



RANGER ACTIVITIES INFORMATION EXCHANGE



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Chief Ranger's Comments

I attended the third meeting of the 21st Century task group in Grand Teton this month. Following that meeting, I had the opportunity to visit with ranger staff members in meetings at Yellowstone and Grand Teton. One of the recurring concerns that was expressed at both of these park meetings and everywhere else we go is that of individual liability. How liable are we for actions taken on the job and will the government represent us?

We will be meeting with representatives from the Solicitor's Office this coming week to discuss this issue. They have tentatively agreed to prepare a paper for distribution to the field that discusses the real potential for individual liability (money out of your pocket) and the question of when the government will defend you. We will move to get this information out as quickly as possible.

A number of people also asked why GS seasonal employees do not receive step increases. The question was in turn asked of WASO personnel, and we learned that, even though the Congressional legislation which established the WG pay rate requires within-grade pay increases, the General Schedule (GS) legislation (5 U.S.C. Section 5335) allows step increases for permanent personnel only. The law would therefore have to be changed.

Other information concerning seasonal employment can be found in the summary of the seasonal employment task group recommendations which appears elsewhere in this issue. Special attention should be paid to recommendation number five. According to personnel, temporary positions are intended to accomplish temporary - not recurring - needs. If you are having annually recurring problems filling positions, an option is permanent, less-than-full-time employment. You need to remember, however, that the turnover rate in permanent positions above GS-7 is very low. We do not want to compound morale problems caused by limited advancement opportunities by being less than candid with those who might occupy such a career seasonal (i.e. permanent, less-than-full-time) position by fostering false expectations. That, historically, is what got us in trouble with the old park technician series.

Field Incidents

Grand Canyon: A one-engine fixed-wing aircraft experienced engine failure while flying at 10,500' en route from Denver to North Hollywood on June 5th. The pilot contacted Grand Canyon tower and was advised to attempt an emergency landing on the East Rim Drive. He landed successfully, but the plane's wing struck a tree, causing considerable damage to the aircraft. One lane of the road was temporarily closed, but was later reopened.

Glen Canyon: A storm which hit the park on May 29th dropped temperatures from the mid-70's to mid-40's in three hours and produced winds of nearly 60 mph. The high winds swamped 90 boats and sank five others. The park staff, assisted by Del Webb staff and officers from the Coconino County Sheriff's Office and Utah State Patrol, transported, fed and cared for the numerous stranded Memorial Day weekend visitors. There were 130 cases of minor hypothermia; four were transported to a hospital in Page and were later released. Although there had been numerous warnings to park visitors, there were about 55,000 people in the park during the weekend and many were out of contact with radio or park rangers. All of this occurred in the middle of the Memorial Day weekend, during which rangers were also had to contend with 74 EMS incidents (several serious), 19 arrests, 266 citations, 1400 verbal warnings, six motor vehicle accidents, a car fire and two boat fires.

Joshua Tree: Containers of unknown substances were discovered when a museum curator began cataloguing over 100,000 artifacts in the Keys collection on May 29th. Due to an unusual odor, a nearby Marine Corps Toxic Response Team was called for assistance. The materials were transported to the Marine depot, identified and destroyed. The containers contained 1 1/2 gallons of lethal ammonia (one breath of which can kill), 1/2 gallon of nitro-glycerin (equal to 21 sticks of dynamite), 1/2 gallon of sulfuric acid, and 10 gallons of carbide. These materials had been in storage in the collection since 1976. The Marine team is working with the park to determine whether there are any other toxic materials at the Keys Ranch.

Navajo: Upon opening the visitor center on the morning of June 13th, rangers discovered the theft of approximately \$125,000 worth of silver and turquoise jewelry from the concessioner's gift shop. The theft occurred some time after 9 pm on the 12th, with the thieves breaking a window to gain entry to the shop. The owner had been advised by NPS staff on several occasions to get an alarm system but had not yet done so. Navajo Tribal Police and the FBI are assisting in the investigation.

Death Valley: Andrew Gillespie began a solo hike from Bad Water to Telescope Peak on Friday, June 10th. He was carrying three quarts of water, but drank two shortly after starting the hike and lost the third. Although Gillespie then aborted his hike, he was already stressed physically. While out on patrol the following day, ranger Kent Meacham was surveying the salt pans with binoculars when he spotted the victim falling down. Meacham started an IV to get fluids into Gillespie, then called for a medevac flight. Gillespie was transported to Las Vegas where he was treated for dehydration and hyperthermia. Doctors stated that the victim would probably have been dead within the hour if Meacham had not found him and promptly begun medical assistance.

