

The Protection ranger

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The Newsletter of the National Park Rangers Lodge, Fraternal Order of Police



July • 2015

President's Message George Durkee

As anybody with even moderate experience as an LE ranger knows, there are days when our job gets darned discouraging. Unpleasant as some tasks are, it's rarely disagreeable visitors or pulling drunks out of vehicles that trigger wistful thoughts of the "One bad day" retirement plan. No, it's a recalcitrant management hierarchy utterly indifferent to the safety and well-being of their employees that causes the gnashing of teeth and pitiful wailing into the dark suburban night.

The rigid top-down "hear no evil, see no evil" bunch of WASO and regional apparatchiks has, year after year, driven the National Park Service – which really is (one of) America's Best Ideas – into the basement on the annual Best Places to Work survey.

I imagine these guys and gals at their annual feel-good fests happily waving big foam fingers chanting "we're number 215, we're number 215" as the head of the Orwellian-inspired Office of Workplace Enrichment continues his diabolical, yet fiendishly brilliant, plan to force any sentient and caring ranger out of the Service and back to the peace of the french fry station at McD's.

Could any agency be less attuned to the needs and input of its field employees; less open to a productive exchange of ideas? Sure, we beat the Office of Air and Radiation (#249) but how can such a great agency as the NPS have employees rate us so low, year after year? Why is not every manager deeply, deeply ashamed of this ranking and taking

substantive steps to improve working conditions?

I pause for breath and a sip of coffee.

A few of you are undoubtedly thinking: "no, no more coffee for you." Yet how is anyone who cares deeply about both National Parks and our profession supposed to react when, for instance, an impressive majority of LE professionals object to a WASO-led standardization of patrol vehicles which fail to clearly identify rangers as law enforcement?

When the Lodge writes the Director (pg. 4) with poll results showing 70% of rangers want the unambiguous word Police on our patrol vehicles; when we helpfully provide examples of how those vehicles could look; when we cite the much ballyhooed (and successful) Operational Leadership program which, in the words of Director Jarvis himself:

...empowers employees to be assertive about their safety and the safety of their team, and encourages them to participate in the decision making and risk management process...

When we ask nothing more than to *participate in the decision making and risk management process*, we are met with a contemptuous silence.

At a regional in-service refresher, a WASO manager was asked about the Lodge's poll results and why managers were apparently not considering implementing – or even discussing – patrol vehicle designs with the field employees directly affected by their decisions. His reply: "the poll was one sided and pushed the FOP's agenda."

OK, if our "agenda" is speaking out for field rangers and advocating a safer more professional work environment, then I'll cheerfully admit that's what we're doing: guilty, guilty, guilty! But surely that's not an excuse for refusing to engage in dialogue with the largest law enforcement advocacy group in the NPS?

Even more strangely, WASO has apparently been calling parks that DO have patrol vehicles with Police on them, and pressuring their Chiefs to have the lettering removed. The Lodge plans to contact as many Chiefs as we can to ask their experience with having the offensive word on their patrol cars. What a concept! Actually asking people with direct experience how it's working rather than "no, you can't do that."

With no response to our initial letter to Director Jarvis, I wrote a followup two months later where I said:

... is Operational Leadership, then, yet another feel-good prop from the Washington office to be touted as a bold program to turn around our abysmal safety record, yet ignored when affected rangers actually attempt to advocate for critical safety improvements?

And:

With our surveys and this letter, the Lodge and our members are bringing a widespread safety issue to your attention. We propose a solution based on widely accepted - and proven - law enforcement standards and practices. The danger of misidentification of the law enforcement role and authority of rangers is real and affects the majority of law enforcement rangers.

Over half a year later with absolutely no word or invitation from WASO to join in a dialogue, the answer is a clear yes: OL is no more than a feel-good prop to the Director, WASO and regional directors. However successful in the field OL has been in raising safety awareness and reducing injuries by encouraging everyone to be heard on safety, at the Regional and Washington level it's just another empty program exposing them for the unprincipled hypocrites that all too many at that level are.

Commenting on the Lodge's Facebook ([facebook.com/rangerfop](https://www.facebook.com/rangerfop)) about WASO's proposed vehicle graphics design, a member wrote:

The NPS does everything it can to associate the term "Park Ranger" with anything and everything BUT law enforcement. The tiny "law enforcement" lettering can't overcome that. We won't even deal with the unrecognizable shield. (And yes, marking a science vehicle in any design that resembles a law enforcement vehicle is inherently stupid to begin with, but the point is that they are smart enough to mark the vehicle with its function, not the job series of the occupant).

Needless to say, we'll continue to push this.

