

# Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff 2025 Annual Report

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Division of State Parks | Division of Natural Heritage





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# Purpose, Mission and Agency Role

## OUR PURPOSE

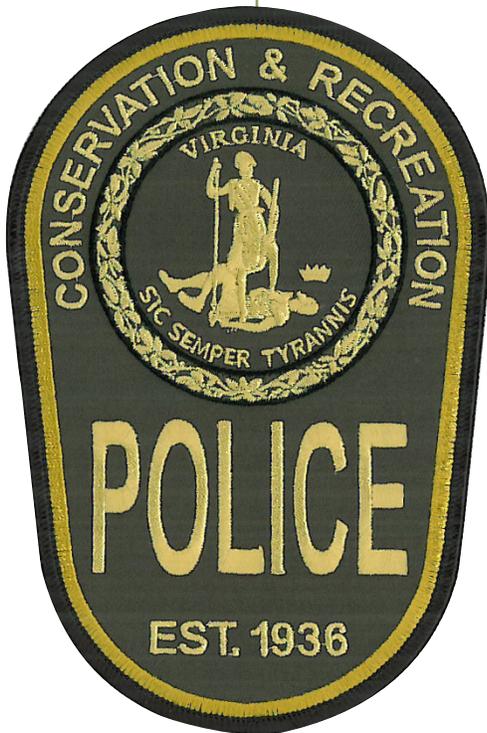
Through an educational law enforcement approach, to protect the lives and property of our employees, visitors, and the greater community to which we belong; to preserve the natural and cultural resources of the Commonwealth; while performing these responsibilities entrusted to us with honesty, integrity, and professionalism.

## OUR MISSION

Preserving the Past - Protecting the Future

## AGENCY ROLE

The role of the employees with the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff requires versatility, compatibility, and professionalism, combined with a dedication for protecting natural resources and ensuring access to all.



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

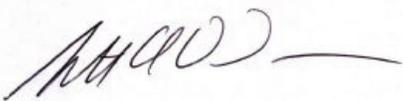
2025 was a challenging and amazing year for the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff. This is the year that we further implemented our *Career Pathing and Career Path Optimization Plan*. With support from DCR Leadership, new District Ranger positions were added to the ranks in Districts 1 and 2, bringing much needed and sought-after resources. Each undertook their role to lead, mentor, and partner within their districts and across the Commonwealth to improve operations, responding to and assisting in serious and complex investigations and providing much needed support to existing staff and parks with staffing shortages. At the end of 2025, we completed the effort to implement a second Deputy Chief position. We were honored and impressed at the caliber of applicants in the pool including Chiefs, former Chiefs, and leaders from other law enforcement agencies a testament to the hard work, dedication, and professionalism of this team.

Throughout 2025, we continued investing in technology and resources to improve the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff's ability to focus on and succeed in our core mission and complete background investigations in a timelier manner, allowing potential employees to access their files and interact on their mobile devices rather than through the mail. We received grant funding which has provided the opportunity to obtain a training simulator. There is great potential, as this new tool is implemented in not only improving law enforcement training but also in furtherance of de-escalation training for rangers and staff across the Department.

While of no small effort by many, 2025 saw the inclusion of the sworn staff within DCR in the Virginia Law Officers' Retirement System (VaLORS). This allows our rangers the benefit due to professional law enforcement in Virginia while protecting the employees and guests, and while preserving the past and protecting the future of our state's natural, cultural, and historic resources for today and generations to come. There are too many to thank, but I want to take this opportunity to say **thank you**. We are grateful for the belief and support, and will work tirelessly to ensure the efforts of many are not forgotten.

As I close, I offer this report for 2025, summarizing the hard work, long hours and often late nights and holiday efforts of Virginia's Law Enforcement Rangers. It is my honor to share it with you.

Respectfully,



Scott A. Vantrease, Chief

Office of Public Safety and Law Enforcement



## Law Enforcement Oath of Honor

Law Enforcement is an honorable profession full of individuals dedicated to the well-being and quality of life of others, and the personnel responsible for public safety and law enforcement within DCR are no exception. We embrace the Oath of Honor as the basis of our individual and organizational strength and our commitment to the community.

