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# Forest Service Patrol Captains and Patrol Commanders Report: Nationwide Study

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Cover photograph: The vehicle had been stolen in the city and burned in the forest.

## **Abstract**

**Chavez, Deborah J.; Tynon, Joanne F. 2007.** Forest Service patrol captain and patrol commanders report: nationwide study. Res. Pap. PSW-RP-254. Albany, CA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station. 38 p.

This is the third in a series of studies to evaluate perceptions of USDA Forest Service law enforcement personnel of the roles, responsibilities, and issues entailed in their jobs. An e-mail survey was administered to the 79 Forest Service patrol captains and patrol commanders (PCs) across the United States. Seventy completed and returned the questionnaire. Communication with others in the Forest Service was important to the PC respondents, as evidenced by their efforts to communicate at group meetings, talking face-to-face with others, their use of e-mail and the phone, and being available to communicate. A major concern for the PC respondents was the shortage of law enforcement officers and forest protection officers. Forest Service PC respondents ranked their highest job priorities as protecting National Forest System employees and forest users, followed by protecting forest resources and public property. Nationally, a successful program was characterized as one with sufficient resources that is understood by those engaged in or affected by the program, and one that is under good leadership.

Keywords: Crime and violence, law enforcement, forest visitors, successful management.

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## Executive Summary

This study is the third in a series of studies evaluating the perceptions of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) law enforcement personnel. The ultimate goals of the work are threefold. First, the Law Enforcement and Investigation (LEI) studies serve as a followup to a previous qualitative study to learn more about crime and violence on national forests and grasslands, and the impacts on recreation visitation and management of those national forests. Second, the LEI studies serve as a followup to a previous qualitative study testing the key characteristics of success in law enforcement, measuring opinions about recreation visitor and public safety, and evaluating impacts to natural resources. Third, the LEI studies serve to provide Credibility Through Accountability/Performance Accountability System data for LEI.

Specific research objectives were to:

- Develop, pretest, and administer a quantitative survey to gather information from patrol captains and patrol commanders (PCs) about crime and violence at USFS sites nationwide.
- Confirm what crimes and acts of violence are occurring, the extent of crimes, and the impacts they have on public land management and public safety.
- Ascertain whether PCs perceive that acts of crime and violence are changing, and, if so, why.
- Determine PCs' perceptions of the impacts of crime and violence to recreation visitors and other forest users.
- Establish measures of law enforcement success.
- Identify successful LEI programs nationally, regionally, and locally.
- Test the key characteristics of law enforcement success.
- Identify additional successful strategies used by PCs to deal with crime in forest settings.

To obtain this information, an e-mail survey along with an endorsement letter from the Deputy Director of LEI was sent to PCs in the USFS. To begin, the PCs received an e-mail message. Of the 79 questionnaires sent via e-mail, 70 were completed and returned, for a response rate of 88.6 percent.

Most of the PC respondents are male, predominantly white, and many are several years away from retirement. There was some diversity evidenced by race and gender. They have been at their duty station long enough to speak with an informed institutional memory about their experiences. Their knowledge, expertise, and experience represent the best available data we have about some of the challenges PCs face on the job.

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**This study is the third in a series of studies evaluating the perceptions of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) law enforcement personnel.**

The PC respondents are responsible for a primary patrol area that totals a median 1.39 million acres, although the LEOs in their region usually patrol less than that. While on patrol, the most common task is public relations/education/information, followed by issuing violations/warnings or performing investigations.

A major concern for the PC respondents is the shortage of law enforcement officers and forest protection officers. Most reported having cooperative law enforcement agreements with county sheriff's offices, but, for many, their perceptions were that these services were not adequate in responding to or preventing crime. Opinions were mixed about whether PC authority and jurisdiction is adequate for what they believe is expected or demanded of them. Those who were dissatisfied said that an outdated Code of Federal Regulations hampers their effectiveness to do the job, noted that they had to depend on others to enforce state violation codes, or felt that they should be deputized. A large proportion of PC respondents noted that they did not have adequate resources to do their jobs, with personnel and equipment topping the list of needed resources.

The USFS PC respondents ranked their highest job priorities as protecting National Forest System (NFS) employees and forest users, followed by protecting forest resources, and protecting public property. They believed that the NFS line officers with whom they most commonly interacted had a similar set of priorities. Almost two-thirds of the PC respondents felt they had good relations and rapport with the line officers with whom they most commonly interacted. Most believed that LEI's relationship with the rest of the Forest Service should be one of collaboration and teamwork. Most felt supported by LEI line officers, NFS line officers, or local NFS employees. Those who felt they were unsupported cited lack of resources (mostly funding) and a lack of trust or understanding of law enforcement.

Several types of crime are on the increase, according to PC respondents. Dumping of household waste, criminal damage, and dumping of landscape waste topped the list, followed by shooting (indiscriminate), thefts of public property, thefts of visitor personal property, personnel threats, methamphetamine chemical dump, methamphetamine labs, road hazards, marijuana cultivation, and domestic violence. Murder, body dumping, rape/sexual assault, wildlife hazards, arson, suicides, weather hazards, drive-by shooting, and armed defense of forest products were thought to remain unchanged from fiscal year (FY) 2003 to 2004. More than one-half of the PC respondents said they were threatened or attacked because of their job. Most said this was a common occurrence.

Lack of adequate funding, management issues (such as good leadership), and occupational ideals (focus on quality) topped the list of priorities facing the law enforcement professionals, according to the PC respondents. Most believed that the NFS line officer with whom they most commonly interacted was in general agreement with their list of priorities.

The PC respondents viewed forest users (defined as forest visitors, the American public, and the recreating public) as their primary customers. They believed that forest users wanted to be assured of a safe and enjoyable experience while on the forest, and wanted conservation of the natural resources. About half of the PC respondents felt that recreation visitors were mostly safe from other visitors and mostly physically safe from site features, while about one-third noted that these conditions varied within the patrol area. The PC respondents nevertheless believed that recreation visitors were much safer from others and from site features compared to being in visitors' own neighborhoods. The top types of crime or law enforcement violations that PC respondents said most commonly affected recreation visitors were urban-associated crimes (e.g., theft, weapons violations, and break-ins) and drug activity. In general, the PC respondents noted that in protecting forest users, they were hampered by a lack of resources (e.g., law enforcement personnel, equipment, and backup) and the patrol areas' large size and remoteness.

Most PC respondents reported that the quality of the natural resources had declined during the time they worked there, as had maintenance of Forest Service facilities and developed areas. About two-thirds believed that the media portrayal of crimes against resources was mostly positive, whereas 8 in 10 noted that the media portrayal of fire crimes was mostly positive.

Half of the PC respondents volunteered law enforcement success stories. The successes differed and included successes in solving crimes and getting convictions, good cooperation, proactive programs, and operations work. Almost half of the PC respondents described special policing programs that worked well. These included cooperation with other law enforcement agencies, visible and concentrated patrols, community involvement, public education, and public contact. They measured their success by the positive perceptions held, or the lack of complaints made, by the public, NFS employees, and their cooperators, and by a reduction in violations. Programs that were less successful were thought to be so because of lack of support and too few officers.

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**A successful national program was characterized as one with sufficient resources that is understood by those engaged in or affected by the program, is under good leadership, and has a sufficient number of employees.**

A successful national program was characterized as one with sufficient resources that is understood by those engaged in or affected by the program, is under good leadership, and has a sufficient number of employees. Similarly, a successful regional program was characterized as one that is understood by those engaged in or affected by the program, that has sufficient resources, and that is supported and trusted. A successful local program was characterized as one that is understood by those engaged in or affected by the program and that has a sufficient number of employees.

In examining the data for common responses across questions, we found that one concern for USFS PC respondents was relationships within and outside the USFS. Another common concern was having adequate personnel and equipment. Natural resource protection was also seen as important. Safety of forest users, customers, and USFS employees was another concern. Urban-associated activities and drug activity were problematic and seen as on the rise. Current successes in law enforcement were described as successes in solving crimes and getting convictions, good cooperation, and proactive programs.

There are several ways to use the results of this study of PCs in the USFS. The identification of issues, particularly issues that are consistent across regions, could be used to prioritize law enforcement efforts. The case studies of success indicated that focus on problem areas was important to overcoming the problems. In addition, considering some of the successes that have occurred in combination with a focus on the characteristics identified as integral to a successful LEI program could identify priority focus areas for officers and leaders. This approach has some serious implications for budgeting and staffing. Some consideration might be made of the current allocation of resources and whether it is congruent with the issues identified by the PC respondents.

## **Introduction**

Crime and acts of violence are a part of the national forest setting and are making the work of national forest and grassland managers more hazardous and are jeopardizing the safety of forest users. To understand and respond appropriately to current and future Forest Service law enforcement needs, it is important to hear from the professionals most closely associated with these issues—patrol captains and commanders (PCs) of the USDA Forest Service (USFS).