On page 5 we summarize rangers assessments of dangers they face in our Ten Most Dangerous Parks survey. Depressingly, it's many of the same issues that have gotten rangers injured or killed for decades. Top of the list are poor or non-existent radio or cell coverage for field rangers; and inadequate staffing and backup, where rangers routinely work very dangerous areas with help 30 minutes to hours away. Also mentioned is lack of support from some regions AUSA, making it unacceptably difficult to enforce park laws and regulations if an arrest is necessary.

In the 30 year history of the Lodge, this is the way NPS has always operated. They reflexively shrink in gibbering terror at the idea that rangers do law enforcement or,

worse, actually *need* to do law enforcement: that criminals also take vacations to their national parks; that protecting our historical heritage and our unique natural areas sometimes requires citations, arrests, duty belts and wrestling in the dirt with really unpleasant and dangerous people.

The Lodge formed to give LE rangers a united voice. Today we face the same mindset and even some of the very same people who opposed law enforcement retirement; who opposed carrying defensive equipment on a duty belt; who opposed ballistic vests; who opposed professional LE standards and training; who continue to oppose an all-LE chain of command for rangers and who, today, oppose the simple and unambiguous identification of a ranger vehicle with the word Police.

These same people stand at memorials for rangers who have died in the line of duty and give moving tribute to the fallen; they call rightful attention to the ranger's valor and sacrifice. Then they go back to their offices and continue to put ranger's lives and safety and risk with their failed policies and cynical hypocrisy.

Much of the problem can be traced to the relentless and increasingly inflexible top-down hierarchy that's taken over all levels of NPS supervision. Responsibilities that, only 10 years ago were handled at the sub-district ranger level have been taken over by Chiefs and Superintendents.

When I was a boy, a sub-district or district ranger was given a budget and had the discretion on how and where to spend it. Both would be able to determine, say, lengths of seasons for seasonals and where they could best be deployed. Increasingly, all such decisions are taken out of their hands. More and more the field is micro-managed to death at the expense of not only efficient and effective ranger operations, but their own ability to learn how to manage.

And, as if more proof were needed, the new RM 9 now designates that the Superintendent will be in charge

of making sure vehicles comply with NPS standards, not the Chief ranger as in the previous RM 9. Sure can't trust those rascally Chief rangers to make the best choice between ranger safety and political expediency....

And god help you if you make a mistake! Innovation will not be tolerated! Yet how do we become more effective if we don't make mistakes and learn from them? How do we become better if we don't try new ideas? In an interview, Pixar and Apple co-founder Steve Jobs said that he attributes much of the success of his companies to making sure that the hierarchy of ideas was not the same as the hierarchy of management:

If you want to hire great people and have them stay working for you, you have to let them make a lot of decisions and you have to, you have to be run by ideas, not hierarchy. The best ideas have to win, otherwise good people don't stay.

Though Operational Leadership was begun to create a better safety culture, where input from everyone is required, the principles are the same: for an enterprise to be successful and for the National Park Service to retain the best employees, innovation and ideas must be encouraged and sought from all levels.

No question many ideas, when implemented, will fail but it's the only way to learn and improve. Timorous manager's avoidance of conflict or mistakes that's taken hold in the last 10 years or so only enforces a culture where innovation is impossible and mediocrity triumphs.

And there's the lesson and action plan for all rangers. Resist this. Insist on more responsibility and oppose attempts to erode your authority. And don't, yourself, become a rigid manager, closed to innovation because, for instance, "we've tried that before." Listen to your employees. Occasionally try the seemingly hare-brained idea, maybe with a new spin. Collaborate: that's how innovation happens and is successful. This trend can be

reversed, but it does require rangers and managers speaking out.

In spite of this history of indifference and triumph of the mediocre, I and the Lodge Board remain, always, hopeful. Even under relentless opposition over the last 30 years, we have eventually prevailed in almost every issue we've advocated for. And it's always been a collaborative effort. There are, scattered here and there, not only excellent and dedicated field rangers, but Chiefs, the occasional Regional Director and LE Specialist as well as people at WASO and FLETC who push for reform. We deeply appreciate all the help, support and advice we've received from you all these years. We need to keep it up.

*An empty coffee cup
A great silence
WASO's face
A mask of fear.*

*Words like arrows
Rain upon them.
Pierced by truth
There is no defense.
Durkee roshi
The Collected Koans*

Patrol Vehicle Markings A History

Back in January 2013, a discussion topic was started on the Lodge Forum concerning vehicle markings. This topic quickly blew up and become one of the most replied-to and viewed discussions there. The Lodge Board quickly took this on as an issue supporting updating current outdated standard government vehicle striping. Later that year this issue, along with others, was presented to Associate Director Cam Sholly and gained his partial support.

Fast forward to today, and the WASO office has selected a design to begin field trials. Unfortunately, it would appear they didn't listen to any of the suggestions or concerns from field rangers.