*“On my honor, I will never betray my integrity,  
my character, or the public trust.*

*I will treat all individuals with dignity and respect  
and ensure that my actions are dedicated  
to ensuring the safety of my community  
and the preservation of human life.*

*I will always have the courage to hold myself  
and others accountable for our actions.*

*I will always maintain the highest ethical standards  
and uphold the values of my community,  
and the agency I serve.”*

Developed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police  
Committee on Police Ethics in 1997 - Adopted 2021



# Core Values

## Versatility

Sworn and Non-Sworn employees with the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff are responsible for much more than enforcing the law; they are protectors and educators of the public and guardians of the resources. They must possess the ability to perform the other challenges of their position and aid others with theirs. They must be adept in the facets of visitor services and resource protection required by their assignment. Their ability to adapt and overcome challenges while remaining true to accreditation standards, while believing in community policing not as a program but as a way of operating, ensures the safety of the staff, guests, and resources, and is a testament to their adaptability and value.

## Compatibility

The role of the law enforcement officer is just one of several roles required of the employees in the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff. Each member must understand the purpose and function of these other roles while integrating them into pursuing our common goal.

## Professionalism

Sworn and Non-Sworn employees with the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff serve with professionalism. Each member strives to achieve professional accountability at the highest level. The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff was the first of the law enforcement agencies under the Secretary for Natural and Historic Resources to gain accreditation from the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC) in 2010 and continues to maintain it illustrating the organization's commitment to safety, professionalism and the protection of resources and the people of Virginia.

## Dedication

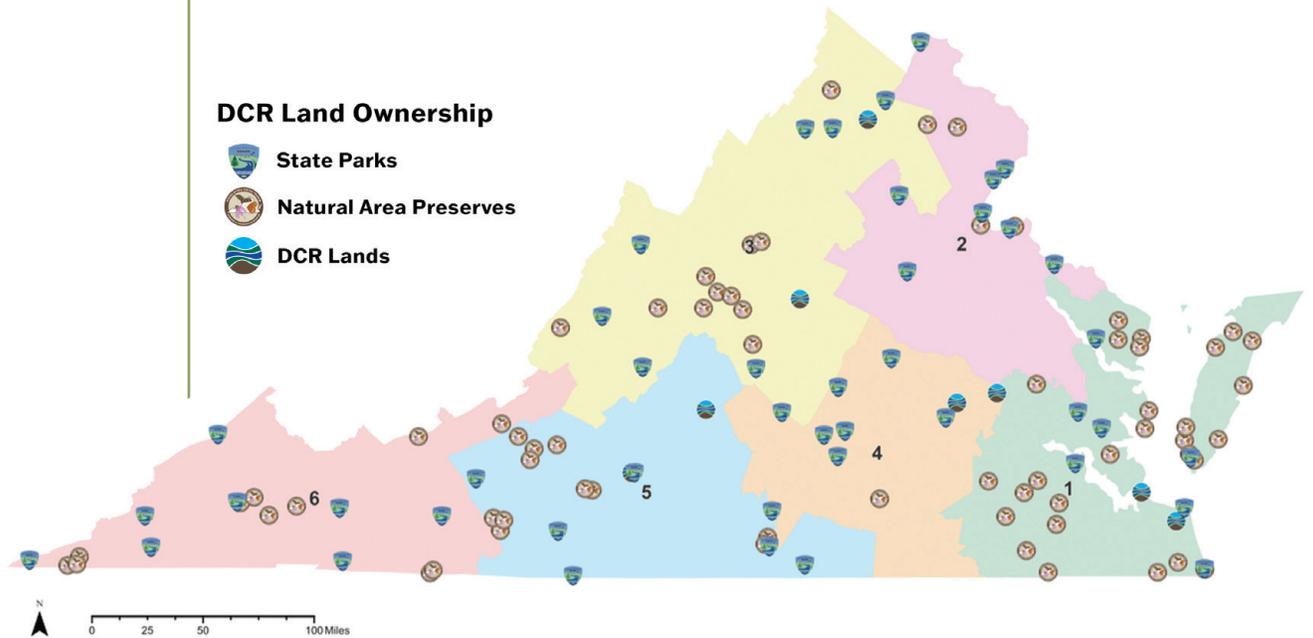
Each member of the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff must show dedication for protecting the employees, guests and natural resources while ensuring access to all.