Another incentive for conducting this study was to respond to the federal initiative for performance-based measures. As a consequence of budget cuts and competing demands for federal dollars, the USFS must demonstrate its accountability to Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, the Government Accountability Office, and the general public for its level of performance. Under the aegis of the Credibility through Accountability/Performance Accountability System (CTA/PAS), USFS Law Enforcement and Investigations (LEI) was tasked with developing and implementing performance outcome measures. Law Enforcement and Investigations also wanted recognition for the benefits that accrue to visitors, employees, and cooperators beyond what is addressed in the performance measures. They wanted an opportunity to “tell their story.” They believe that “locking up bad guys and writing tickets” does not adequately describe the benefits they provide. This report includes CTA/PAS performance measures for USFS law enforcement as well as many of the stories, opinions, and institutional memories of dedicated USFS PCs.

This is the third in a series of studies addressing the CTA/PAS component. Previously, we reported the results of studies conducted with law enforcement officers (LEOs) and special agents in charge (SACs). Following this study, we will conduct the special agents study, and finally, the study that includes forest supervisors and district rangers. Results from those studies will appear in separate reports.

## **Background**

Research on national forest crime is limited. Historically, research efforts focused on vandalism (Christensen and Clark 1978), especially graffiti and target shooting. More recently, Munson (1995) noted problems such as the dumping of garbage and toxic chemicals, vandalism, marijuana cultivation, and timber thefts. Marosi (1999) found that national forests were being used as a dumping ground for murders committed elsewhere, especially in urban-proximate forests (those within an hour’s drive of a million or more people). Pendleton (1996) found a 100-percent increase in national forest crime from 1989 to 1992. More recently, Chavez and Tynon (2000) found that clandestine methamphetamine manufacture and methamphetamine

lab chemical dumps, once thought to be the bane of urban environments, indiscriminately endanger both those who visit and those who work on national forests. Methamphetamine has become a dangerous and environmentally damaging drug problem.

Chavez and Tynon (2000) reported on crime in a study conducted at eight USFS sites in four USFS regions. The kinds of crime taking place at these sites were sorted into the following crime categories: urban-associated crime (e.g., arson, body dumping, domestic violence, drive-by shooting, gang activity, murder, rape and sexual assault, suicide); assault (e.g., personal assault, criminal property damage, threats against property); drug activity (e.g., marijuana cultivation, methamphetamine labs, methamphetamine chemical dumps, armed defense of crops); and takeover or violence perpetrated by members of extremist and nontraditional groups (e.g., satanic cults, EarthFirst!, survivalists, and militia/supremacy groups). Later research at other USFS sites lent support to those findings (Chavez et al. 2004, Tynon and Chavez 2006).

These crime categories are familiar to readers of the “USDA Forest Service Law Enforcement and Investigations Weekly Report” (LEI Summary), where nonrandomly selected topics are reported each week. An analysis of 5 years of data (from October 1997 through the end of September 2002) revealed that the percentages in the LEI Summary report mimic estimates from managers’ perceptions of time spent in city law enforcement (such as domestic violence or murder) vs. natural resources law enforcement (such as timber theft) (Tynon and Chavez 2002,<sup>1</sup> Tynon et al. 2001). The analysis of the LEI Summary reports indicated that about 17 percent of USFS LEO time was spent conducting natural resources law enforcement, and that they spent 48 percent of their time investigating urban crime (the remainder of topics and time were for assault, drug activities, and extremist groups). These groupings are based on research conducted by Chavez and Tynon (2000).

#### **Crime mitigation efforts—**

In addition to knowing what kinds of crime are occurring, it is important to understand how to mitigate crime. Case-study research conducted at two USFS sites uncovered strategies that resulted in areas being safer for visitors, natural resource managers, and staff. Chavez et al. (2004) conducted face-to-face interviews with LEOs, district rangers, recreation officers, public affairs officers,

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<sup>1</sup>Tynon, J.F.; Chavez, D.J. 2002. Crimes and violence on public lands post-9/11. Keynote address presented at the leisure research symposium, National Recreation and Park Association, October 16–19, Tampa, FL.

resource specialists, and recreation planners, as well as interviews with those outside the agency (e.g., county sheriff's deputies, a resort owner, public relations employees, and community representatives). The benefit of conducting indepth interviews is in its flexibility. Respondents can "elaborate, question, go off on (informative) tangents, and often provide answers to questions that the interviewer did not foresee being asked" (Lersch 2004: 25).

The interviews revealed problems common at both sites. These included assaults, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and problems created by gang activity or members of extremist groups. Isolation or distance from assistance was also a familiar theme. Watershed events occurred that led to action (a riot at one site and a murder at another). Some of the specific actions taken to manage crime and violent acts and events were (1) development of sites, (2) addition of physical barriers (categorized as prohibition and harm reduction actions), (3) control of parking and motor vehicles, (4) increased law enforcement, (5) temporary and permanent closures, and (6) traffic checkpoints.

Evaluation of the case studies resulted in the identification of key characteristics of success in law enforcement. The key characteristics were force of personalities (i.e., attention to an area depended upon individuals, not on policies), resources (i.e., money and people), persistence (i.e., planning, consistency, and visibility), collaboration (i.e., within the Forest Service, with other law enforcement agencies, with community and volunteer groups, and with recreation visitors and recreation clubs), and communication (i.e., follow a communication plan, get the word out to the public, be reliable and be consistent).

The replication of site-specific actions might prove useful in other areas. The take-home message was that successful crime mitigation characteristics (e.g., force of personalities, resources, persistence, collaboration, and communication) are not "business as usual" for law enforcement—they go beyond the cooperative agreements that already exist.

#### **Data collection issues on national forests—**

Obtaining statistical data to substantiate how much crime is occurring in USFS settings has been difficult because of the way crime is reported and recorded. Agreements between the USFS and other law enforcement entities can result in several agencies tracking crime. Local sheriffs track incidents by using categories based on the Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) guide. Part I of the UCR includes categories such as criminal homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson. Part II includes other assaults, drug violations, stolen property (receiving, buying, possessing), vandalism, weapons-related offenses, driving under the influence,

liquor law violations, drunkenness, and disorderly conduct (Lersch 2004). Part III of the UCR is about assists to USFS LEOs and assists to the public, where state or local law enforcement personnel contribute to USFS enforcement efforts. Although this information can be made available, local LEOs/sheriffs, in general, do not specifically tie data to incidents on USFS lands—it is all combined.

Forest Service LEI has its own database to track crime incidents, also using categories from the UCR guide. In addition, the database has categories specific to forest or land management (e.g., campfire where prohibited, camping where prohibited, violating curfew). It tracks observations of problems, verbal warnings, and written warnings (together these are the total violations). It also tracks tickets given. Total violations and tickets written equal the total incidents or occurrences.

A significant problem is entering the data into the database. Originally, LEI entered crime data into a USFS system database called Law Enforcement Management Attainment Reporting System (LEMARS). Then the USFS transported all their data into a new database program called Law Enforcement and Investigations Management Attainment Reporting System (LEIMARS). Unlike LEMARS, LEIMARS contains not only investigative information but also the latitude and longitude coordinates of crime incidents, allowing it to serve as a geographic information system (GIS) database. Unfortunately, data at some sites were permanently lost during the transfer process. Problems with the new system (i.e., some data were either not recorded or disappeared after being entered into the program) are being corrected.

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**The only reliable source of crime statistics for the entire 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands in the USFS remains LEIMARS, but it does not capture all the crime that is occurring.**

## Study Objectives

The only reliable source of crime statistics for the entire 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands in the USFS remains LEIMARS, but it does not capture all the crime that is occurring. Crime data collected by non-Forest Service law enforcement are not specifically earmarked to USFS lands, are not included in the USFS crime database, and are not available for analysis. Therefore, we decided to survey law enforcement personnel directly to obtain their perceptions rather than analyzing incomplete records of actual crime/incidents. Previous research suggested that PCs with several years of experience might best know about crime and how crime incidents have changed over time. Specific research objectives were to:

- Develop, pretest, and administer a quantitative survey instrument to gather information from PCs about crime and violence at USFS sites nationwide.
- Confirm what crimes and acts of violence are occurring, the extent of crimes, and the impacts they have on public land management and public safety.

- Ascertain whether PCs perceive that acts of crime and violence are changing, and, if so, why.
- Determine PCs' perceptions of the impacts of crime and violence on recreation visitors and other forest users.
- Establish measures of law enforcement success.
- Identify successful LEI programs nationally, regionally, and locally.
- Test the key characteristics of law enforcement success.
- Identify additional successful strategies used by PCs to deal with crime in forest settings.

## **Methods**

Several individuals reviewed the first draft of the questionnaire, including staff within LEI. We enlisted the cooperation and participation of all PCs across the United States by including an endorsement letter from the LEI deputy director. We administered the questionnaire via e-mail between June and July 2005.

There were 48 questions, both closed- and open-ended,<sup>2</sup> on the questionnaire eliciting information about crime and violence that had occurred within the past year on each respective administrative unit. Four questions measured experience levels of respondents: years in law enforcement, years with USFS, years worked as a PC with the USFS, and years at current duty station. Questions that focused on respondents' areas of responsibility asked about the number of acres respondents normally patrol as well as the number they are responsible for, the patrol setting (e.g., urban, semirural, remote), and the number of incidents they were personally involved in. We also asked them to characterize their most common public contacts and to describe how they communicate with others in the USFS.