The Lodge was fearful of this. So back in September we created a

survey to collect feedback from commissioned rangers, in regards to priorities and issues, to pass along to the WASO office. In the five days the survey was online, we received almost 800 responses. A majority of those responses were within the first 72 hrs of it going live. This number alone should be an indication of just how important this topic is to rangers.

Using the results of the survey along with reported Use of Force (UOF) incidents from the field, we tied this topic into the National Park Service's highly advocated Operational Leadership model. An overwhelming 82% (n=629) of commissioned rangers reported they have been in a situation that became unsafe, or potentially unsafe, because they were not recognized as having law enforcement authority despite being in uniform, with defensive gear and/or in a marked NPS patrol vehicle.

On October 4, 2014 the Lodge sent its letter to Director John Jarvis, Associate Director Cam Sholly and Risk Management Officer Michael May outlining the results of the survey, emphasizing our safety concerns and how Operational Leadership essentially requires a discussion with the rangers directly affected by any design decisions.

In fact in at least two parks, rangers did get together and do a GAR worksheet assessing the various risk factors of operating without Police on their patrol vehicles (Supervision, Planning, Contingency Resources etc.). GAR requires that mitigations be considered where any category exceeds five, which was the case in each category of at least one GAR.

As such, the results should immediately have initiated a thorough and extensive look into what is happening and what can be done to more clearly identify our rangers as law enforcement officers. Alas, when presented with the results, the Superintendent of one of the parks replied "...this is a gross misuse of the Operational Leadership model." And "My role of authority should be clear to you in this matter."

Well, so much for OL and any hope of input from the field. Depressing, too, is at least one Superintendent's misunderstanding of the need for and uses of GAR. This is why NPS has among the worst safety records of any federal agency. In fact, of course, a GAR can – and should – be done in any effort or operation that carries risk; nor should it be done only for immediate and active incidents.

After two months with no reply from Director Jarvis, the Lodge sent a follow-up letter on December 15th. Then Associate Director Cam Sholly did send a brief and immediate reply where he said: "USPP is also changing their vehicle markings simultaneously and this is a good opportunity to get into sync overall."

This was one of the Lodge's suggestions from the very beginning. Why shouldn't the two law enforcement divisions of the National Park Service have a similar graphic scheme; with just the differences being color and badge?

It's a good idea, and it would seem this would also address some of our ranger's Officer Safety concerns. Unfortunately the new graphic design couldn't be further in the opposite direction of the U.S. Park Police design which is being considered.

So what is WASO's response to the identity crisis which is getting commissioned rangers assaulted in the field, you ask? Well it's a giant NPS Arrowhead and "U.S. PARK RANGER" billboard along both the side doors of the patrol vehicle. For a photo, see our Facebook page. It looks more like a rolling advertisement or recruiting tool than a law enforcement vehicle. Oh wait, the design does include a cute little 4 inch LE Badge and 3 inch LAW ENFORCEMENT on the rear fender. All is well!

How does this new scheme clearly and immediately convey police authority? It doesn't. The badge and law enforcement is ridiculously small and on the rear fender of the vehicle. It takes a "back seat" to the Arrowhead and U.S. Park Ranger.

This key symbol and text – which clearly and immediately convey police authority – is not even displayed on the front fender of the vehicle, which is most likely going to be seen first. Not to be overlooked, the Arrowhead is still the prominent focal point, which adds to the confusion and risks the safety of noncommissioned rangers operating white Impalas, Expedition, F150s, Tahoes, etc. with the Arrowhead on the door.

One of WASO's objectives with the new vehicle markings is uniformity across the service, because of the wide range of markings currently seen service wide (i.e. LE Badge, law enforcement, American Flag, Police, Federal Officer, 911, etc.). These mentioned graphic additions, which parks have added in addition to the standard markings outlined in RM9, would seem they're trying to make their vehicles more closely resemble State/City/County Police vehicles.

Unless WASO gives the field rangers what they want in the next generation of vehicle graphics, there will be parks who will continue to ignore policy or look for that grey area to operate in, to put on additional graphics they feel are necessary to convey authority and officer safety.

The best chance to get service wide vehicle uniform markings is to give the rangers working in the field what they want and need to get the job done safely. And what does the field rangers want? Well, 517 of survey takers (nearly 70%) chose the word "POLICE" as their number one priority for new vehicle markings. Followed by, the addition of the LE Badge as the second highest priority.

The consensus of the field is not merely a subjective opinion, and is not confined to the NPS. There is an emerging national standard, where park rangers with law enforcement authority have "Police" on their vehicles.

In fact, at least a dozen parks have been using the word Police on their vehicles for quite awhile. This has not caused the slightest ripple in the high

esteem and confidence that the public feels towards rangers. What, exactly, are the Director and Regional Directors so worried about?

While this movement is growing, we realize there are exceptions. However, we challenge WASO to find an agency that has gone in the opposite direction, and replaced the word Police with any other designs.