# Our Sacred Trust:

## Who and What We Preserve and Protect

The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff have a sacred trust, to preserve the past and protect the future. Law Enforcement Rangers work to protect the over 2,350 full-time, hourly, seasonal, host, and volunteer staff<sup>1</sup>, 8.3 million annual guests<sup>2</sup>, and irreplaceable resources (historical, natural, cultural, and heritage) that DCR is responsible for. These rangers preserve resources for generations to come while working to make them available for appropriate use by all. These resources provide a positive economic impact for Virginia, with Virginia's State Parks having an estimated impact of over \$382 million a year while generating an estimated \$40.2 million in state and local tax revenues during 2024<sup>3</sup>.

The resources protected by Virginia's Law Enforcement Rangers include 44 state parks opened to the public and additional land-banked park sites (exceeding 76,000 acres), Falkland State Conservation Area, and 69 Natural Heritage Preserves and Areas (exceeding 61,000 acres protecting some of the rarest natural communities and rare species habitats in Virginia). Combined, the public safety and law enforcement responsibilities for these rangers include infrastructure and equipment which includes over 1,427 buildings and improvements with a replacement value of over \$1.246 billion.



1 Information from DCR internal sources as of 1/30/2026 for FY 2025.

2 Data from DCR internal sources as of 01/26/2026.

3 Longwood University, College of Business and Economics Study THE ECONOMIC AND FISCAL IMPACTS OF VIRGINIA'S STATE PARKS: 2024

# Agency Goals

The Law Enforcement Rangers within the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff are dedicated, hardworking, and highly successful in utilizing true community policing and educational approaches in their responsibilities. During 2025, the Office of the Chief took steps to align the goals and strategies of the staff with the Department’s Mission ‘36 goals and laid the groundwork to support these goals moving towards 2036. Many of these challenges will be addressed through the implementation of the approved *Public Safety and Law Enforcement Career Specialization and Career Path Optimization Plan*.

## Focus on Our Core Mission

### ***Conservation, Protection, Stewardship, and Education.***

We will continue to train and enhance our ability to utilize an educational enforcement approach in ensuring the safety and well-being of the employees, guests, and resources under DCR’s responsibility. We will evaluate operations, adjust, improve, and implement new strategies and personnel to ensure our ability to focus on our core mission.

## World Class Visitor Experiences and Services

### ***Deliver exceptional customer service and innovation.***

We will remind ourselves of this goal daily, undertaking our duties and assignments. Remembering that the shortest contact we may have that day could have a large impact on the person we are interacting with, we understand our efforts may make the difference between someone’s worst day and their last day. To this end, we will continue to enhance our equipment, technology, and ability to respond to those in need and crisis.

## Protect Virginia’s Special Places

### ***Preserve Habitats, Landscapes, and Historic Sites.***

We will continue to protect Virginia’s special places through the development of new strategies and implementation of personnel and resources that address the growing demand for public safety, law enforcement and investigative intelligence, cooperatively across DCR operations for awareness and insight into potential illicit or illegal activity involving or impacting operations, from illegal hunting activities to narcotics and drugs.



**Focus on Our Core Mission**



**World Class Visitor Experiences and Services**



**Protect Virginia’s Special Places**



**Professional and Organizational Excellence**



**Support Agency Personnel**

## **Mission ‘36**

*Our Conservation Legacy-Our Path Forward*

## Professional and Organizational Excellence

### ***Build Effective Processes and Credibility.***

We will continue to build effective processes and credibility through the development, planning, and implementation of techniques, technology, resources, and personnel to address the overall public safety and law enforcement needs of the Department, including complex and general crimes, mental health, suicide, and emergency management and response.

### ***Support Agency Personnel***

#### ***Enhance Skills, Collaboration, and Support.***

We will continue undertaking the development and planning of activities which support our personnel, assuring a thriving culture improved upon by its success. This includes addressing increasing operational requirements of a statewide law enforcement agency that is responsible for ensuring the security of employees and guests annually; and the increasing need for and expectation of additional public safety and law enforcement operational support for the State Parks and Natural Area Preserves during peak needs and special events.



# Agency Organization

## OVERVIEW

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is the state's lead natural resource conservation agency. DCR protects what Virginians care about – natural habitat, parks, clean water, dams, open space, and access to the outdoors. The approximately 100 sworn and commissioned conservation officers within DCR, more commonly known as Law Enforcement Rangers, are highly educated and trained individuals responsible for protecting the resources DCR is charged with protecting, as well as those who visit agency parks and natural area preserves. Law Enforcement Rangers receive training in search and rescue, wildfire management, and are certified as law enforcement officers by the Department of Criminal Justice Services under 9.1-102. Additionally, Law Enforcement Rangers receive commissioning as Special Conservation Officers under 10.1-115 of the Code of Virginia and, where appropriate, hold the same authority and power as sheriffs throughout the Commonwealth to enforce the laws of the Commonwealth with a focus on DCR matters.