Revisions to NPS-9

The draft revisions to several chapters of NPS-9 were sent to regional chief rangers for field distribution in early June. Comments are due back to this office by August 5th.

The proposed changes to NPS-9 are the result of the combined efforts of two work groups which drafted revisions based on field suggestions during the winters of 1987 and 1988. Rather than continue with the patchwork updates of past years, this revision addresses a number of needed changes in policy, provides policy direction in several new areas and incorporates significant organizational and editorial improvements. The entire document will be reorganized after review and incorporation of field comments. We intend the result to be a solid document which will provide clear and effective guidance to field managers and rangers. Here are some of the proposed changes:

- a provision has been added which will require superintendents to conduct law enforcement needs assessments;
- authorization for use of the PPD (park protection designation) has been removed;
- the three-year expiration date for law enforcement commissions has been deleted in favor of a commission that will not expire as long as its holder maintains the required qualifications;
- the former requirement to maintain current first aid and CPR certifications in order to maintain a valid commission has been deleted;
- the NPS standard issue handgun has been changed to a six-shot, .357 caliber revolver with 4" barrel and adjustable sights for new purchases;
- the guidelines pertaining to operation of emergency vehicles have been revised to coincide more closely with 36 CFR 4.2.

Park EMS Stats

Here are three lists which provide a good idea of the scope of EMS incidents in the top parks in terms of total cases, advanced life support cases and total fatalities in 1987. Where two or more parks are listed before an incident total, each of the listed parks had the same number of incidents:

Total Cases: Grand Canyon (1174), Yosemite (1076), Yellowstone (745), Glen Canyon (503), Lake Mead (465), Sequoia/Kings (412), Rocky Mountain (379), Shenandoah (341), Whiskeytown (323), Everglades (274), Assateague (240), Blue Ridge (206), Grand Teton (197), Mount Rainier (169), Golden Gate (161), Statue of Liberty (153), Lassen (151), Mesa Verde (138), Acadia (119), and Haleakala (117).

Total Advanced Life Support Cases: Yellowstone (290), Yosemite (189), Grand Canyon (146), Grand Teton (82), Blue Ridge (62), Lake Mead (60), Glen Canyon (59), Whiskeytown (50), Sequoia/Kings (42), Everglades (39), Death Valley (29), Shenandoah (25), Golden Gate and Jefferson (24), Bryce Canyon (20), Chattahoochee (18), Hawaii Volcanoes and Saguaro (17), Glacier and Rocky Mountain (16), USS Arizona (15), Haleakala and Big Cypress (11) and Great Smokies (10).

Total Fatals: Lake Mead (24), Grand Canyon and Yosemite (18), Golden Gate (14), Blue Ridge (12), New River (9), Glen Canyon and Denali (8), Great Smokies, Gulf Island and Mount Rainier (7), Channel Islands, Grand Teton, Big Bend and Glacier (6), Amistad, Yellowstone and Shenandoah (5), and Montezuma Castle, Big Cypress, Coulee Dam and Canyon de Chelly (4).

Fire Forecast

It's no secret that there's a drought going on this year, but it's more extensive than you might think. As of late June, 83% of the 343 climate zones or divisions in the United States were experiencing some level of drought - 8% incipient, 17% mild, 30% moderate, 18% severe, and 10% extreme. As might be expected, fire forecasters say that the potential exists for a fire season in the west which could be as bad or worse than last summer's, during which the National Park Service put a record number of people in the field. And, according to a recent NIFCC forecast, the potential also exists for severe fall fire seasons in the southeast and northeast if current trends continue.

The Palmer Drought Index (PDI) shows some form of drought in 75% of the climactic divisions in the southeast, with severe to extreme conditions in Tennessee, northern Georgia and North Carolina. Long range indications are that no relief can be expected. Much the same is true in the northeast. The PDI shows extreme conditions in northern Minnesota and southeast Ohio, and moderate to severe conditions in west central Illinois, western Ohio, West Virginia, Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and northern Wisconsin. Live fuel moistures are well below normal, and water ditches in the Upper Peninsula are at the lowest levels ever recorded. Long range forecasts are for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

Seasonal Employment Committee Recommendations

A committee of field, regional and WASO employees met in Washington this past spring to "address problems the Service has experienced in recruiting and attracting applicants for our seasonal positions, particularly those with law enforcement responsibilities." A second objective was to review and improve the seasonal employment program and the current application process. Among the participants was Jim Loach from this office.