We don't believe it is reasonable to place the safety of the workforce at risk based on the subjective and, arguably, uninformed opinion of a select few.

The Lodge will continue to fight for a design based on input from rangers in the field and not by those sitting behind a desk.

Letter To Director Jarvis Regarding LE Vehicle Graphics

October 4, 2014

Dear Director Jarvis:

The Ranger Lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police has recently become aware that WASO is reviewing graphics for law enforcement vehicles with the goal of standardizing design. We have long considered this a critical safety issue and are encouraged by your interest.

Last year, we created a survey asking LE rangers to list the issues they wanted the Lodge to address. In that survey, 70% of rangers checked the box: Vehicle markings need to look more modern and more clearly designate us as police or law enforcement. As a result of that survey, we asked a couple of members to submit potential designs which we then posted on our web page for discussion. You may view them at: <http://goo.gl/mU8bW2>.

Our Lodge Board then had a preliminary and productive conference call with Associate Director Cam Sholly to discuss these and other LE ranger concerns.

In a very recent law enforcement situation, one of our board members and the suspect he was contacting had to be transported to the hospital for injuries when the arrested visitor resisted, saying "park ranger? You're not even the police!" The situation quickly escalated and use of force was required to make the arrest. As a result of this and similar incidents, the Lodge has just conducted another survey of LE rangers to find out how common it is that our LE authority is questioned. In five days, we have received almost 800 responses - that's well over half of all commissioned rangers. This level of response is an indication of how important the issue is to rangers.

To the survey question: Have you ever had an experience where someone, not understanding your law enforcement role, has made a situation more complicated, stressful, or unsafe; despite being in a marked NPS vehicle. An overwhelming 82% (n= 629) of LE rangers tell us they have been in a situation that became unsafe, or potentially unsafe, because they were not recognized as having law enforcement authority despite being in uniform, with defensive gear and in a marked NPS patrol vehicle. The experience of our board member is not unique; it is shared among the overwhelming majority of his co-workers.

In response to our survey, field rangers made clear that a critical contributing factor is the ambiguity of our role as conveyed by patrol vehicle markings. Almost 70% (n= 517) of commissioned rangers favor the word POLICE displayed on their marked vehicles. They also strongly favor the NPS law enforcement badge being prominently displayed.

Rangers, of course, work with the public every day and are very aware many visitors are not familiar with our role and authority. Critically, that role is not clearly conveyed by the words "Park Ranger." Even more confusingly, not all park rangers are law enforcement rangers. The word "Police" is universal: clearly understood throughout America and the world. A car with lights, a stripe

on it and the word Police is instantly and unambiguously recognized as a car driven by someone with law enforcement authority.

This is a critical safety issue for both rangers and the public we serve. We are concerned you are moving forward without field input. We have long supported the Operational Leadership model to formalize employee discussion on safety issues. You wrote:

NPS Operational Leadership empowers employees to be assertive about their safety and the safety of their team, and encourages them to participate in the decision making and risk management process. . . . [A] goal of NPS Operational Leadership is to assist the NPS workforce achieve a higher level of professional excellence by creating and fostering a culture of safety that seeks out and values input from employees who are the best equipped to make risk management decisions within the organization.

The Lodge formed over 25 years ago to accomplish this very thing: bring the safety concerns of field rangers to the attention of managers and to actively participate in solutions, to the benefit of rangers, parks and the public we serve. We are concerned, then, that the management is proceeding with a decision making process without input from the field whose safety - and that of the public - depends on your solution.

With our surveys and this letter, the Lodge and our members are bringing a widespread safety issue to your attention. We propose a solution based on widely accepted - and proven - law enforcement standards and practices. The danger of misidentification of the law enforcement role and authority of rangers is real and affects the majority of law enforcement rangers. Park rangers are proud of the long tradition that goes with that title and responsibility. We understand that some may have issues with the word "police" and might consider it one

more strike against the so-called traditional ranger image.

I well remember working in Yosemite in the early 1970s when there was equally strong resistance to rangers wearing defensive equipment - rather than having it in a briefcase in the patrol vehicle. Over the decades since, each step in advancing the professionalization of law enforcement rangers has been accompanied by concerns the ranger image would somehow suffer. Each advance, though, has resulted in not only a safer work environment for rangers and the public, but has unquestionably enhanced our professional image as park rangers.

A final decision, then, on how ranger patrol vehicles will be identified must make safety of both rangers and the public your priority. In order for Operational Leadership to be more than another training session, there must also be input from the field rangers "best equipped to make risk management decisions within the organization."

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to further discussion on this vital project.

Regards,
George Durkee
President

Dangerous Parks Survey

We got a good response from our survey seeking to name *America's 10 Most Dangerous Parks*. After reviewing the results, though, the Board decided we didn't have enough representative comments to decide on any particular park as dangerous. However, the comments we did get definitely allow us to identify three areas that rangers consistently identify as dangerous in their day to day work.