DCR's Law Enforcement Rangers are responsible for performing general law enforcement, criminal investigations, and traffic enforcement,<sup>4</sup> and are available to respond to matters throughout the state 24 hours a day. With the guest resources and overnight facilities under the responsibility of DCR, Law Enforcement Rangers often respond to traditional calls for service, including domestic assaults, thefts, alcohol and drug violations, mental health challenges, welfare checks and traffic-related violations (speeding, driving under the influence, and crashes). Additionally, Law Enforcement Rangers respond to non-traditional incidents, including conservation issues (e.g., hunting and fishing violations and aggressive or injured wildlife) and resource issues (e.g., wildfire response and theft or destruction of historic resources under DCR control).

Aligned with many other law enforcement officers, DCR's Law Enforcement Rangers have access to essential and modern law enforcement equipment, operate marked and unmarked patrol units and have statewide communications. Each Law Enforcement Ranger develops significant and personal knowledge of their park, conservation area, natural heritage area, and surrounding community over extended periods while also performing stewardship tasks, enhancing the protection of the employees, guests and resources of Virginia State Parks, conservation areas, and natural area preserves. The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff is divided into three sections based on the type of activity undertaken. The sections are the Office of the Chief, Patrol Operations, and Investigations and Professional Standards.

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<sup>4</sup> VLEPSC 2022 Accreditation Report

## OFFICE OF THE CHIEF

The Office of the Chief consists of the senior leadership and administration within the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff and the Joint Communications Center.

### Immediate Office of the Chief

#### Chief of Public Safety and Law Enforcement **Scott A. Vantrease**

Scott A. Vantrease serves as the current Chief of Public Safety and Law Enforcement for the Department of Conservation and Recreation and was sworn in as chief in April 2021. He has been in law enforcement for over 30 years, starting in 1989, and has held positions in various traditional and non-traditional law enforcement agencies at the federal, state, and local levels. Chief Vantrease is the Chair of Cardinal Criminal Justice Academy's Executive Board, a committee member with the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and an active member of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police (VACP), serving as a VACP commissioner appointed to the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission.



#### Deputy Chief of Public Safety and Law Enforcement **Charles A. Conner**

Charles A. Conner is the Deputy Chief of Public Safety and Law Enforcement, overseeing one-half of the patrol and investigative operations as well as training and equipment. He was promoted to Deputy Chief in May 2022. Deputy Chief Conner began his career when he joined the Department as a seasonal employee in 1990, and in 1995, he was hired as a full-time Park Ranger, where he managed the interpretive program, volunteers, and conducted park maintenance operations. Starting with his promotion to Chief Ranger Law Enforcement in 2004, he attended Cardinal Criminal Justice Academy and began his career in law enforcement. He was promoted to Park Manager at Douthat State Park in 2005, overseeing law enforcement, park maintenance and administrative operations until his promotion to Deputy Chief. He has developed unique skills, background, and historical knowledge involving public safety and the protection of employees, guests, and resources that the Department is responsible for. He has overseen sensitive investigations, major operational reforms, training operations, and has served as interim Chief, leading public safety and law enforcement operations during the height of the pandemic. Deputy Chief Conner is an active member of the Parks Law Enforcement Association, serving as the Department's primary representative to the association.



## Deputy Chief of Public Safety and Law Enforcement **Christopher S. Doss**

Christopher S. Doss is the Deputy Chief of Public Safety and Law Enforcement, overseeing one-half of the patrol and investigative operations as well as accreditation and support services. He was promoted to Deputy Chief in December 2025. Deputy Chief Doss began his career when he joined the Department in 1990 as a seasonal ranger, and in 1994, was hired as a Chief Ranger Law Enforcement, attending Rappahannock Regional Academy. He became Assistant Park Manager at Occoneechee State Park and progressed to Park Manager at Hungry Mother State Park, then Claytor Lake State Park, and finally to Occoneechee State Park, overseeing law enforcement, park maintenance, and administrative operations until his promotion to Deputy Chief. He has developed unique skills, background, and historical knowledge involving public safety and the protection of employees, guests, and resources that the Department is responsible for. He has assisted in the drafting of vital policies and procedures, served as a leader in the training cadre for almost two decades, and was instrumental in founding and serving as team coordinator of the Department's Peer Support Team. During his career, he has overseen sensitive investigations, major operational reforms, and has served in both support and leadership roles for the Department's accreditation since its initial Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission approval in 2010.



