

Law Enforcement Authority and Training
National Park Service

The law provides four (4) primary elements of authority:

1. Carry firearms
2. Make arrests
3. Execute warrants
4. Conduct investigations

The present situation finds commissioned officers, seasonal as well as permanent, vested with all four elements. Those personnel who have been issued the Park Protection Commission are not law enforcement officers and are not granted any elements of authority.

We will continue to send all of our new permanent protection personnel through the basic law enforcement for land management agencies program at FLETC as required by DM 446. Seasonal rangers will be required to complete, as a minimum, the approved seasonal ranger training program. Upon completion of this training they will be issued a seasonal ranger law enforcement commission which will authorize them to carry firearms and make arrests. They would not have authority to execute warrants or to conduct criminal investigations.

The investigative function demands a thorough knowledge of criminal and constitutional law as well as expertise in forensic science. The execution of warrants often exposes the officer to hazardous situations and frequently demands that the operations occur outside of our territorial jurisdiction.

The authority granted to the seasonal ranger will be sufficient to meet the great majority of needs for road and campground patrol as well as backcountry service. The seasonal ranger's authority will also include the investigation of motor vehicle accidents and violations of CFR. In addition, the seasonal ranger can provide support service to the commissioned ranger in complex situations.

The allocation of authority is to be as follows:

1. Law Enforcement Commission (Full Authority)
 - a. Carry firearms
 - b. Make arrests
 - c. Execute warrants
 - d. Conduct investigations

2. Seasonal Law Enforcement Commission

- a. Carry firearms
- b. Make arrests
- c. Conduct investigations of violations of CFR
- d. Investigate motor vehicle accidents

3. Park Protection Commission

- a. Issue violation notices for specified minor infractions

STANDARDS

It is the intent of the National Park Service to fully comply with those Departmental standards disseminated through DM 446. The seasonal law enforcement ranger is recognized as a law enforcement officer. Therefore, personnel vested with this authority must also comply with those standards dealing with selection, conduct, defensive weapons, discipline and all other standards promulgated by the Department.

TRAINING

Law Enforcement Commission

All new permanent protection employees will be required to satisfactorily complete the basic law enforcement for land management agencies program at FLETC. In addition, all commissioned rangers will have to hold advanced first aid and emergency medical care and CPR certification as specified by the American Red Cross or the equivalent. Annual refresher and firearms training are to be in accordance with Departmental and Bureau policy. The Criminal Investigator School at FLETC does not meet the requirements for a commission. Only commissioned rangers will be nominated to attend this program. For those employees entering the Service from other Federal agencies or with extensive law enforcement training, the program detailed in the Basic Law Enforcement for Land Management Agencies Syllabus will be the required minimum standard for issuing a commission. Certification of training equivalent to this standard may qualify an employee for a commission without attending the basic program. Regional law enforcement specialists will have the authority to issue this certification.

Seasonal Law Enforcement Commission

Seasonal employees will be required to complete a minimum of 200 hours of training in thirty (30) subject areas, as specified in the Seasonal Ranger Training Syllabus. In addition, they will maintain certification with the American Red Cross for advanced first aid and emergency medical care and CPR or the equivalent. Refresher training and firearms qualification will be as stipulated in Departmental and Bureau policy.

Park Protection Commission

The prescribed forty (40) hour course covering nineteen (19) subjects will be the minimum training for a park protection commission.

IMPLEMENTATION

All permanent protection positions that have law enforcement as an element of responsibility are to be designated as commissioned ranger positions. In order to facilitate this program, it is recognized that those permanent personnel now commissioned will retain their commissions and not be subject to the new training standards. It is the responsibility of each Superintendent to designate, for each seasonal ranger position in his or her operation, the level of authority essential to meet the protection responsibility. Seasonal personnel now commissioned could either retain their full commission or be redesignated to another level of authority. It is recommended that any seasonal now commissioned be automatically converted to "Seasonal Law Enforcement" without any additional training.

A new identification card for the Seasonal Law Enforcement Commission will be designed in the Washington Office and distributed to the Regions. Sufficient copies of the Seasonal Ranger Training Syllabus are being sent to each Regional Office for distribution to the park.

It is hoped that several training institutions throughout the country can be identified and encouraged to provide the seasonal training program. The program now in operation at Santa Rosa, California, is a good example of an adequate program. It will be the responsibility of the Division of Training, WASO, to determine whether or not any institution's program meets the standards before submittal to the Chief, Division of Enforcement and Security Management, USDI for final approval.

In order to implement this new program, it will be essential to develop new policies and guidelines. These new procedures will be disseminated as elements of NPS 9. Specifically, new chapters dealing with Execution of Warrants and Criminal Investigative Procedures will be developed immediately.

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