The PCs were asked a series of questions related to enforcement levels on an average day. This included questions about cooperation with other agencies/groups, and perceptions about the adequacy of that coverage. Questions also addressed perceptions about authority and jurisdiction as well as resources necessary to do the job.

Questions that focused on their roles in the USFS asked how their job fits into the USFS, what they perceived as their highest work priority, what they believe the relationship of LEI with the rest of the USFS should be, and where LEI fits

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<sup>2</sup> Questions with no response categories provided to respondents are called open-ended. Responses are divided into response categories after reading all responses. Many respondent comments have been paraphrased to help ensure confidentiality.

within the organization and programs. We also asked if the line officer they most commonly interact with knows and understands what PCs do, and if they feel supported.

To get at the issues PCs believe are important, we asked them if 28 different types of crime, law enforcement violations, and other patrol activities had increased, decreased, or remained about the same from fiscal year (FY) 2003 to 2004. We asked PCs to identify activities they found more common during the week, during daytime hours, or when areas were more crowded. We also asked PCs if they had ever been threatened or attacked because of their job.

The PCs were asked two open-ended questions about priorities. In the first, we asked about priority issues facing the law enforcement profession in the USFS today. In the second, we asked how the priorities of the line officer they most commonly interact with compares with LEI priorities.

Several questions focused on USFS customers. Using open-ended questions, we asked PCs to identify their customers and what they think customers want. We also asked them to characterize recreation visitor safety and any special problems they have protecting forest users in general. We also asked about the media portrayal of crimes against forest users.

The PCs were asked if the quality of the natural resources had degraded, improved, or remained about the same. We asked if maintenance of facilities and developed areas had changed. We also asked about media portrayals of fire crimes and crimes against resources.

Several open-ended questions were used to identify measures of law enforcement success, including what PCs believed worked well and what they tried that did not work. We asked PCs to characterize a successful LEI program nationally, regionally, and locally.

The survey closed with a number of sociodemographic questions. There was also an opportunity for PCs to add final thoughts. A copy of the questionnaire used is included in the appendix.

The e-mail survey was administered according to Dillman's Total Design Method (Dillman 2000). To begin, the PCs received an e-mail message from the Deputy Director of LEI. Next, they received a questionnaire and a personalized letter from us. The next e-mail was a "postcard" reminder sent one week later. In subsequent e-mail contacts the respondent received another copy of the questionnaire. Completed questionnaires were returned in several ways: via e-mail, FAX, FedEx, or through the U.S. postal system.

## Data Analysis

The data were entered into an SPSS v. 12 software program.<sup>3</sup> We ran frequencies on all variables to confirm data integrity. SPSS was used to analyze all variables. Either percentages or averages (and standard deviations) are provided, as appropriate.

## Results

Of the 79 questionnaires sent via e-mail, 70 were completed and returned, for a response rate of 88.6 percent. Results are reported for all respondents unless noted otherwise.

### Demographics

Sociodemographic questions used to describe the respondent population addressed gender, age, race/ethnicity, and education level. Most of the PC respondents were male (86 percent). They averaged 49.5 years of age ( $n = 69$ ;  $SD = 5.35$ ).

The majority of PC respondents were White (74 percent), although some were Native American (6 percent), African American (3 percent), or multiracial (3 percent). There was also one Latino and one Asian, and several others who declined to identify race/ethnicity (10 percent). Years of school completed averaged 15.4 years ( $n = 63$ ;  $SD = 1.81$ ), with 43 percent holding an academic degree related to their work in law enforcement.

Four questions measured experience. The PC respondents had been in law enforcement an average of 19.7 years ( $n = 69$ ;  $SD = 5.58$ ) and with the Forest Service an average of 23.6 years ( $n = 69$ ;  $SD = 8.29$ ). Number of years as a LEO for the Forest Service ranged from 0 to 27 with an average of 15.3 years ( $n = 69$ ;  $SD = 5.85$ ). Number of years as a patrol captain or patrol commander for the Forest Service ranged from 1 to 17 years with an average of 5.7 years ( $n = 69$ ;  $SD = 3.32$ ).

### Background on Area of Responsibility

The PC respondents were responsible for providing law enforcement coverage for a median 2.1 million acres in their primary area of responsibility ( $n = 67$ ), and further noted that the LEOs in their area of responsibility normally accessed a median 1.39 million acres for patrol purposes ( $n = 52$ ). The PC respondents reported there were a median 6 LEOs ( $n = 69$ ) employed in their region.

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<sup>3</sup>The use of trade or firm names in this publication is for reader information and does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture of any product or service.

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**Public relations/ education/information was rated “1” by 47 percent, violation notices/warnings/ investigations was rated “1” by 43 percent, and non-violator public assistance was rated “1” by 4 percent.**

The setting of the patrol area of responsibility differed. On average, the percentage of area of responsibility was characterized as 31 percent rural (n = 51; SD = 19.78), 29 percent urban/urban interface (n = 51; SD = 26.73), 22 percent semirural (n = 52; SD = 15.12), and 19 percent extremely remote (n = 51; SD = 17.32).

Median total incidents (warning notices, violation notices, incident reports, and state violations) reported in LEIMARS for FY2004 in their region was 3,325 (n = 54). Only three PCs reported how their region captures and reports other incidents not reported in LEIMARS. They provided three methods: law enforcement performance, partners/cooperators, and officer’s daily logs.

The PC respondents were asked to rate 1 to 5 their most common activity during public contacts (1 is most common). Public relations/education/information was rated “1” by 47 percent, violation notices/warnings/investigations was rated “1” by 43 percent, and non-violator public assistance was rated “1” by 4 percent.

The PC respondents communicated with others in the Forest Service through various means. Note that this question had no responses provided to respondents. More than one-half said they communicated at group functions (57 percent; e.g., attend weekly staff meetings). Other communications methods included:

- 44 percent said they talked face-to-face
- 30 percent said they sent e-mail messages
- 29 percent said they talked by phone
- 16 percent made themselves available to communicate
- 9 percent go to NFS job sites
- 7 percent provided weekly reports
- 17 percent had other comments:
  - Community outreach and media relations have been cut due to funding.
  - There is little administrative support so we rely on supervisor time or LEO time to carry messages to the organization.

## Enforcement Level and Cooperation

On an average day, there was a median of 6 LEOs responsible for law enforcement patrols or regulatory compliance in the LEO patrol area of responsibility (range 1 to 63; n = 70). Also, on an average day, a median of 25 Forest Protection Officers (FPOs) was responsible for law enforcement patrols or regulatory compliance in the patrol area of responsibility (range 0 to 502; n = 67).

Almost all (99 percent) PC respondents reported there were too few LEOs in their patrol area of responsibility, and more than 4 in 10 (43 percent) reported too few FPOs in their patrol area of responsibility. One percent reported the amount of

LEOs in their patrol area of responsibility was about right, and 37 percent reported the amount of FPOs in their patrol area of responsibility was about right.

The majority of PC respondents (97 percent) reported having cooperative agreements with other law enforcement agencies. Most reported agreements with county sheriff's offices (93 percent) or with state police (21 percent). Some had similar agreements with city/town/community law enforcement (19 percent), or others (4 percent).

We asked on an average day how many sworn personnel from other law enforcement agencies provide Forest Service **reimbursed** law enforcement services on or affecting the NFS in the patrol area of responsibility. City/town/community law enforcement ranged from none to 7 (n = 20), with a median of zero sworn personnel. County sheriff's office law enforcement ranged from none to 100 (n = 56) with a median of 3 sworn personnel. State police law enforcement ranged from none to 4 (n = 16), with a median of zero sworn personnel.

We also asked whether these **reimbursed** patrols offer adequate services in responding to or preventing crime. Perceptions about services from city/town/community law enforcement for those who had them differed greatly with about 6 in 10 who reported they were adequate, while 36 percent reported they were inadequate. Perceptions about services from county sheriff's law enforcement for those who had them also differed with 73 percent who reported them to be inadequate and 37 percent who reported them to be adequate. Perceptions about services from state police law enforcement for those who had them differed greatly with about two-thirds who reported they were adequate (64 percent) and about one-third (36 percent) who reported they were inadequate.

We asked on an average day how many sworn personnel from other law enforcement agencies provided **nonreimbursed** law enforcement services on or affecting the NFS in the patrol area of responsibility. City/town/community law enforcement ranged from none to 30 (n = 17), with a sworn personnel median of 1. County sheriff's office law enforcement ranged from none to 100 (n = 38) with a median of 2 sworn personnel. State police law enforcement ranged from none to 40 (n = 36), with a median of 2 sworn personnel. "Other" law enforcement ranged from none to 15 (n = 23), with a median of 3 sworn personnel. "Other" included Fish & Game, Fish & Wildlife, Game Officers/Wardens, and Division of Wildlife/Conservation.

We also asked whether these **nonreimbursed** patrols offer adequate services in responding to or preventing crime. Perceptions about services from city/town/community law enforcement for those who had them were fairly evenly split—45 percent reported they were adequate and 55 percent reported they were not.