1. Communications

This topped the list of serious concerns from rangers. Almost each park represented had serious, even life-threatening problems with radio

communications: No 24 hour dispatch or poor to non-existent radio or cell coverage or both.

In the last 15 years, several SAITs have cited both issues as needing immediate attention following serious accidents or deaths of park personnel. In 1996 in Sequoia Kings following the disappearance of backcountry ranger Randy Morgenson, radio dead zones may have contributed to the five year delay in finding him and certainly hampered search efforts. Several other SAITs have made the same recommendation though the Lodge is aware of only one park where it was actually done.

2. Staffing and backup

With PEER (Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility) we FOIA'd the last 15 years of NPS LE ranger staffing. This will be the subject of a future article but, as we've written many times before, NPS does not take seriously it's own LENA staffing models, IACP (International Association of Chiefs of Police) or similar recommendations from the NPS IG. Rangers in a number of parks are at serious risk as a result of continued understaffing.

3. Support for the LE function

either locally by the Superintendent or regionally from the AUSA.

Members Comments

Some representative comments by rangers (in order to protect any possibility of the commenting ranger being identified, in most cases I've paraphrased or redacted possible identifying information within brackets):

[Lake X] is a dangerous NPS area. There are very few rangers on at a time. Supervisors have been poorly qualified in the last few years. Rangers are frequently alone contacting large drunk groups in CG's and on houseboats. There is a high proportion of use of force incidents. Many areas of the park are isolated and without adequate radio reception. I was involved with assaults, numerous warrants, and other arrests with no backup. I was also involved with 3 felony foot

pursuits. The local law enforcement doesn't understand proprietary jurisdiction and their dispatchers neglect the park rangers. There is also a high level of methamphetamine and heroin use in the area. With this situation it's surprising worse things haven't happened yet.

[Following ranger Margaret Anderson's murder at Mount Rainer] and against recommendations from the previous LENA (which the Super directly told staff members was BS and unrealistic) and the BOR (and the BOR for Nick Hall's death), the park management continued to cut permanent law enforcement staffing numbers. Many of the rangers there during those incidents left between 2012 and 2014, and rather than fill many of the positions, they sat vacant during that time. The park management chose to fund resource positions, even going so far as to create new positions in the management staff, while cutting back on emergency resources.

Even when presented with a "minimum staffing guideline" (based upon the GAR worksheets), the management would question [our decisions not to open areas we didn't have the staff to safely and adequately patrol.]

[From another ranger's comment about Mount Rainer.]

The management team is creating a hazard-filled environment based upon the lack of adequate funding, and a lack of support. A Chief from a big Y park, after conducting an audit, recommended that [our] protection budget be at least doubled. The superintendent laughed in the chief's face.

The court system [at Region Y] is broken, which causes rangers to question their ability to do their jobs. All of the parks have been on board with [the] AUSA's demands that she be contacted prior to any arrest (which were rarely allowed

by the AUSA), and essentially refused to prosecute all but the most solid cases. This made it difficult for me to mentor new seasonals, as we had to coach them in alternative enforcement methods.

We have no local judge in the area. He is about 2½ hours away and comes to Park Y for court once a month. If we make an arrest, outside of alcohol offenses, they have to be brought to the judge within 48 hours. Consequently, we are not feasibly able to make arrest, except in the most extreme circumstances, when an arrest could and should be made.

The city of ... employs over 100 officers. We used to be on their radio network. Our last Chief took us off the PD radio network because he wanted us on a NPS dispatch which is approx. 3 hours away. Radio coverage is poor in some areas and the local officers can no longer hear us, which presents a serious safety hazard. There is now resistance from the superintendent to us going back because of the hype the last chief created.

There was a [recent incident] where a ranger had a subject run on foot following a traffic stop and throw down a gun. PD officers were right up the street and had no idea, because we are no longer on their net. Someone is going to get hurt.

[Patrol is] operating at less than 50% staff currently, due to in-house/service wide budget cuts and poor management decisions. More often than not, only two law enforcement rangers are on duty at one time in [an area] with over 3,000 permanent residents and approximately 10,000 visitors per day.

These rangers are also responsible for coverage of [another area] located over 25 miles away. Typical incidents include; assault, suicide, domestic violence, larceny, alcohol violations, DUI, disorderly

conduct, along with other typical EMS and fire emergency calls-for-service.

Radio communications are "spotty" in about 15-20% of the park that we actively patrol. The park typically eradicates 1-3 marijuana grows per year. Roughly 1 in 20 contacts has a person on probation or parole. The discretionary budget for our division is also very minimal and we often have to use gear that is in poor condition or is outdated.

