

# THE SIGNPOST

Third Quarter, 2019



Dear Members and Supporters of the Park Rangers Association of California,

Please enjoy this issue of *The Signpost*. Use the hyperlinks below to jump to a specific article, or scroll through and read the whole newsletter whenever and wherever is convenient for you.

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# How to be an Obnoxious Camper

By Park Ranger Andy Brown (with inspiration the internets)



It's that time of year that we all treasure (endure). The season's heating up, and everyone and their brother-cousins are headed out for a camping excursion in the great outdoors. For those of you who have the honorable task of care and oversight of a public campground, this time of year brings special meaning to the word Sanity.

There's always that one bunch of rotten apples...You know the kind – families that make Clark Griswold's cousin Eddy and his kin look like normal people. They have throwing axes and dogs name Thunder-turd, piles of liquor bottles, and late and loud arguments. Thankfully they are separated from their

neighbors by a thin layer of nylon.

Being a truly obnoxious camper is all about the execution. The rules are as follows:

1. Make your entrance to the campground as fashionably late as possible, preferably after 10 p.m. when there is no available light and everyone else is asleep.
2. Drive around the entire loop with your brights on to inspect each campsite fully and so other campers can make shadow puppets inside their tents if they want. Make sure that your car does not have a muffler, and that you idle the engine at high RPM's for minutes on end, while you and your family debate the merits of each campsite, even those currently occupied.
3. If you have a boat or camp trailer that blocks your rear view, always back into your campsite. It is ideal to have someone from your party standing behind the vehicle, shouting directions loudly to the driver. When you find your campsite, be sure to move all of the large boulders and other permanent features to your liking. Don't be afraid to show off your rock-crawling skills with that '98 Caravan.
4. If things take longer than you planned, swear a lot. Do it loudly. Don't forget to involve the kids as well. Making them cry will break the ice for everyone.
5. Starting the campfire requires a lot of gasoline or other flammable fluid. Who needs eye brows anyway? Once started, keep the fire as high as you can so your campsite will serve as a beacon for other campers who may be lost, or otherwise under the impression that they were asleep.

6. Make sure that someone in your party is either a) drunk and obnoxious; b) ill with bronchitis or some other lung affliction that produces a loud, hacking cough; c) tired and under 4 years old; or d) all of the above.
7. Run your discount-tool-store generator all night to create white-noise for those around you who may have trouble sleeping. How else will you be able to keep the tunes pumping and margaritas flowing at 2 a.m.?
8. Drink a lot and debate the current political situation or family problems loudly. If you can't swing that, get up early and adjust the idle on your dirt bike.
9. Always have a radio playing. If the signal is weak and there is a lot of crackle, you can always turn up the volume.
10. If you are relieving yourself in the wild, don't bother to bury it or take it with you. Make sure that you leave plenty of toilet paper lying around to warn others.
11. Do your part to keep the forest clear of unsightly trees and shrubs. Kick and drag to your site any piece of vegetation that you can burn in your bonfire. Let your kids peel off all the bark they can off of the White birches and leave a memento by carving your favorite curse words into the picnic table. After all, you paid for your site, so you're entitled to make the most of it.
12. When breaking camp, leave your half-burned garbage in the fire pit and lots of dirty diapers, cigarette butts and bottle caps lying around for the Rangers to clean up. Otherwise they won't have anything else to do.



(Actual Photo taken in Andy's Campground)

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# Under the Flat Hat

## By Matt Cerkel

By the time you read this we'll be approaching the peak of the fire season here in California, so it seems like a good time to discuss the requirements to be a basic wildland firefighter, some wildland fire safety resources, online resources that you can add to your mobile device, and finally the Ten Standard Firefighting Orders, 18 Watch Out Situations and LCES.