Perceptions about services from county sheriff's law enforcement for those who had them were mostly negative with more than 8 in 10 saying they were inadequate (86 percent). Perceptions about services from state police for those who had them were mostly negative with more than half saying they were inadequate (64 percent).

Seven in 10 PC respondents reported that their authority and jurisdiction was inadequate for what they feel is expected or demanded of them internally and externally (70 percent). A total of 63 comments addressed concerns. These were grouped into four categories of responses: having to depend on others, the need to deputize LEOs, having out-of-date regulations to deal with, and "other." Some examples follow:

- 37 percent said LEI had out-of-date regulations to deal with:
  - There is no authority to enforce personal property crimes such as "car clouting" at trailheads or personal possession of narcotics.
  - The Code of Federal Regulations (CFRs) is outdated for what is going on and encountered on national forest lands.
- 25 percent said they had to depend on others:
  - We would be of greater service to the public and others if we had assimilated crime authority (true concurrent jurisdiction).
  - We do not have the authority to take action on many state law violations and must call a deputy or refer them to the local sheriff's office.
- 21 percent felt that LEOs should be deputized:
  - LEOs should have full "peace officer" authority.
  - Need to add authority to enforce state laws.
- 17 percent had other comments:
  - Some cooperating law enforcement agencies do not understand our limited authorities and jurisdictions.
  - We need to be able to deal with serious crimes on the forest.

Almost all PC respondents (96 percent) reported not having adequate resources to do their job. We asked what additional resources they might need. We received a total 122 responses that we grouped into six categories: personnel issues, equipment, fiscal constraints, deputizing LEOs, up-to-date regulations, and other. Some examples of each category follow:

- 48 percent said they needed additional personnel:
  - Many duties I now have should go to an administrative assistant.
  - We are understaffed and cannot handle the huge marijuana cultivation on our forests, nor can we handle recreation visitation
  - We need an increase in staffing

- 23 percent said they needed additional equipment
- 22 percent said they needed fiscal increases:
  - Need monies for travel and specialized equipment.
  - Need adequate funding for quality training.
- 2 percent said there is a need to deputize LEOs
- 2 percent said they needed up-to-date regulations
- 3 percent had other comments

## Roles

The PC respondents reported their highest priority as protecting National Forest System (NFS) employees, followed by protecting forest users (table 1). They were also asked to rank 1 to 4 what they believed the NFS line officer they most commonly interacted with thought was the highest priority: protecting forest users; protecting resources; protecting NFS employees; or protecting public property. The PC respondents reported their perception that the NFS line officers' highest priority was protecting NFS employees, followed by protecting forest users.

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**The PC respondents reported their highest priority as protecting National Forest System (NFS) employees, followed by protecting forest users.**

**Table 1—Priorities of patrol captains and patrol commanders (PCs) and perceptions of National Forest System (NFS) line officers' priorities.**

Priority	Average (n) PCs' view	Average (n) perception of NFS line officers' view
Protecting NFS employees	1.5 (62)	1.4 (55)
Protecting forest users	1.9 (63)	2.2 (56)
Protecting resources	3.0 (62)	2.8 (55)
Protecting public property	3.6 (62)	3.6 (55)

Rank: 1 to 4, with 1 being highest priority.

The PC respondents were asked what they believed LEI's relationship with the rest of the Forest Service should be. We grouped their responses into four categories:

- 77 percent said the relationship should be one of collaboration and teamwork:
  - A partner and team member; LEOs are the employees who often have most contact with visitors.
  - We need to work hand in hand.
  - I look at it as being part of the team.
- 17 percent said they should remain a separate entity:
  - Separate but equal.

- 16 percent said LEI served a protection role:
  - We create a safe environment for our fellow employees and for forest visitors.
- 13 percent had other comments:
  - We are a service unit to forest line and staff.
  - LEI must understand that it is a small part of the USFS in general and that the USFS is a land management agency not a law enforcement agency.

The responses were quite varied for PC respondents about where LEI fits within the Forest Service organization and programs. We grouped responses into the following categories:

- 36 percent said they were equal partners in the USFS:
  - Side by side with USFS management
  - We're an equal and valued partner.
- 17 percent said LEI were outsiders:
  - We are not thought of as part of the USFS.
- 6 percent said LEI was well-integrated:
  - There is no question we are an integral part of the USFS.
- 6 percent said LEI was forgotten/misunderstood:
  - We are last thought of and not considered part of the organization in many areas.
- 4 percent said LEI served a protection role:
  - Protection for people and resources like that provided by LEI is basic to the agency mission.
- 24 percent had other comments:
  - LEI is not taken seriously as is evidenced by the funding it receives.
  - LEI has a role in almost every functional area of the agency.

About three-quarters (73 percent) of the PC respondents reported that they had good relations and rapport with the NFS line officer:

- 73 percent said there were good relations/rapport:
  - Many line officers seek out law enforcement advice.
  - I have a really good relationship with the forest supervisor.
  - The line officer has a very good understanding of how we operate and [how] we do the things we do.

- 7 percent said LEOs provided information to enhance understanding
- 1 percent said they made frequent contacts

Other relations were not as good:

- 36 percent said NFS line officers did not understand the complexity/hazards of the LEO job:
  - The majority of the staff officers do not understand or care that we cannot meet all the requests for service that we receive.
  - I do not believe that any of the district rangers are aware of what I have to do or my workload.
- 10 percent said the NFS line officer did not want information or details
- 4 percent said the NFS line officer needed training and ride-alongs
- 3 percent had other comments:
  - They have often said they would spend time with me, but that has not ever happened.

The majority of PC respondents (64 percent) felt supported by LEI line officers.

Those who did not feel supported by LEI line provided 38 responses:

- 29 percent said there was a lack of resources:
  - Internal strife over limited dollars is the biggest issue.
  - I don't see LEI in the Washington office trying to inform subcommittee members about the funding problems we have.
- 21 percent said there was a lack of trust/understanding:
  - LEI line officer seems to have either no experience with what goes on out in the field, or they have forgotten what it is like to be in the field.
- 13 percent said the mission was unclear:
  - LEI line has lost track of our mission.
- 11 percent said there was a lack of contact/relationships:
  - I do feel supported by my immediate supervisor, but it falls off higher than that.
- 5 percent said there was resentment toward law enforcement
- 21 percent had other comments:
  - My perception is that my job is to support LEOs in their job while upper management seems to think my job is to respond to requests for data and information.
  - LEI line officers are reluctant to change with changing conditions.

The majority of PC respondents (73 percent) felt supported by NFS line officers. Those who did not feel supported by NFS line officers provided 16 responses:

- 31 percent said there was a lack of trust/understanding:
  - Mostly it [is] not negative, but more that, they are disinterested.
- 31 percent said there was a lack of resources:
  - We had a need to fill an opening but not the funds to do so.
  - NFS (and LEI) line officers have heartburn with the “stovepipe” (separate reporting structure from NFS) organization and the burden of having to absorb LEI debt.
  - Funding drops are followed by morale drops.
- 6 percent said there was resentment toward law enforcement
- 6 percent said there was a lack of contact/relationship
- 6 percent said the mission was unclear
- 19 percent had other comments:
  - Some line officers are good, some are not.
  - There is a division between treatment of law enforcement and treatment of investigations.

The majority of PC respondents (84 percent) felt supported by local NFS employees. Those who did not feel supported by local employees provided 18 responses:

- 28 percent said the mission was unclear
- 22 percent said there was a lack of trust/understanding:
  - Sometimes we are an afterthought rather than part of the process.
- 11 percent said there was resentment toward law enforcement
- 11 percent said there was a lack of resources
- 6 percent said there was a lack of contact/relationship
- 22 percent had other comments:
  - Some feel the law enforcement is not a USFS responsibility, and are allowed to promote that view through open ridicule and nonperformance of duties.

## Existing Issues

The PCs were asked about 27 different types of crime, law enforcement violations, and other patrol activities in their patrol area of responsibility. First they were asked if these had increased, decreased, or remained about the same in the last fiscal year

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**The majority of PC respondents (84 percent) felt supported by local NFS employees.**

(FY2004) as compared to FY2003, and then were asked to specify which ones were more common during the week, during daytime hours, or when the area was more crowded. We also asked if the PCs have ever been threatened or attacked because of their job.

At least 45 percent of the PC respondents said the following 12 activities had **increased** from FY2003 to FY2004 (see table 2); in rank order:

- Dumping of household waste
- Criminal damage
- Dumping of landscape waste
- Shooting (indiscriminate)
- Thefts of public property
- Thefts of visitor personal property
- Personnel threats
- Methamphetamine chemical dump
- Methamphetamine labs
- Road hazards
- Marijuana cultivation
- Domestic violence

No activities were seen to be decreasing from FY2003 to FY2004 by a majority of respondents.