We currently have 7 full time rangers (no seasonal LE for at least 5 years) and one of those is the Chief (who oversees fees, LE, dispatch, and lifeguards - no active patrols doing LE). In 2011 there were 10 LE positions. In 2014 we had over 850,000 visitors and 90 arrests. Since I have been at this park, I have personally been involved in 4 vehicle pursuits and 1 foot pursuit. I have pulled my weapon (to include gun and intermediate weapons) at least 30 times.

[We don't have full-time dispatch and, after hours, dispatch is taken over by another park 300 miles away. They're not familiar with our place names.] Radio communications are "spotty" in about 15-20% of the park that we actively patrol.

Typically, there are only 2-3 people working at a time (with times that there is only 1 LE unit in the park). Backup can be as far as 30 minutes away at times given the geography of the park. There are often times where we contact groups of 10 or more people. I very seldom only contact one person at a time.

In the summer of 2012 I contacted a group of approximately 15 people. This was our most popular beach in the park. The group appears to be late teens and early 20s. Most of the people in the group had alcohol. This beach is closed to alcohol so all were in violation of the superintendent's compendium.

During this contact I was using [remote to area] dispatch. There was only one other ranger on at this time and he was approximately 15-20 minutes away from my location. The group was extremely confrontational and did not want to leave the area or pour out the alcohol. I requested the backup officer almost immediately after my authority was challenged. I was only able to identify one of the individuals through dispatch.

The other ranger and I were able to defuse the situation and talk them into leaving the area after having them at TASER point 10-15 minutes. I was able to find out more information the following day through [our local] dispatch for the person I had identified. He is a known gang member who had shot someone (the victim refused to press charges from what we found, so his case was dismissed).

Patrol Vehicle Graphics It's Worse than you think

Editor's Note: Just as I had the newsletter formatted and ready to go, this exchange came over the transom from a member. For as long as I've been an LE ranger (and that's over 40 years now), I had no idea the opposition to LE reached such a level of batshit crazy. Read and despair.

On Wed, Jul 1, 2015 at 1:29 PM, Steele, Sheridan <sheridan_steele@nps.gov> wrote:

Mike and Gay: I have a serious concern about the new NPS9 [sic] as it relates to ranger vehicle markings. At Acadia, and I suspect most other units of NPS, we still expect that our rangers provide many more services than just law enforcement. I believe their responsibilities must include education, interpretation, emergency medical, wildland fire response, motorist assistance, and visitor information to name a few. I believe our rangers will be much less "approachable" if "Law Enforcement" and the badge is prominently displayed on every vehicle. If some

areas need the "police" approach, maybe they should hire the Park Police for those duties. We must continue to stress the need for our rangers to be more broadly focused than just LE. Putting them in a vehicle that essentially says "POLICE" all over it will discourage many visitors from seeking other services from these folks that too often are the only park staff that visitors will see. I hope this directive can be modified before it become final. Thanks for your consideration. Sheridan

Sheridan, I completely agree with you on this. I'm copying NER Chief Ranger, Lori Harris on this message as well, as she is also in agreement.

Thanks for taking the time to send this note.

Gay
Gay Vietzke
Deputy Regional Director
Northeast Region, NPS

Agree as well

Mike Caldwell
Regional Director
National Park Service -
Northeast Region

The Ranger Lodge Replies July 14, 2015

Dear Superintendent Steele:

As you may know, the Ranger Lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police was established to represent concerns of law enforcement rangers and have been doing so since 1985. We have just received a copy of a memo you wrote outlining fears about law enforcement vehicle markings (below). For the past year, the Lodge has been aware of efforts at WASO to standardize vehicle markings on our law enforcement patrol vehicles. We immediately sought opinions from our membership and began to receive input from many LE rangers on this issue. A number of members have also submitted example graphics of their own preferred designs which we

have published on our Facebook page (facebook.com/rangerfop). We discussed our interest and evolving designs with then Deputy Director Cam Sholly. From the beginning, we made it absolutely clear that we wanted to be part of the discussion.

Such was the explosive interest by LE rangers that the Lodge wrote and published an online poll seeking input from all LE rangers. In only 5 days, there were over 700 responses. We have not had an issue attracting so much interest and attention in over 20 years. The overwhelming majority of respondents wanted the word "Police" marked clearly on our vehicles. Further, the majority cited safety as the reason for this preference. When responding to a law enforcement call, it's critical for officer safety that authority be established right away. This is done not only by our uniform, defensive equipment and how we present ourselves, but by our vehicle clearly identifying one of our roles as law enforcement. The word "police" is universally recognized as a person holding that authority.

The Lodge next wrote Director Jarvis asking, once again, to have input in the decision making process (letter attached). We especially emphasized the Operational Leadership model that clearly encourages all employees to participate in an open exchange of ideas on any matter relating to safety. We were deeply disappointed that no one in the Director's office or WASO bothered to discuss this issue with us.