Under the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) and California Incident Command Certification System (CICCS) the basic wildland firefighter is the Firefighter Type 2 (FFT2). An FFT2 is required to pass the "arduous" level physical fitness test, most agencies use the "pack test," which requires a person to carry a 45-pound pack three miles in 45 minutes.



The required training to qualify as a Firefighter Type 2 is as follows:

- Introduction to ICS (I-100)
- NIMS an Introduction (IS-700)
- Firefighter Training (S-130)
- Human Factors on the Fireline (L-180)
- Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior (S-190) or State Fire Marshal (SFM) Wildland Firefighter 1

Many of the courses are now available online:

L-180- <https://onlinetraining.nwcg.gov/node/163>

S-130- <https://onlinetraining.nwcg.gov/node/177>

S-190- <https://onlinetraining.nwcg.gov/node/169>

I-100c- <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-100.c>

IS-700b- <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-700.b>

For S-130 there is still a required field component that must also be completed to be issued the S-130 certification. More information on this can be found [here](#).

FFT2s and all other ICS firefighting positions also require the Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training (RT-130).

More information on wildland firefighter requirements in California can be found [here](#).

I recently learned about the NFDRS PocketCard. The Pocketcard “is a tool for personnel to locally track outputs of the National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) throughout the fire season. It is based on current and historical weather for a localized area and the area’s historic fire occurrence. The PocketCard displays a general assessment of the fire potential and identifies combinations of local weather and fuel conditions that might contribute to severe fire behavior.” The PocketCard can provide valuable information such as fire danger values related to past large or problem fires or critical local thresholds for temperature, humidity, wind speed, and fuel moistures associated with large or problem fires.

Click [here](#) to see if a PocketCard is available for your area.

A great source for daily wildland firefighting safety training is “6 Minutes for Safety”, which can be incorporated into “tailgate” talks or daily briefings during fire season. Click [here](#) to view their calendar visit:

Here are some links to online resources that might be worth bookmarking on your mobile device to help you track fire danger and conditions in your area:

- To see if there are fire detection cameras in your visit <http://www.alertwildfire.org/>
- To see the weather stations, including RAWs (Remote Automated Weather Station) and the new PG&E weather stations visit [Mesowest](#) and under the network tab select “All Networks” option
- Finally, bookmark the [National Weather Service Fire Weather Forecasts](#). Learn the [zone](#) your local area or park are located in.

Many of the above links and resources can help you stay safe during this fire season. Remember the 10 Standard Fire Orders, the 18 Watch Out Situations and LCES.

#### The Ten Standard Firefighting Orders

1. Keep informed on fire weather conditions and forecasts.
2. Know what your fire is doing at all times
3. Base all actions on current and expected behavior of the fire.
4. Identify escape routes and safety zones and make them known.
5. Post a lookout where there is possible danger
6. Be alert. Keep calm. Think clearly. Act decisively.
7. Maintain prompt communication with your forces, your supervisor, and adjoining forces.
8. Give clear instructions and insure they are understood
9. Maintain control of your forces at all times.
10. Fight fire aggressively, having provided for safety first

## 18 Watch Out Situations

- Fire not scouted and sized up
- In country, not seen in daylight
- Safety zones and escape routes not identified
- Unfamiliar with weather and local factors influencing fire behavior
- Uninformed regarding strategy, tactics, and hazards
- Instructions and assignments are not clear
- No communication with your company or supervisor
- Constructing line without a safe anchor point
- Building fireline downhill with fire below
- Attempting a frontal assault on the fire
- Unburned fuel between you and the fire
- Cannot see the main fire and not in communication with someone who can
- On a hillside where rolling material can ignite material below
- Weather is getting hotter and drier
- Wind increasing or changing direction
- Getting frequent spot fires across the fireline
- Terrain and fuels make escape to safety zone difficult
- Taking a nap near the fireline

## LCES

### Lookouts

- Have experience to recognize potential threats
- Be decisive
- Communicate clearly
- Be in a position to see potential threats and the entire crew
- Be in a safe location

### Communications

- Have a communication plan
- Command to retreat must be clearly understood by all

### Escape Routes

- Easily traveled and lead away from the fire, directly to the safety zone
- If there is cut-off potential, two routes should be planned and discussed
- Establish new escape routes as the effectiveness diminishes

## Safety Zones

- Locations of adequate refuge from advancing fire
- Large enough for all who might use them
- Located for effectiveness
- Large enough for protection without a fire shelter.