At least 45 percent of the PC respondents said the following nine activities had **remained the same** from FY2003 to FY2004 (see table 2); in rank order:

- Murder
- Body dumping
- Rape / sexual assault
- Wildlife hazards
- Arson
- Suicides
- Weather hazards
- Drive-by shooting
- Armed defense of forest products

Of the above patrol activities (table 2), the five more common **during the week** (rather than the weekend) were dumping of household waste (51 percent), dumping of landscape waste (43 percent), criminal damage (26 percent), methamphetamine labs (24 percent), methamphetamine chemical dump (23 percent), and thefts of public property (23 percent).

**Table 2—Perceptions about different types of crime, law enforcement violations, and other patrol activities in the patrol area of responsibility**

	Increased	Decreased	Remained the same	Don't know
	<i>Percent</i>			
a. Arson	20	13	60	4
b. Domestic violence	50	1	36	11
c. Thefts of visitor personal property	61	0	33	3
d. Thefts of public property	63	6	29	3
e. Gang activity	44	3	37	13
f. Body dumping	20	3	64	10
g. Shooting (indiscriminate)	64	3	20	9
h. Suicides	30	1	59	9
i. Murder	14	4	71	9
j. Rape/sexual assault	14	4	61	17
k. Drive-by shooting	6	7	49	36
l. Criminal damage	67	3	23	3
m. Personnel threats	60	7	31	0
n. Threats against property	41	4	41	10
o. Marijuana cultivation	53	11	34	0
p. Methamphetamine labs	57	10	26	6
q. Methamphetamine chemical dump	60	10	21	6
r. Armed defense of crops	24	3	44	26
s. Dumping of household waste	71	1	23	3
t. Dumping of landscape waste	64	0	24	4
u. Trespass of undocumented immigrants	44	3	29	21
v. Armed defense of forest products	11	7	49	30
w. Natural fire hazards	41	9	37	10
x. Accidental fire activity	44	6	43	6
y. Weather hazards	23	6	54	11
z. Wildlife hazards	24	3	61	10
aa. Road hazards	57	4	31	4

Row totals do not add to 100 percent owing to missing data. All percentages based on n = 70.

Of the above patrol activities (table 2), the five more common during **daytime** hours (as opposed to nighttime) were dumping of household waste (37 percent), dumping of landscape waste (35 percent), shooting (indiscriminate; 31 percent), accidental fire activity (31 percent), and marijuana cultivation (30 percent).

Of the above patrol activities (table 2), the five more common when the **area is crowded** (as opposed to when not many visitors are in the area) were theft of personal property (51 percent), domestic violence (50 percent), personnel threats (46 percent), criminal damage (31 percent), and gang activity (24 percent).

Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of the PC respondents said they had been threatened or attacked because of their job. We asked about incidents in the past 3 years. The PCs provided 19 comments that we grouped into the following categories:

- 32 percent said incidents were a common occurrence:
  - USFS officers are ridiculed/intimidated/threatened on a routine basis.
  - Verbal attacks are becoming more common.
  - Harassment and intimidation, and threats while off-duty from neighbor.
- 5 percent said incidents were related to drug activity.
- 5 percent said incidents occurred during contacts with recreation visitors.
- 5 percent said incidents were related to large groups.
- 53 percent had other comments:
  - I had a firearm pulled on me by an older man who was occupying public land.
  - Over my career I have been physically assaulted, bitten, spit at, kicked, and stalked.
  - I was informed that I was to be assassinated for my involvement in a prosecution.

## Priorities

The PC respondents provided comments on priority issues. The responses were quite varied and were grouped into these categories: fiscal, management, occupational ideals, natural resource protection, safety, update rules and regulations, cooperation, and other. Most had comments related to funding. Examples of priority issues facing the law enforcement profession in the Forest Service today were:

- 77 percent said the priority was fiscal:
  - Not enough funding for personnel or equipment.
  - Need funding in order to be proactive, rather than reactive.
  - We need sufficient funding in order to have a viable organization.
- 40 percent said the priority was management:
  - We really need good management and leadership.
  - Without effective leadership, it is doubtful that budget and staffing levels will improve.
- 36 percent said the priority was occupational ideals:
  - We need to focus on the quality of our employees.
- 19 percent said the priority was natural resource protection:
  - The increased demands and use of USFS lands and facilities should be the priority.

- 16 percent said the priority was safety:
  - We need to deal with crimes against persons and their property.
- 6 percent said the priority was to update rules and regulations
- 3 percent said the priority was cooperation
- 23 percent had other comments:
  - We need to dust off the 1996 National Strategic Plan for LEI and begin to educate both LEI employees and NFS line and staff about community oriented policing.
  - I think we are facing the need to do more with less and not getting a clear signal as to what our mission should be.

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**Most of the comments were that there was general agreement between the NFS line officer and LEI priorities.**

We asked how priorities of the NFS line officer who most commonly interacted with the PCs compared with LEI priorities. Most of the comments were that there was general agreement between the NFS line officer and LEI priorities. Some examples follow:

- 67 percent said there is general agreement in priorities:
  - We are both concerned about shortfalls in funding that may affect the careers of the people under our watch.
  - Our priorities are set by our effective integration with NFS leadership teams.
  - I feel we line up very well.
- 29 percent said there are conflicting priorities:
  - A lot of line officers like to deny that “bad” people visit the national forest and that bad things happen in their forest or region.
  - They are very different—they are doing projects and fighting fires, and we are trying to survive.
- 6 percent said the NFS line officer is apathetic.
- 4 percent said the NFS line officers wants increased enforcement.
- 3 percent said occupational ideals.
- 1 percent had other comments.

### Customers

Most PC respondents described their customers as forest users and Forest Service employees:

- 89 percent said forest users:
  - Forest visitors, the American public, recreating public

- 73 percent said Forest Service employees
- 26 percent said local agencies
- 11 percent said the natural and cultural resources
- 11 percent said law-abiding users
- 10 percent said violators of rules and regulations
- 9 percent said adjacent landowners
- 10 percent had other comments:
  - Contractors

We also asked what the PCs think these customers want from LEI on NFS lands. Most comments were related to safety/protection. Other comments were grouped into prevention, conservation, action, use/access, unregulated activity, regulations that are clear and concise, crime opportunities, and other.

- 71 percent said customers want safety/protection:
  - The forest visitor wants a safe, quality experience for themselves and their families.
  - They want to feel safe when using a national forest.
  - They have the right to a safe environment while they enjoy and/or work on our national forests.
- 23 percent said customers want conservation:
  - They want to have their resources protected.
  - They want protection of the natural resources.
- 20 percent said customers want use/access:
  - They want to use the forests and be treated with respect.
- 16 percent said customers want prevention:
  - They want to see our presence on national forests.
- 11 percent said customers want action:
  - They want frequent patrols, keeping the peace, and adequate response time to incidents as they occur.
- 4 percent said customers want unregulated activity
- 3 percent said customers want regulations that are clear and concise
- 3 percent said customers want opportunities to commit crimes
- 29 percent had other comments:
  - They want to see a “ranger” who is friendly.
  - They want prompt, courteous service.

**Recreation visitors—**

Most PC respondents said that recreation visitors are mostly safe (47 percent) from other visitors or that safety varies within the patrol area (34 percent). Seven percent said that recreation visitors were very safe from other visitors, and 7 percent said recreation visitors are not safe. Most PC respondents said that recreation visitors are mostly physically safe (64 percent) from site features or that safety varies within the patrol area (33 percent).

Most PC respondents said that when compared to being at home in the average recreation visitors' neighborhoods that visiting recreation sites is very or mostly safe (73 percent) from other visitors and very or mostly safe (83 percent) from site features.

The PCs were asked the types of crime or law enforcement violations most commonly thought to affect recreation visitors. Respondent comments differed widely. We grouped responses into the categories shown below. Many noted urban-associated crime, drug activity, and "other violations" (e.g., recreation fee violations) as ones most commonly affecting recreation visitors. Some examples follow:

- 74 percent said urban-associated crime:
  - Theft of personal property, usually small items but can also be their car.
  - Disturbances in camp facilities
  - Sometimes gangs are active, especially in areas where there is trash and graffiti.
- 59 percent said drug activity:
  - Marijuana cultivation by cartels is the biggest problem.
  - Armed confrontations with marijuana growers
  - We discover approximately two drug labs or lab dumps and two to five marijuana gardens each year.
- 39 percent said motor vehicle violations:
  - All-terrain vehicles and off-highway vehicle (OHV) violations in the realm of unsafe operations and damage to the land
- 33 percent said natural resource issues:
  - Chopped and damaged timber and vegetation
- 24 percent said assaults:
  - Disorderly conduct and physical assaults
- 14 percent said dumping of household/landscape waste/littering
- 10 percent said vandalism

- 41 percent said other types of violations:
  - Failure to pay the recreation fee
  - Adolescent parties or other large groups
  - Use of national forest for residential purposes
- 30 percent had other comments:
  - Use of noisy equipment
  - Illegal occupancy (mostly homeless persons)

**Forest users—**

We asked what special problems PCs have protecting forest users in their patrol area of responsibility. We grouped respondent comments into the following categories: lack basic patrol equipment/officers/cooperative agreements, remote/too large area to cover, drug activity, social conflicts, increasing uses, hostility/armed use, and other. Responses were varied, but most mentioned they lack the basic patrol equipment/officers/cooperative agreements and/or remote/too large an area to cover. Some examples follow:

- 51 percent said lack of patrol equipment/officers/cooperative agreements:
  - In the past 5 years, LEI staffing has been reduced about 35 percent on my area. This is at the same time as use of the area has increased, as had crime.
  - We don't have enough officers, and backup officers do not know the area.
  - We lack specialized equipment.
- 36 percent said remote/too large an area to cover adequately:
  - Some areas are remote and can only be accessed by aircraft or boat.
  - A lot of area to cover for each officer
- 19 percent said drug activity:
  - The increase of methamphetamine labs and methamphetamine dumps has increased danger to forest users.
- 10 percent said social conflicts:
  - Lots of visitors in concentrated areas
- 9 percent said increasing uses
- 4 percent said hostility/armed use
- 20 percent had other comments:
  - Crowded areas sometimes lead to problems with users or the environment.
  - Crimes sometimes go unreported.