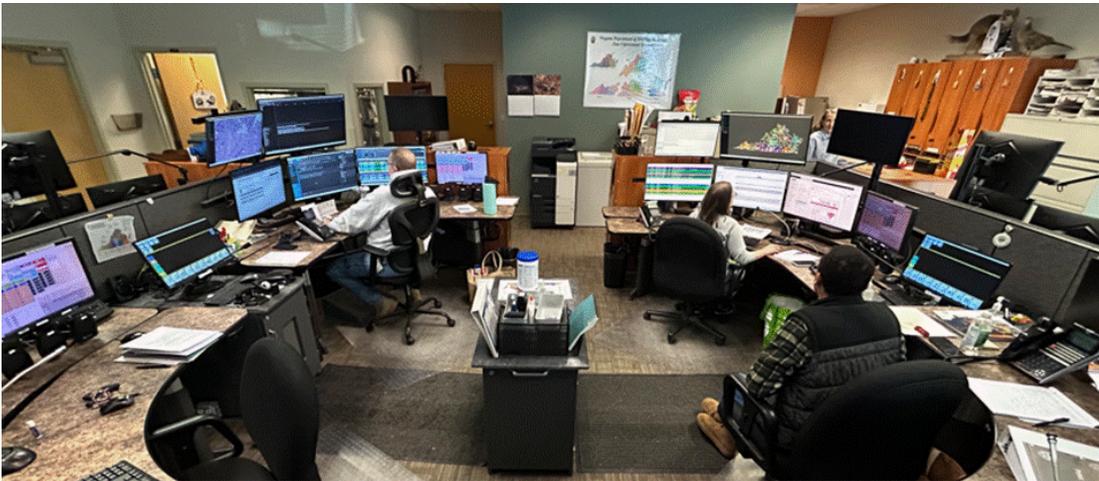
## Joint Communications Center

Wherever possible, DCR has leveraged joint resources in fulfilling its public safety and law enforcement mission while ensuring fiscal responsibility for the Commonwealth. No better example exists than the joint Conservation Law Enforcement Communications Center (CLECC) shared with the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR). It started in 2018 to improve officer safety while improving the efficiency and functionality of their communications, records, and mapping processes. The CLECC serves as a vital statewide communications hub for DCR and the DWR, operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to support law enforcement and public safety across the Commonwealth. Sharing a unified Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system and Report Management System (RMS), and staffed by 10



Communications Officers, two Communications Supervisors, and a Communications Manager, the center manages all incoming calls, emails, and radio traffic while coordinating closely with other state, federal, and local agencies.

With peak operations addressing the communications and safety of over 300 law enforcement professionals and utilizing the required STARS radio network overseen by the Virginia State Police, the center provides the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff with state-of-the-art communications and recordkeeping in a building, a vehicle, or in the field. During 2025, CLECC handled 11,143 calls for service for DCR and a total of 83,782 calls for both supported agencies, reflecting its essential role in ensuring timely response, officer safety, and effective communication throughout Virginia's natural and recreational areas. The CLECC remains a cornerstone of public safety within these environments by providing continuous coverage and expert communication support, enhancing officer safety, improving response times, and ensuring that citizens receive prompt and accurate assistance. Its work directly supports the mission of both DCR and DWR: protecting natural resources, ensuring safe outdoor recreation, and upholding conservation law across the Commonwealth.



## PATROL OPERATIONS

Patrol Operations is responsible for the daily public safety and law enforcement activities under the Division of State Parks and the Division of Natural Heritage. The actions of these rangers include patrol, community interactions, responding to calls for service, and preliminary investigative activity. The focus of enforcement undertaken by Patrol Operations is “educational” enforcement, meaning that the main goal of law enforcement is to help the violator understand the improper action and its impacts on the safety and well-being of employees, guests, and resources. The Law Enforcement Rangers work varying shifts and are available to respond to service calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. All these rangers work together with employees, guests, and community members to engage in problem-oriented policing. Patrol Operations is divided into two Platoons (A and B), each led by a Deputy Chief, supported by three District Rangers and Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff at various sites and areas.



## INVESTIGATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Investigations and Professional Standards is responsible for criminal investigations, administrative investigations (commonly Background and Internal Affairs Matters) for the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff. Investigations and Professional Standards is currently allocated part-time staff supported by secondary responsibilities from the Patrol Operations Section staff.

### Investigations

Criminal Investigators undertake a thorough and comprehensive investigation of alleged criminal matters impacting the Department. Such investigations may range from criminal and conservation matters to death investigations and use the full range of resources available.

In 2025, investigators with the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff undertook 88 Criminal Investigations.

During 2025, Law Enforcement Rangers conducted investigations involving various criminal activity including:

- Larceny
- Robbery
- Destruction of Property
- Suspicious Death/Homicide
- Attempted Kidnapping
- Sexual Assault
- Assault on a Law Enforcement Officer
- Non-consensual Filming
- Fraud, Embezzlement, Forgery, Counterfeit Funds

- Of special note, in August 2025, DCR Law Enforcement Rangers, Virginia State Police (VSP), and Prince Edward County Sheriff's Department responded to and investigated a suspicious death after bikers found an unknown female body under a tree. Ongoing investigation efforts by VSP and DCR Law Enforcement Rangers resulted in the identification of the victim and the subsequent arrest and charging of a 28-year-old male with second-degree murder.

*Media Attention:*

**Bicyclists found woman's body under fallen tree in High Bridge Trail State Park**  
WTVR (8/23/25) <https://www.wtvr.com/news/local-news/body-found-high-bridge-trail-state-park-virginia-aug-23-2025>

**Court documents shed light on gruesome details of High Bridge Trail State Park murder case**, WSET News (9/6/2025) Court documents shed light on gruesome details of High Bridge Trail State Park murder case.

## Professional Standards

Professional Standards include all aspects of ensuring the integrity of the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff. Their responsibilities include agency accreditation, training, internal investigations, and employee and volunteer background checks.

### Accreditation Team

The Accreditation Team ensures compliance with the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC) standards. It illustrates the organization's commitment to professionalism and the protection of resources and the people of Virginia. The Accreditation Team undertakes the ongoing monitoring and assurance of requirements to maintain VLEPSC accreditation<sup>5</sup>.

In 2010, the Department of Conservation and Recreation was the first conservation and recreation law enforcement agency in the Commonwealth to achieve accreditation from VLEPSC. Accreditation provides a valuable framework to ensure accountability by the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff and protects the Law Enforcement Rangers by reducing liability. Accreditation enhances our staff's ability to prevent and reduce crime through effective and efficient delivery of services to the Commonwealth. The accreditation process has also sculpted General Orders and procedures that will best serve the staff, which serves the people of the Commonwealth and those who choose to visit.



Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Chief Scott A Vantrease  
Accredited: Mar 2010  
Accreditation Manager: Inv. Gary Brumfield  
Status: Reaccredited - 4th Award  
Next Assessment: by Mar 2026

### Training Cadre

All sworn Law Enforcement Rangers employed by the Department must complete annual classroom, firearms, and practical training to maintain their Virginia certification as law enforcement officers.

Training is vital to any agency providing public safety and law enforcement services, ensuring a professional and accountable organization. The Code of Virginia 6VAC20-30-30, overseen by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), requires law enforcement officers to attend 40 hours of DCJS pre-approved in-service training every two years.

In support of this, the Training Cadre consists of teams that ensure this mission, such as the certified staff within the Firearms and Defensive Tactics Team, as well as General Instructors, and others with specialized skills. Training the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff and supporting the training staff of our home academy, these individuals ensure safe and professional training, both mandated and non-mandated.

In 2025, no member of the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff failed to meet the training standards and requirements required by DCJS or the Department. This included attending the Basic Law Enforcement Academy, annual law enforcement training and developmental and advanced training, such as obtaining certification as a Field Training Officer or Instructor.

<sup>5</sup> Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission Promoting Professionalism in Law Enforcement Since 1996 (vlepsc.org)

## Field Training Cadre

Those who serve as part of the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff have one of the most diverse responsibilities of any such organization. Being involved in outreach, education, safety and interacting on violations with those who have come to enjoy the Commonwealth's natural and recreation resources is not something that any certified law enforcement officer can do. The Field Training Cadre works to uphold the organization's educational and community policing approach. They ensure that staff undertaking this responsibility (transferring from other agencies or graduating from the academy) do so while meeting not only Department of Criminal Justice Services requirements but also our internal standards.