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# How to NOT be a JERK at WORK

By Ranger Amy Wolitzer

Coworkers get on each other's nerves. It's just what happens when people share close quarters. We have all heard about hostile work places and sat in sexual harassment trainings. I'd like to hope all of our PRAC members are good-hearted and would never purposely contribute to a hostile workplace. I wanted to suggest a few things that well meaning but possibly oblivious Rangers could do to make work-life better for some of your more reserved or sensitive coworkers. Most of the offenses below are very small annoyances that are by no means on the level of hostile workplace but please think about the effects these common behaviors could be having on your coworkers..

*Full disclosure, I 100% can be a jerk at work. I welcome constructive feedback from my coworkers and others about how we can better support each other in our often stressful jobs. If you would like to anonymously share feedback about how coworkers (including me!) can stop being a JERK at WORK, you can use this google form [here](#). If we get some interesting submissions, maybe we will run them in a future issue of this newsletter.*

## 1) STOP COMMENTING ON PEOPLE'S APPEARANCES

Unless it is explicitly part of your job to address when coworkers are not following written uniform or appearance standards, do not comment on a coworker's appearance. Ever. (Exceptions to this include letting someone know when their fly is down or if they have a freshly-spilled soup stain they may not be aware of!)

To clarify it is appropriate to ask a coworker if they're feeling okay if they are looking ill but we don't really need you telling us that we look like we're not getting enough sleep (we are not) or that our uniform looks a little tight on us (it

is, we are aware of it).

As a side note, stop commenting on the appearance of park visitors to your coworkers. We don't care if you think that person is too fat to be wearing leggings or that you could watch that chick stretch her hamstrings all day. You are revealing yourself as an all around jerk when you comment on people's appearances so please think before you speak.

## 2) ASK BEFORE YOU CHAT

This is going to sound jerky but... please recognize that some of us are at work to work, not to chat. If you're not sure who's who ask. Chatting is one thing when you are on patrol together or doing trail work with a coworker but please be aware that many of us end up with a lot of computer work we need to do and idle chatter in a small office can make it very hard to concentrate. Most rangers don't have the comfort of private offices or even cubicles. I have noticed that, especially in small agencies, technologically competent female rangers end up saddled with the work of updating social media accounts and websites, preparing presentations, reports, and newsletters, and a whole panoply of clerical and administrative tasks. This isn't what we got into the profession to do but many of us are good at it and these tasks need to be done.

Some "traditionalist" rangers may think of this as "not ranger work" and will imply laziness any time they see a coworker spending time in an office / on a computer. Newsflash, the world is changing and rangering has changed with it. These things need to be done and it is easier to complete these tasks if a coworker is not talking our ear off about the latest movie they saw or the rude thing a park visitor said. Please recognize there are times for conversation and times when we're just trying to get some work done. Don't spontaneously launch into a long story. Ask, "Do you have time to chat right now or are you trying to concentrate?". Please be respectful of our time.

## 3) GIVING SOMEONE A HARD TIME = BEING A JERK

If there is something you know your co-worker is sensitive about please don't harp upon it. You might think it's just razzing someone or giving them a hard time but frankly, that is not work appropriate, that is being a jerk. If you're friends it may be a different story... but make sure both of you think you're friends.

If you catch yourself saying something that might be poking a coworker in a



sore spot, check in about it: “I hope you know I'm just messing with you because we're friends but if you don't like it I'll stop.” We know our faults and we don't need you bringing them up all the time.