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**Most of the PC respondents reported the quality of the natural resources in their patrol area of responsibility had declined (59 percent) during the time they worked there.**

The media portrayal of crimes against forest users in the patrol area of responsibility was described as either mostly positive (69 percent) or nonexistent (23 percent).

## Natural Resources

Most of the PC respondents reported the quality of the natural resources in their patrol area of responsibility had declined (59 percent) during the time they worked there. Others said it has remained the same (24 percent). Some said it had improved (14 percent).

Most of the PC respondents said the maintenance of Forest Service facilities and developed areas in their patrol area of responsibility had declined (69 percent) during the time they worked there. Others said the maintenance had remained the same (16 percent). Some said it had improved (10 percent).

The media portrayal of crimes against resources in the patrol area of responsibility was mostly positive (70 percent) or nonexistent (16 percent). The media portrayal of fire crimes in the patrol area of responsibility was mostly positive (81 percent) or nonexistent (9 percent).

## Success Stories

A few PC respondents (27 percent) had success stories to share. They provided 38 comments about successes. The comments provided were grouped into the following categories:

- 24 percent said solving crimes/getting convictions:
  - The eradication of marijuana gardens.
  - The prohibition of alcohol in OHV areas.
- 18 percent said good cooperation:
  - A program that brought together the community, cooperators, and the USFS.
- 11 percent said proactive programs:
  - Our national K-9 program.
- 11 percent said operations work
- 3 percent said positive feedback/gratitude.
- 34 percent had other comments:
  - Saved a young child from a raging river.
  - Every day we work without someone getting hurt is a success.
  - A lot of small things that have gone right, but are not headline material.

Almost half of the PC respondents (49 percent) said they had special policing programs that have worked well. They provided 54 comments about those programs.

- 28 percent said cooperation with other agencies:
  - We coordinate patrols with other law enforcement agencies on a regular basis.
  - We train with cooperating agencies.
- 26 percent said patrol/visibility:
  - We have “emphasis” patrols where I bring in many officers to one area to get extensive exposure along with accompanying media exposure.
  - Saturation of problem areas has worked well.
- 15 percent said community involvement:
  - Put on demonstrations at schools and other community events.
- 9 percent said public education
- 4 percent said public contact
- 2 percent said specialized equipment
- 17 percent had other comments:
  - Tribal self-regulation on the national forests.

We asked how PCs measure the success of the policing programs. Most of the responses were related to positive perceptions and reductions in violations.

- 44 percent said public/employee/cooperator perceptions are positive:
  - By the reduction of complaints filed by the public concerning violations.
  - We have many more people willing to provide information on issues affecting our policing program and illegal activities than ever before.
  - Positive comments from the public and USFS employees.
- 34 percent said reduction in violations:
  - Measured reduction in observed crimes and damage.
  - Decrease in crime statistics.
- 9 percent said cases are up-to-date
- 7 percent said preservation of natural resources
- 14 percent had other comments:
  - If training principles and practices are utilized by officers while doing their job safely, that is a success.
  - Officer safety is a key component of the success.

We asked what policing programs they have tried (if any) that were not successful. We received 23 comments that varied widely. These included law enforcement scheduling, increased patrols, drug policing, OHV management, education of users, and other. Some examples follow:

- 22 percent said law enforcement scheduling:
  - Placing a LEO in an area with little support to address crime.
- 13 percent said increased patrols:
  - Saturation patrols
- 13 percent said drug policing:
  - We have attempted to investigate multiple marijuana cultivation sites.
- 9 percent said OHV management:
- 9 percent said education of users
- 35 percent had other comments:
  - An attempt to work cooperatively with a metropolitan sheriff's department.
  - Closure of heavy activity areas.
  - Fuelwood check stations.

The PCs also were asked why they thought these were unsuccessful. They provided 27 comments.

- 30 percent said lack of support:
  - Large turnover of personnel make cooperative efforts difficult.
  - Grants fluctuate depending on the political climate.
- 15 percent said too few officers:
  - We just do not have the personnel to carry the efforts forward.
- 11 percent said too busy/too many priorities:
  - There are incentives for issuing citations but not for these efforts.
- 4 percent said slow response time
- 41 percent had other comments:
  - Cooperative officers do not know the reasons behind our rules and regulations so they cannot provide that information to the public.
  - Efforts work short term but not for the long term.

## Successful LEI Program

We asked PC respondents to describe a successful **national** program. Responses differed widely and were grouped into the following categories:

- 40 percent said adequate resources:
  - The dollars need to be put where the use is and that is in recreation, public information, and recreation.
  - Adequate funding and staffing levels.
  - A budget to meet the needs of the agency.
- 33 percent said understanding/interaction:
  - Acceptance as an integral part of the agency.
  - Integrated into agency functions with good internal and external communications.
- 30 percent said leadership:
  - We need good leadership who stay around.
  - A program with leadership that can clearly define and promote the mission.
- 24 percent said personnel:
  - We need to put LEOs where the activity is and someone needs to work with Congress to make them understand the needs of the field.
- 17 percent said occupational ideals:
  - We meet the needs of our customers and create safe recreation opportunities.
- 16 percent said support/trust
- 13 percent said consistent policies/regulations
- 11 percent said good communication
- 16 percent had other comments:
  - Any program that increases our effectiveness and efficiency in protecting the public, employees, and resources.

PC respondents were asked to describe a successful **regional** program. Responses differed widely and were grouped into the following categories:

- 34 percent said understanding/interaction:
  - Appreciation is given to the people on the ground.
  - We have a lot of support.

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**We asked PC respondents to describe a successful national program. Responses differed widely.**

- 30 percent said adequate resources:
  - Make changes so that more funding goes to the field.
  - Reassess the population and incidents occurring in each geographical location and compare that to the number of LEOs in that area and adjust LEI resources to fit the national need.
- 26 percent said support/trust:
  - Make it so that decisions do not have to go through multiple levels of approval.
- 21 percent said personnel:
  - Use a small staff with region-specific priorities and responsibility for managing investigations.
- 21 percent said leadership:
  - Firm, honest, and smart direction from the director in law enforcement for all regions.
- 13 percent said consistent policies/regulations
- 10 percent said occupational ideals
- 10 percent said good communication
- 17 percent had other comments:
  - Enhance grade levels for special agents in charge to coincide with colleagues in other law enforcement agencies.
  - We need regions to be proactive in developing Subpart C regulations.

The PCs were asked to describe a successful **local** program. Responses differed widely and were grouped into the following categories:

- 39 percent said understanding/interaction:
  - Complete support and understanding of line officers and other employees.
  - Awareness and sensitivity from forest employees that we are trying the best we can.
- 29 percent said personnel:
  - We would have administrative support.
  - Increased staffing, especially LEOs.
- 19 percent said occupational ideals:
  - Provide courteous service to visitors to the forest.
- 17 percent said resources:
  - Fully staffed and funded to do the job.

- 14 percent said good communications
- 14 percent said support/trust
- 11 percent said leadership
- 3 percent said consistent policies/regulations
- 24 percent had other comments:
  - Reduce criminal activity with the number of LEOs currently assigned to forests.
  - LEI works as a team and has excellent relations with USFS management and partners.

## Other Comments

We asked the PC respondents if there was anything else they would like to tell us. Some were positive, some were negative, and others were about the survey itself.

Positive comments included these:

- I love my job, but wish it were as a fulltime LEO.
- Law enforcement has come a long way over the years. I believe the USFS is a good agency.
- I thoroughly enjoy my work in law enforcement.

Negative comments included these:

- The USFS is an excellent agency, but it has gone downhill over the years. Budget cuts mean we all have to do more with less, and it is no fun anymore.
- We have gone from a family-oriented organization to one that does not care about families.

Comments about the survey included these:

- The data collected ought to go to everyone in the USFS, not just LEI.
- I really hope this survey helps law enforcement.

## Discussion

This was the third in a series of studies evaluating perceptions of law enforcement personnel in the USFS. The ultimate goals of the work are threefold. First, the LEI studies serve as a followup to a previous qualitative study to learn more about crime and violence on national forests and grasslands, and about the impacts on recreation visitation and management of those national forests (Chavez and Tynon 2000, Tynon et al. 2001, and see footnote 1). Second, the LEI studies serve as a followup to a previous qualitative study testing the key characteristics of success in law enforcement, measuring opinions about recreation visitor and public safety,

and evaluating impacts to natural resources (Chavez et al. 2004, Tynon and Chavez 2006). Third, the LEI studies serve to provide CTA/PAS data for LEI.