## Employee and Volunteer Background Checks

Of vital importance to any law enforcement organization is the initial background investigation for potential new law enforcement staff. In 2025, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff investigators undertook 18 background investigations to support the hiring of law enforcement staff.

The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff regularly supports the Department, overseeing and coordinating the background checks of employees and volunteers to ensure the safety of employees and guests. During 2025, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff oversaw the conducting of 2,502 background checks.

- In July 2025, the team conducting background checks for potential DCR, Division of State Park, employees was checking the background of a potential housekeeping employee. The applicant was identified as being out on bond for 16 felony counts of the possession and sale of child pornography. The process of doing background checks on potential employees and volunteers has never had a greater importance, as displayed by this finding.



## SPECIALIZED CADRES AND TEAMS

The dedication of those within the department allows for specialized resources. While involvement with these responsibilities is ancillary and often an additional voluntary commitment, they maximize the department's fiscal responsibility to the citizens of the Commonwealth. The following specialized resources are available through the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff:

### Bike Patrol Cadre

The Virginia State Park Bike Patrol Cadre is a highly trained team of Law Enforcement Rangers that provide specialized patrol and services for special events. During 2025, the Bike Patrol Cadre added e-bikes to their resources, allowing for added patrols on rail-to-trail parks and other areas where needed.

### Honor Guard Cadre

Founded in 2011, the DCR Honor Guard is a highly complimented cadre that provides honor guard services for special events. During 2025, this included 3 events, including the opening of Hayfields State Park and the Association of Southeastern State Park Directors Conference hosted by Virginia State Parks. In addition, a highly regarded honor of the cadre is to represent the agency at funerals of law enforcement officers who passed in the line of duty or notable officials with impact to the organization, presenting flags to families in memoriam and appreciation of their loved one's service to the Commonwealth and Country.



## Critical Incident Stress Management/Peer Support Team

According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Police Psychological Services Section, the goal of peer support is to provide all public safety employees in an agency the opportunity to receive emotional and tangible support through times of personal or professional crisis and to help anticipate and address potential difficulties<sup>6</sup>. The DCR Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)/Peer Support Team works with staff across DCR to address such issues — individual, family, or professional — through referral or direct contact.

The DCR CISM/Peer Support Team consists of trained volunteers who understand their responsibilities and work to assist staff in need, whether providing an ear or assisting in identifying services through EAP or professional providers, such as psychologists and therapists. Additionally, members from the DCR CISM/Peer Support Team work, coordinate, and train with members of the Virginia Law Enforcement Assistance Program (VALEAP) to further their roles and support of DCR staff and peers.

- During 2025, the DCR CISM/Peer Support team responded to six requests with the nature of matters including assisting employees in addressing impacts related to suicide, unattended deaths, and vicarious trauma related to the employee's proximity to traumatic events.

## Virginia Emergency Support Team

Under the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, VEST comprises more than 300 credentialed members; the VEST draws its staff from all executive branch state agencies, dozens of non-governmental organizations, and private sector companies such as Verizon and Dominion. Through the Office of the Chief, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff serves as the Division of State Parks Liaison for the Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST). Additionally, it is the primary contact for any Emergency Support Function (ESF) matters that involve DCR law enforcement response/personnel. DCR is involved in seven ESFs and is often looked to for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery assistance. The Department's ESF responsibilities include ESF 3 – Public Works and Engineering; ESF 4 – Firefighting; ESF 5 – Emergency Coordination; ESF 9 – Special Operations; ESF 11 – Agriculture and Natural Resources; ESF 13 – Public Safety and Security; and ESF 15 – External Affairs.



**VEST**

<sup>6</sup> Ratified by the IACP Psychological Services Section (Accessed 2/29/2024)

## Search and Rescue Team

During 2025, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Search and Rescue (SAR) Team supported public safety across the Commonwealth by providing rapid, skilled response to lost, injured, and distressed citizens. During 2025, DCR Public Safety and Law Enforcement recorded 65 calls for service related to search and rescue needs (61 on land and four on water).