A number of recommendations came out of the meeting, and a memo was sent to the field on June 14th asking for comments. The due date for responses is July 14th. Here's a summary of their recommendations:

- 1) Increase recruitment efforts and redirect them to different target groups, such as retired persons and park visitors. Because the seasons at most parks are lengthening due to increased visitation, many students are no longer available for an entire season. Efforts should include:
 - sending recruitment packages to college faculties, retired police and travel associations, retired teachers, AARP, schools with criminal justice curriculums, minority schools and others;
 - allocating funds for recruitment;
 - preparing brief statements for interpreters to give which will advise visitors of seasonal opportunities;
 - training regional personnel to conduct recruitment visits;
 - requesting special salary rates for seasonal positions where there are problems with recruitment and retention;
 - increasing the number of schools with criminal justice curricula compatible with NPS-9.

- 2) Revise the Service's law enforcement guidelines to eliminate a first aid screenout for LE positions (already done via Special Directive 88-2) and to provide more latitude whereby LE training and experience can be accepted in lieu of NPS LE training requirements. Examine park needs from a position management standpoint to determine if LE work assignments can be addressed in other ways.
- 3) Request Departmental approval to change the excepted service seasonal qualification standard at the GS-3, 4 and 5 levels.
- 4) Request OPM (through DOI) to lift the current 200-position ceiling on the number of seasonal positions that can be filled under excepted service authority at the GS-6 and 7 levels, as cross-referencing of GS-025 positions with LE duties to the new GS-083 series may lead to significant upgrading of GS-5's to those grades.
- 5) Recommend that parks consider using various appointing authorities to fill seasonal positions and establish "core" positions on a permanent basis. Approaches should include:
 - converting some traditional seasonal positions to permanent on-call positions which would be full-time during peak visitation periods and intermittent the remainder of the year;
 - establishing a core permanent seasonal staff;
 - eliminating the need for larger temporary seasonal staffs through good position management and depending more on the talents of a core staff.
- 6) Establish intake parks which would be used to provide a steady stream of qualified candidates to fill necessary positions in all park areas that need them. This program would:
 - include candidates at the GS-4 and 5 levels;
 - provide training experiences at one or more parks which have been designated as training parks;
 - provide some career opportunities, at least to the GS-7 level;
 - provide training funds and FTE's to parks designated as intake parks.
- 7) Allow seasonal park rangers who were hired from the seasonal register to be rehired for subsequent seasons by any park and in any specialization. The seasonal would only need to complete a seasonal application, attach a copy of his or her separation SF-50 from the previous season, and submit it directly to any park. Parks would be able to rehire seasonals based upon the documentation on the separation SF-50 from the previous season.
- 8) Remind parks and regions that, when an applicant is hired, the hiring park is required to send a notice of selection to any other park to which that person has applied.
- 9) Proceed with efforts to update the automated seasonal application process.

- 10) Establish regional clearinghouses for law enforcement eligibles. Once a park fills all its law enforcement positions from its register, the extra names would be referred to the region for redistribution to park areas with vacancies.

Briefly...

- Several parks have called us asking if we know of any software programs which include computerized incident report forms and/or a spreadsheet for recording incident statistics. We'd be interested in knowing what's out there, too; if you have a program you've worked up, would you let us know? Please contact Bill Halainen at (202) 343-2981.
- The National Speleological Society has regional SAR coordinators available to help advise parks on cave rescue plans and rescues. For more information, call Butch Farabee at FTS 343-4188.
- Ranger Activities would like to get on the mailing lists for any park resource/visitor protection/management newsletters. There are several outstanding newsletters being produced - Yellowstone's The Buffalo Chip is a good example - and we'd very much like to see them in order to keep in touch with park developments.
- The Royal Canadian Police have a video entitled "Next of Kin" which deals with techniques for making notifications to next of kin. If you're interested, you can obtain it from Dive Rescue, Inc., for \$24.95 plus shipping. Call them at 1-800-248-DIVE.
- NASAR will be offering six 60-hour EMT-Wilderness courses and six 60-hour Wilderness First Responder courses nationwide between now and next February. National Registry approval for each is currently being sought. For further information, contact NASAR Wilderness Medicine, RFD 2, Box 890, Bryant Pond, ME 04219; (207) 655-2707.
- Cosmos 1900, a USSR nuclear-powered satellite, will be coming to earth in the not too far distant future - most likely on the last week of August or the first week of September. Preparatory measures are being taken by FEMA, and we have been asked to assist. More details in the July Exchange. Please note that an airspace incursion by the aforementioned craft will not necessarily qualify a park for funding under the aircraft overflight legislation.

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The Ranger Activities Information Exchange is produced by the Washington Division of Ranger Activities. Walt Dabney, Chief Ranger. Address letters, comments and inquiries to: Ranger Activities (650), Stop 3310, National Park Service, Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127; FTS 343-4874 or (202) 343-4874.