In your memo, you express concern that if our vehicles have any law enforcement markings (e.g. LE badge or the words "law enforcement") that would somehow make us less approachable by visitors seeking EMS, fire, interpretive or other assistance. With respect, I must say I find that deeply insulting to every LE ranger who is out patrolling roads, trails and waterways. Surely you are not implying that the mere phrase "Law Enforcement" or "Police" will cause us to disregard our long, proud tradition of public service, not only in law enforcement and other emergency services but visitor assistance,

interpretation, wildlife protection and the full variety of duties that make us rangers? You and your fellow managers are presenting a hypothetical as fact to oppose a partial solution to a very real and documented danger to field rangers.

Protecting our historical heritage and irreplaceable natural areas sometimes requires citations, arrests, and wrestling in the dirt with some really unpleasant and dangerous people. As a manager, you and your colleagues have an absolute obligation to ensure we have the tools, training and support to carry out our duties safely and effectively.

Rather than the narrow role you seem to assign law enforcement, I see park rangers as positive examples – ambassadors, really – for the full range of our responsibilities. When I swear in a group of Junior Rangers while wearing my defensive equipment and next to my patrol vehicle, there's no question that, in addition to making a bunch of kids proud and happy, I'm reinforcing the image of a friendly and helpful LE officer – someone the kids will remember as a person to go to when they need help. Making our patrol vehicles unambiguously represent our LE role will not affect visitor's attitudes towards our helpful role in the slightest but will help ensure the safety of those who carry out that role.

Rather than continuing the long history of reflexively opposing every safety improvement field rangers suggest, I'm hopeful you and your colleagues will reconsider or, at the very least, discuss with the Ranger Lodge your recommendation to revise the innocuous change RM 9 is recommending. As always, the Ranger Lodge is happy to provide our thoughts and discuss this matter further.

Regards,

George Durkee
President

Lodge Supports FLEOA Action with OPM

Editor's Note: FLEOA sent the following to its members about action to take over the breach of OPM data. The Lodge supports this action. An electronic version of this letter is available at: <http://goo.gl/6ypFeo>

Dear FLEOA Member,
Since OPM remains perplexed, response-crippled, and shamefully silent, we all need to formally request what specific information of ours has been compromised. Attached to this message, you will find a template letter addressed to two divisions within OPM:

1. Office of the Chief Information Officer

Chief, Records Management and Data Analysis;

2. FOIA Requester Service Center

Please print the attached letter twice. Fill in your personal information on both copies, and mail them certified to the addresses provided on the template. Some of you may have been informed through agency channels that the information contained in your background investigation for the past ten years MAY have been compromised. Considering the consequences of the OPM breach, we recommend that you act as though this information has been compromised. We can't afford to delay in taking safety precautions to protect ourselves and our families.

FLEOA Member Letter to OPM June __, 2015

Via Certified Mail / Return Receipt Requested

U.S. Office of Personnel
Management
Office of the Chief Information
Officer
Chief, Records Management and
Data Analysis
1900 E Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20415-7900

U.S. Office of Personnel
Management
FOIA Requester Service Center
1900 E Street, N.W.
Room 5415
Washington, D.C. 20415-7900

Re: Privacy Act and Freedom of
Information Act Requests

Dear Records Manager and FOIA
Officer:

As authorized by the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. § 552a, and Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 552 et seq., I am writing to request records and documents.

Specifically, I request that I be permitted to review the following records, and that they be provided to me:

An accounting, under 5 C.F.R. § 297.403, of all disclosures within the last five years of records or information contained in any system of records pertaining to me, that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) was the the custodian of;

All documents showing which Personally Identifiable Information of mine, and of those persons identified in my background investigation, was or may have been compromised as a result of the OPM data breach referred to in Michael Esser's June 16, 2015, statement before the United States House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform as well as various June 2015 Department of Justice (DOJ) memoranda and notices on this subject. My requests for "records" and "documents" include any electronically stored information.

If you choose to provide the records to me, rather than permit their inspection, please call me in advance to arrange a secure means for transmitting these records. My telephone number is [phone].

To help you identify me and my records, my full name is [full name], my place of birth is [city, state], my Social Security Number is [SSN], and my [current/most recent] federal employment is as a [job title] with [agency].

For fee-assessment purposes, I am an individual seeking the records and documents specified above not for commercial reasons but solely for personal use, including the need to understand what specific vulnerabilities I am now facing as a result of the data breach so that I may take necessary and appropriate steps to ensure the safety and security of my family, relatives, associates, and myself, along with anyone else who may reasonably be facing jeopardy as a result of the breach of my personally identifying information.

I am willing to pay for fees for this request and respectfully request you notify me of the cost as soon as you gather the information. In light of what I'm requesting, I do not anticipate the fee will exceed \$100. If you estimate that the fees will exceed this limit, please inform me first.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this request.