As an example, I will readily admit I don't have the best vehicle maneuvering skills and have dented/scraped a few trucks in my day. I feel horrible and self-conscious about it. You know what doesn't help? Comments when I get keys to a new vehicle about returning it in one piece or a crowd watching me back into a tight spot. If you want to offer to show me some tips and techniques, offer politely and if I say “no thanks” don't persist.

#### 4) DON'T BRING UP THE BAD

If someone has difficult things going on in their private life don't assume they want to discuss it with you at work on a regular basis, even if it is common knowledge or they have talked about it with you in the past. I think it's ok to feel someone out by generally asking “Hey! How things are going lately?”. If they want to talk about it with you they will. For many of us, just talking about emotional things can be upsetting and ruin our concentration and make it hard for us to get back to focusing on our job.

Perhaps all 4 of these tips can be summarized as “Think before you speak”. We know this is easier said than done but we can all try to be a little nicer to those who share our professions, passions, parks, and offices.

*What tips do you have for your coworkers? Share anonymously [here](#).*

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## **Getting to Know You: City of Monrovia Hillside Wilderness Preserve and Recreational Areas**

**By Richard Weiner, Director Region #3**

Nestled in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains 20 miles northeast of Los Angeles is the City of Monrovia. Established in 1887, Monrovia is a small city with a population of 38,500. Monrovia has owned, preserved, and managed a now 80 acre passive recreational area since 1911. With the expansion of the population and awareness for environmental stewardship, a ranger program (now naturalists) started in 2010. In 2016, the City added over 5 miles of trails, a total of 1,200 acres known as Monrovia Hillside Wilderness Preserve. Here are some facts of their program:

1. Program started: 2010
2. Park users on a yearly basis: 500,000
3. Number of Naturalists: 2 full time supervisors, 10 part time naturalists, 2 recreational leaders, 30 volunteers
4. Number of wilderness parks: Hillside Wilderness Preserve (1,200 acres), Canyon Park (80 acres), and 6 urban parks
5. Total acreage of all parks: 1,432
6. Types of vehicles used on patrol: 4 X 4 trucks, 2 ATV, foot
7. Basic training: Wilderness first aid, First Aid, CPR & AED Use, PC 832 within a year of hire
8. Unique features of the park: Canyon Park has a year-round waterfall (30 feet), fed by a natural spring in the Angeles National Forest that supports a rich wildlife corridor. Frequented by bears, this also provides a unique opportunity for the community to learn about living and co-habituating in these wildland urban interface. The topography of the park provides a unique ecological area including chaparral, riparian, and oak woodland communities perfect for a host of unique flora and fauna in such a small area.



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## Save the Date: March 2 - 5, 2020 2020 California Parks Training Conference



The 2020 California Parks Training Conference will be at the Whitney Peak Hotel in downtown Reno, NV from March 2<sup>nd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Our keynote speaker is scheduled to be [Phil Gaines](#) the recently retired Director of South Carolina State Parks and frequent guest on the [Park Leader Show](#).

Another speaker will be Paul Berkowitz, National Park Service Supervisory Special Agent (RET) and author of "[U. S. Rangers: The Law of the Land](#)" and "Legacy of the Yosemite Mafia: The Ranger Image and Noble Cause Corruption in the National Park Service."

Your conference committee is working hard on scheduling presenters and planning conference related events. We hope to provide you with another great conference in 2020. See you in Reno next March!

Whitney Peak Hotel reservations are now available by clicking [here](#).

We hope to have conference registration available this Fall.

If you have ideas or suggestions, please contact the conference co-chairs Andy Brown ([region5@calranger.org](mailto:region5@calranger.org)) and Matt Cerkel ([matt@calranger.org](mailto:matt@calranger.org))

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Thanks for reading! Please [letusknow](#) if you have ideas for what you would like to see in future issues of *The Signpost*.

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