The research met several study goals. We gathered information from PCs about crime and violence at USFS sites nationwide; confirmed what crimes and acts of violence are occurring, the extent of crimes, and the impacts they have on public land management and public safety; determined PCs' perceptions of the impacts of crime and violence to recreation visitors and other forest users; established measures of law enforcement success; identified successful LEI programs nationally, regionally, and locally; tested the key characteristics of law enforcement success; and identified additional successful strategies used by PCs to deal with crime in forest settings. Summaries of specific subject findings are found within the report. The purpose of this section is to discuss some overall findings.

The PC respondents bring years of experience that lend credence to their perceptions about their job and their place in the USFS. They are dealing with a large variety of crimes and acts of violence. Many of these incidents were thought to either remain at the same rate in FY2004 compared to FY2003 or were thought to be on the increase. At the same time, the officers are patrolling large numbers of acres with what was perceived to be too few officers (LEOs and FPOs) and sometimes inadequate external support.

In examining the data for common responses across questions, we found that one concern for USFS PC respondents was relationships. They were especially concerned about the perceptions that others have of them, including those within and outside the agency. Good relationships, working together, and collaboration were ways they would measure success within the LEI program. Most problematic to having good relationships were the lack of understanding, support, and trust.

Another common concern for USFS PC respondents was having adequate resources. This was often expressed in terms of funding, personnel, and equipment. Fiscal concerns were raised often and seen as detrimental to getting the job done. In part, this relates to the shortage of personnel; there are not enough funds to hire new law enforcement personnel. Equipment concerns related to safety issues were also raised. These concerns were both internal and related to the safety of forest users.

Natural resource protection was seen as important, too. Many PC respondents reported increasing problems with forest users dumping household and landscape waste on national forest lands. They reported that the quality of the natural resources had been compromised during the time they worked there.

Safety of forest users, customers, and USFS employees was another concern. Urban-associated activities and drug activity were problematic and seen as on the

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**In examining the data for common responses across questions, we found that one concern for USFS PC respondents was relationships.**

rise. These are some of the same activities described in earlier qualitative studies (Chavez and Tynon 2000, Tynon et al. 2001, and see footnote 1).

Current successes in law enforcement were described as successes in solving crimes and getting convictions, good cooperation, and proactive programs. Several of the descriptions matched the key characteristics of success identified in earlier studies (Chavez et al. 2004, Tynon and Chavez 2005). These characteristics included adequate personnel and funding, collaboration, and communication. These also tie into the characteristics identified as integral to a successful law enforcement program including adequate resources and understanding.

Finally, there are several ways to use the results of this study of PCs in the USFS. The identification of issues, particularly issues that are consistent across regions, could be used to prioritize law enforcement efforts. The case studies of success indicated that focus on problem areas was important to overcoming the problems. In addition, some of the successes that have occurred, in combination with a focus on the characteristics identified as integral to a successful LEI program could be identified as a priority focus area for officers and leaders. This has some serious implications for budgeting and staffing. Some consideration might be made of the current allocation of resources and whether it is congruent with the issues identified by the PC respondents.

While it appears that a successful LEI program is all about the officers and their needs, further examination of the many comments indicates a great desire to work for the public good, keep visitors safe, and protect the land base.

Additional studies for LEI measure opinions of other employees in law enforcement. They will be asked similar questions to the ones asked of the PCs. In addition, we will be surveying customers of LEI including district rangers and forest supervisors.

## **Acknowledgments**

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## **Appendix**

### **Patrol Captain and Patrol Commander Survey Questionnaire**

Dear Patrol Commanders and Patrol Captains,

You recently received a letter from Deputy Director Ferrell about the survey being conducted by myself (Dr. Debbie Chavez, PSW) and Dr. Jo Tynon (Oregon State University). We thank you for taking time from your busy schedules to respond to this survey.

In the last few years, law enforcement in the USFS has faced some tough challenges. In order to understand and respond appropriately to current and future needs, it is important to hear from you. This study is part of a larger effort to capture law enforcement successes so that others can benefit from what already works. We are also partnering with those who seek to develop meaningful performance measures for what you do. This study is one way for you to tell your story.

Completing the questionnaire will take about 40 minutes of your time. Your answers will be coded for computer analysis, combined with those from other Patrol Captains and Patrol Commanders, and used for statistical summaries only. At no time will your name be released or associated with your responses. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any question. Your participation is vital to the study, and to future planning for LE&I. **Responses are due July 8.**

The answers you provide will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Special precautions have been established to protect the confidentiality of your responses. The identification number associated with your questionnaire will be removed once your questionnaire has been returned. We use the number to contact those who have not returned their questionnaire, so we do not burden those who have responded. Your completed questionnaire will be destroyed once your responses have been tallied. There are no foreseeable risks to you as a participant in this project, nor are there any direct benefits. However, your participation is extremely valued.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Debbie Chavez at (951) 680-1558 (e-mail [dchavez@fs.fed.us](mailto:dchavez@fs.fed.us)) or Jo Tynon at (541) 737-1499 (e-mail [Jo.Tynon@oregonstate.edu](mailto:Jo.Tynon@oregonstate.edu)). If we are not available when you call, please leave a message and one of us will call you back. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research project, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator at (541) 737-3437 (email [IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu)).

Responses can be sent in several ways: You can send the completed survey via e-mail to [dchavez@fs.fed.us](mailto:dchavez@fs.fed.us) you can fax it to Debbie Chavez at (951) 680-1501, or you can mail it to Debbie Chavez at PSW, 4955 Canyon Crest Drive, Riverside, CA 92507.

Thank you for your help. We appreciate your cooperation.

Deborah J. Chavez, Ph.D.  
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## Supervisory Law Enforcement Officer Survey Questionnaire

### Patrol Commanders and Patrol Captains

1. Approximately how many acres are you responsible for providing LE coverage in your area of responsibility?

\_\_\_\_\_ acres

\_\_\_\_\_ don't know

1a. Of that total, what is the approximate acres of that area that LEOs normally access for patrol purposes? \_\_\_\_\_ acres or \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know

1b. Today, how many GS-5 through GS-10 LEOs do you have employed?

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of LEOs      \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Reserve LEOs

2. Is your area of responsibility primarily on an urban or urban-interface, in a semi-rural setting, or in an extremely remote setting? Provide approximate percentages based upon acreage.

\_\_\_\_\_ urban or urban-interface

\_\_\_\_\_ semi-rural

\_\_\_\_\_ rural

\_\_\_\_\_ extremely remote

3. How many total incidents were reported in your area of responsibility in FY04?

\_\_\_\_\_ number of incidents in FY04 reported to LEIMARS in your area of responsibility

\_\_\_\_\_ number of all incidents in FY04 in your area of responsibility (perhaps not captured in LEIMARS, i.e. by cooperators)

\_\_\_\_\_ don't know

Do you have a system in place to capture and report these other incidents not reported in LEIMARS?

If so, what is it?

4. Rate 1-5 your officers' most common activity during public contacts (1 is most common):

\_\_\_\_\_ violation notices/warnings/investigations

\_\_\_\_\_ public relations/education/information

\_\_\_\_\_ non-violator public assistance

\_\_\_\_\_ search/rescue/medical response

\_\_\_\_\_ other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5. On an average day, how many USFS people are responsible for law enforcement patrols or regulatory compliance in your area of responsibility (i.e., how many LEOS and FPOs are annually certified in your area of responsibility)?

\_\_\_\_\_ LEOs

\_\_\_\_\_ FPOs

\_\_\_\_\_ others (please explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_ don't know

6. Do you think there are too few, too many, or about the right amount of USFS law enforcement officers or FPOs in your area of responsibility?

LEOs (select 1):

\_\_\_\_\_ too few

\_\_\_\_\_ too many

\_\_\_\_\_ about right

\_\_\_\_\_ don't know

FPOs (select 1):

\_\_\_\_\_ too few

\_\_\_\_\_ too many

\_\_\_\_\_ about right

\_\_\_\_\_ don't know

Based on your organizational chart, approved by line officers in your area of responsibility, how many LEOs and FPOs do you need to add in your area of responsibility?

\_\_\_\_\_ LEOs to add      \_\_\_\_\_ FPOs to add

7. Do you have cooperative law agreements with other law enforcement agencies?

\_\_\_\_\_ no  
\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ City/town/community law enforcement  
\_\_\_\_\_ County Sheriff's office  
\_\_\_\_\_ State Police  
\_\_\_\_\_ other (please explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

8. On an average day, how many sworn personnel from other law enforcement agencies provide FS reimbursed law enforcement services on or affecting the NFS in your area of responsibility?

\_\_\_\_\_ # City/town/community law enforcement  
\_\_\_\_\_ # County Sheriff's office  
\_\_\_\_\_ # State Police  
\_\_\_\_\_ # other (please explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

9. Do you think the reimbursed patrols/enforcement work by cooperating law enforcement officers in your patrol area offer adequate services or inadequate services in responding to or preventing crime?