National Federation of Federal Employees Backed Path to Permanence for Temporary Employees Passes House

NFFE-Backed Path to Permanence for Temporary Employees Passes House

Tuesday, July 7, 2015

The Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act (LMWFA, H.R. 1531) passed the House of Representatives this afternoon. H.R. 1531 would give long-serving temporary seasonal employees in land management agencies, including thousands of wildland firefighters, the ability to compete for career advancement using the same merit promotion procedures that are already available

to other federal employees. It would also waive age requirements that currently prevent experienced temporary seasonal firefighters from competing for permanent positions for which they may be well qualified. For more information and to follow breaking developments, see the NFFE Forest Service Council temporary employment reform webpage.

"In over two decades, we have never been closer to achieving meaningful reform," said Mark Davis, Vice President of the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) and past President of the NFFE Forest Service Council. "The next step in the process is to move the bill through the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC) preparatory for action by the full Senate. I've been in contact with HSGAC staff and there is interest in moving the bill, so I'm optimistic about its chances to become law."

"Too many, including thousands of wildland firefighters, have been stuck for too long in dead-end jobs not because of a lack of merit on their parts, but because of flawed regulations that do not recognize their years of service," said William R. Dougan, President of NFFE. "The Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act removes a nonsensical regulatory barrier to career-advancement opportunities for long-serving federal wildland firefighters and other temporary seasonal workers. This common-sense reform honors and credits their service by giving them the same shot at career advancement that other federal employees have. We thank Congressman Connolly and supporters for the years of committed work to provide a path to permanence for these dedicated employees."

Original article at:
nffe.org/ht/display/ArticleDetails/i/105577

Bill at:
www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/1531

Write your Senators to support this getting passed in the Senate!



Law Enforcement Wellness Partner

Free confidential helpline for PTSD, stress, suicide, and drugs & alcohol, for Law Enforcement and their families.
Help is available 24/7.
AmericanAddictionCenters.org/law-enforcement

Confidential Helpline: 1.855.997.6542



Law Enforcement Wellness Partner

- Recognize signs of trouble that may lead to addiction.
- Get answers to your questions and concerns.
- Find resources for information, treatment, and support.
- Know your conversation is confidential.
- Get referrals to quality professional care.

Presented by
Fraternal Order Of Police & American Addiction Centers

The Grand Lodge now offers free counseling through this number. They've provided wallet cards as a reference. Please contact the Ranger Lodge and we'll send you one.

Let us all raise a glass and congratulate long-time member and seasonal ranger Fred Koegler who, this summer, marks his 50th year with the National Park Service in Yosemite.

Thanks, Fred, for your continuing dedication and service!

Lodge Website

The Lodge website is updated with notices and links to other sites that we think are interesting and/or helpful to resource based law enforcement officers. Visit it often between issues of *The Protection Ranger* to keep current on things that affect you and your job. Our address is www.rangerfop.com.

Application for Membership

You may also join, renew and pay your dues online with PayPal. rangerfop.com and choose Join the Lodge.

I, the undersigned, a full-time regularly employed law enforcement officer, do hereby make application for active membership in the U. S. Park Rangers Lodge, FOP. If my membership should be revoked or discontinued for any cause other than retirement while in good standing, I do hereby agree to return to the Lodge my membership card and other material bearing the FOP emblem.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

DOB: _____ E-Mail: _____

Permanent Rangers: \$60/year

Seasonals and Retired Active Members: \$40/year

Associate (non-Commissioned) Membership (Newsletter only): \$40/year

Renewals: You do not need to send in this form to renew. Enclose a copy of your Commission (new members only)

Make Check Payable to: National Park Rangers Lodge.

Agency and Work Unit: _____

Mail to: National Park Rangers Lodge, POB 1481, Twain Harte, CA 95383

Phone: 1-800-407-8295 9am-8pm Eastern Time or email:

rangerfop@sonic.net

A member suggested we look into signing up for pro deals through *ProMotive.com*. This site consolidates pro deals from hundreds of equipment companies such as 5.11 Tactical, DeLorme, Marmot, Crimsom Trace laser products and over 200 other law enforcement and outdoor equipment manufacturers. Discounts of up to 70% are available and new brands are added often.

To sign up for the Ranger Lodge's ProMotive Team site, create an account at: www.promotive.com/fraternalorderofpolicerangerlodge

On the left, click on **Have A Code?** Then paste in: B664-948F-ADEA-C4D5. Fill in your email address and other information as you click through the screens. The Lodge will approve your membership so it'll take a few days for your account to become active. Write us at rangerfop@sonic.net if you're not approved fairly quickly. Please use the same email you use for your Lodge contact. We will **ONLY** approve current members in good standing.



National Park Rangers Lodge
POB 1481
Twain Harte, CA 95383



9227766640

