduced visibility during foggy mornings, she has been taking the metro lately, she told **TOI.**

Due to prolonged exposure to petrol and diesel fumes, dust matter and dirt, Delhi Police has provided traffic personnel with masks to reduce the amount of pollution inhaled. Officers deployed on the roads also wear woollen jackets to cope with the cold. Fluorescent jackets and light bars are also used to navigate through dark and foggy early winter mornings. Sanitisers have been distributed and an advisory has been issued directing those on ground to use handwash regularly and strictly follow safety measures to prevent illness, as falling temperatures make them more vulnerable to infections.

Shukla said she drinks hot water throughout the day and ensures everyone posted with her consumes various kinds of tea as much as possible to protect their throats. "We can protect our noses and throats with masks and such measures, but our eyes still get irritated and watery because of dust," she said, adding water sprinklers on roads provide some relief by settling the dirt in the air. Some of the measures also painfully remind the officers of the pandemic, she said.

In the context of respiratory health, age becomes a significant factor for traffic personnel, many of whom have spent decades on field duties. Shukla said she and other officers stationed with her make a conscious effort to stay active. Regular walks and constant movement during duty hours help keep their lungs functioning well, while home remedies such as ginger and clove offer relief from throat irritation after long hours on the road.

As a woman officer, her presence often reassures female commuters who feel comfortable approaching her. "There are six-seven women officers stationed during every shift. We all want to take care of people," she said. Despite worsening pollution levels and the cold, she said the trust shown by women commuters and her desire to help people keeps her motivated.

At the end of her shift, Shukla returns home to her children, who are proud of her work and often speak about her role to their friends. "They tell people that their mother works with the traffic police and teach others how to take care of themselves and manage on the roads in such conditions," she said, adding that she uses this influence to spread awareness about road safety. Shukla also credited her husband for being a constant source of support after long days on duty.

Piyal Bhattacharjee



Sub-inspector Sarita Shukla, posted at Tughlaq Road Circle, says she and other officers make a conscious effort to stay active this season