City/town/community:	County Sheriff's:	State Police:
_____ adequate	_____ adequate	_____ adequate
_____ inadequate	_____ inadequate	_____ inadequate
_____ don't know	_____ don't know	_____ don't know

10. On an average day, roughly how many sworn personnel from other law enforcement agencies provide law enforcement services on or affecting the NFS that are NOT reimbursed by the FS in your patrol area of responsibility?

\_\_\_\_\_ # City/town/community law enforcement  
\_\_\_\_\_ # County Sheriff's office  
\_\_\_\_\_ # State Police  
\_\_\_\_\_ # other (please explain: \_\_\_\_\_)  
\_\_\_\_\_ don't know

11. Do you think the level of non-reimbursed services by non-FS law enforcement officers in your area of responsibility is adequate or inadequate in preventing or responding to crime?

City/town/community:	County Sheriff's:	State Police:
_____ adequate	_____ adequate	_____ adequate
_____ inadequate	_____ inadequate	_____ inadequate
_____ don't know	_____ don't know	_____ don't know

12. When you think about **recreation visitor** safety in your area of responsibility, do you think it is very safe, mostly safe, not safe, very dangerous, or it varies in your area of responsibility? Please respond for personal safety from other visitors and for physical safety from site features (e.g., hazard trees, wild animals, road hazards, etc).

Personal safety from other visitors:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ recreation visitors are very safe here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ recreation visitors are mostly safe here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ recreation visitors are not safe here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ it is very dangerous for visitors here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ it varies within the patrol area  
 \_\_\_\_\_ don't know

Physical safety from site features:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ recreation visitors are very safe here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ recreation visitors are mostly safe here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ recreation visitors are not safe here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ it is very dangerous for visitors here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ it varies within the patrol area  
 \_\_\_\_\_ don't know

13. When you think about **recreation visitor** safety in your area of responsibility, do you think it is very safe, mostly safe, not safe, or very dangerous in your area of responsibility compared to places in the average recreation visitors' neighborhood?

Personal safety from other visitors:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ recreation visitors are very safe here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ recreation visitors are mostly safe here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ recreation visitors are not safe here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ it is very dangerous for visitors here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ don't know

Physical safety from site features:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ recreation visitors are very safe here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ recreation visitors are mostly safe here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ recreation visitors are not safe here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ it is very dangerous for visitors here  
 \_\_\_\_\_ don't know

14. What types of crimes or law enforcement violations most commonly affect recreation visitors in your area of responsibility?

15. Do you think the following crimes, law enforcement violations, and other patrol activities in your area of responsibility have increased, decreased, or remained about the same in the last fiscal year (FY04) as compared to FY03.

	Increased	Decreased	Remained the same	Don't know
a. Arson	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Domestic violence	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Thefts of visitor personal property	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. Thefts of public property	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Gang activity	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. Body dumping	_____	_____	_____	_____
g. Shooting (indiscriminate)	_____	_____	_____	_____
h. Suicides	_____	_____	_____	_____
i. Murder	_____	_____	_____	_____
j. Rape / sexual assault	_____	_____	_____	_____
k. Drive-by shooting	_____	_____	_____	_____
l. Criminal damage	_____	_____	_____	_____
m. Personnel threats	_____	_____	_____	_____
n. Threats against property	_____	_____	_____	_____
o. Marijuana cultivation	_____	_____	_____	_____
p. Meth labs	_____	_____	_____	_____
q. Meth chemical dump	_____	_____	_____	_____
r. Armed defense of crops	_____	_____	_____	_____
s. Dumping of household waste	_____	_____	_____	_____
t. Dumping of landscape waste	_____	_____	_____	_____
u. Trespass of undocumented immigrants	_____	_____	_____	_____
v. Armed defense of forest products	_____	_____	_____	_____

- w. Natural fire hazards
- x. Accidental fire activity
- y. Weather hazards
- z. Wildlife hazards
- aa. Road hazards
- bb. Other \_\_\_\_\_

15a. Of the above, which ones are more common during the week (rather than the weekend; list the letter of the items, for example, b & d): \_\_\_\_\_

15b. Of the above, which are more common during the daytime hours (as opposed to nighttime): \_\_\_\_\_

15c. Of the above, which are more common when the area is crowded (as opposed to when not many visitors are in the area): \_\_\_\_\_

16. What special problems do you have protecting forest users activities in your area of responsibility?

17. During the time you have worked activities in your area of responsibility have you seen the quality of the natural resources in your area of responsibility degrade, improve, or remain the same? How about the maintenance of FS facilities and developed areas?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Quality of the natural resources:          | Maintenance of FS facilities and developed areas: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> degraded          | <input type="checkbox"/> degraded                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> improved          | <input type="checkbox"/> improved                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> remained the same | <input type="checkbox"/> remained the same        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> don't know        | <input type="checkbox"/> don't know               |

18. Rank 1 to 4 your highest priority (1 is highest priority). Is it protecting forest users, protecting resources, protecting NFS employees, or protecting public property? Rank 1 to 4 what you believe the NFS line officer you most commonly interact with thinks is your highest priority: protecting forest users; protecting resources; protecting NFS employees; or protecting public property? (1 is NFS line officers' view of your highest priority)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Your view:  | NFS line officers' view:                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> protecting forest users    | <input type="checkbox"/> protecting forest users    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> protecting resources       | <input type="checkbox"/> protecting resources       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> protecting NFS employees   | <input type="checkbox"/> protecting NFS employees   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> protecting public property | <input type="checkbox"/> protecting public property |
| <input type="checkbox"/> don't know                 | <input type="checkbox"/> don't know                 |

19. Is FS LEI authority and jurisdiction adequate for what you feel is expected or demanded of you internally and externally?

- yes
- no

If no, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

20. What has been the media portrayal of crimes against forest users, crimes against resources, and fire crimes activities in your area of responsibility?

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| Crimes against forest users:             | Crimes against resources:                | Fire crimes:                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> mostly positive | <input type="checkbox"/> mostly positive | <input type="checkbox"/> mostly positive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> mostly negative | <input type="checkbox"/> mostly negative | <input type="checkbox"/> mostly negative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> no coverage     | <input type="checkbox"/> no coverage     | <input type="checkbox"/> no coverage     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> don't know      | <input type="checkbox"/> don't know      | <input type="checkbox"/> don't know      |

21. Do you have adequate resources to do your job?

\_\_\_\_\_ no  
\_\_\_\_\_ yes

If not, what additional resources do you need?

22. What do you believe LEI's relationship with the rest of the FS should be?

23. Where does LEI fit within the FS organization and programs?

24. Do you have any special policing programs that have worked well?

\_\_\_\_\_ no  
\_\_\_\_\_ yes. What are they?

25. How do you measure the success of your policing programs?

26. What policing programs have you tried (if any) that were not successful? Briefly explain why they were not successful.

27. What do you believe are the priority issues facing the law enforcement profession in the FS today?

28. How do the priorities of the NFS line officer you most commonly interact with activities in your area of responsibility compare with LEI priorities?

29. Does the NFS line officer you most commonly interact with in your area know what you do? Further, do they **understand** what you do?

30. Whom do you believe your customers are?

31. What do you believe your customers want from LEI on NFS lands?

32. Do you feel supported by LEI line officers, NFS line officers, or local NFS employees?

LEI line officers:	NFS line officers:	Local NFS employees:
_____ yes	_____ yes	_____ yes
_____ no, please explain	_____ no, please explain	_____ no, please explain

33. How well do you communicate with others in the Forest Service activities in your area of responsibility Please explain and add how you go about communicating.

34. How would you describe a successful LEI program nationally, regionally, and locally?

Nationally:

Regionally:

Locally:

35. Do you have a LE success story you'd like to share?

\_\_\_\_\_ no  
\_\_\_\_\_ yes, please describe:

36. Have you ever been threatened or attacked because of your job?

\_\_\_\_\_ no  
\_\_\_\_\_ yes. Please briefly describe incidents in the past 3 years.

Please tell us about yourself.

37. What is the Region where you work? \_\_\_\_\_

38. I am \_\_\_\_\_ male \_\_\_\_\_ female

39. I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old

40. I consider myself:

\_\_\_\_\_ Black \_\_\_\_\_ White \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_ Asian \_\_\_\_\_ Multiracial  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

41. I have been in law enforcement a total of \_\_\_\_\_ years.

42. I have been with the FS a total of \_\_\_\_\_ years

43. I have been an LEO for the FS a total of \_\_\_\_\_ years

45. I have been an Patrol Captain/Patrol Commander at this duty station \_\_\_\_\_ years.

46. I have completed: 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22+  
High School College through Graduate School

47. The highest academic degree I hold is:

48. My academic degree is related to my work in law enforcement

\_\_\_\_\_ yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ no

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Thank you!

We do appreciate the time and effort it took to complete this questionnaire. The results will be summarized into a report for LE&I in the Washington Office and will later be included in published manuscripts. Your individual data will not be disclosed to anyone.

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