The readiness and training of the SAR Team is vital for operations for missing juveniles, endangered adults, and others, requiring the quick response of trained, professional personnel. Some operations last only a fraction of an hour, others for multiple days. DCR's land holdings are a significant sampling of the Commonwealth's terrain and natural resources. Responding to such calls and utilizing their specialized knowledge of the associated challenges across the Commonwealth, staff from across DCR provide unique insights to SAR operations. DCR personnel are almost always the first to respond, whether to an internal operation or in response to a call for assistance from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM).

Additionally, the DCR SAR Team undertakes ongoing trainings to ensure their skills. During 2025, DCR's SAR Team continued to ensure the team's skills are prepared to respond and assist all in need, logging 719 training hours.

- During March 2025, DCR's SAR Team was featured in a DCR Insights blog by Starr Anderson, Behind the scenes: DCR's Search and Rescue Team. The article outlined the operation of DCR's Search and Rescue Team, highlighting the history, training, and role of this important cross-divisional function. <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/insights/dcr-search-and-rescue-team>
- In December 2025, a member of DCR's SAR Team from the Division of Natural Heritage received outside accolades from peers with the Department of Wildlife Resources for their efforts during a search on Thanksgiving Day for an overdue hunter in Giles County who had been missing overnight and at temperatures well below freezing. While the active search operations were able to locate the person, they were found in deteriorating health, with complaints of chest pain and abnormal breathing, resulting in the request for additional assistance. The DCR SAR Team member responded and traveled through dense foliage and across steep terrain, during which the member displayed great tenacity. With the DCR SAR Team member being the foremost medically trained, they efficiently directed officers and the subject of her needs to provide care, showing poise under pressure and provide calm consistent direction throughout the hour-long extraction. The commendation letter stated that this had been the author's first interaction with a Natural Area Steward and cited the DCR SAR Team member's conduct as exceptional and a sterling example of a public servant.



During 2025, the DCR Search and Rescue Team responded to 31 VDEM mission activations involving 185 search hours and 3,436 miles driven.

# Calls for Service and Statistics

The following data reflects the information compiled for the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff for the calendar year 2025. The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff continually works to enhance and improve its data collection and reporting. Crime information is reported monthly to the Virginia State Police through a uniform system adopted by local, state, and federal agencies under the Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR), established by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

## CALLS FOR SERVICE

Calls for service reflect incoming emergency and non-emergency requests for service and proactive patrols undertaken by law enforcement and received by the CAD system. In 2025, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff recorded 9,834 calls for service, including traditional law enforcement:

- **3,479 Community Policing Efforts (To Deter Illegal Activity and Protect Resources)**
  - 2,228 Foot Patrol Assignments
  - 601 Special Assignment Patrols
  - 313 Park Specific Patrols
  - 147 ATV Patrol Assignments
  - 9 Bike/E-Bike Patrols
  - 181 Public Outreach Events
- **2,182 Violations of DCR Rules (e.g., Noise, Dumping, Trespassing or COV 10.1-200.3)**
- **212 Medical Calls for Assistance (Traditional and Mental Health including Suicide)**
  - 1 Drownings
- **1,956 Traffic Stops (Vehicle/ATV Violations)**
- **439 Suspicious Vehicles/Persons/Activity**
- **19 Lost/Found Property**
- **106 Drug or Alcohol Violations**
- **50 Stolen Property/Larceny/Fraud Complaints**
- **11 Assault Calls**
- **65 Calls for Missing Persons/Search and Rescue**
  - 4 on Water
  - 61 on Land
- **76 Robbery/Burglary Alarm Responses**
- **10 Service of Warrants**
- **365 Assist to Motorists/Public**
- **199 Assists to Other Agencies**
- **26 Complaints on State Property/Personnel**
- **36 Domestic Disturbance Calls**
- **117 Vehicle/Property Collisions**

Additionally, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff addresses resource and conservation issues, including:

- **69 Boating/Boater Matters**
  - 2 Careless/Reckless Operation
  - 20 General Watercraft Violations
  - 24 Distressed Boater Assists
  - 9 Boats Found Adrift/Abandoned
  - 9 Boating Accidents
  - 4 Watercraft Patrols
  - 1 Watercraft Checkpoints
- **147 Wildlife Related Matters**
  - 5 Injured Protected Species
  - 74 Injured/Deceased Wildlife
  - 13 Nuisance Wildlife (4 Involving Bears)
  - 49 Dog Complaints
- (Injured/Off-Leash)
  - 5 General/Misc. Wildlife Calls
  - 1 Wildlife/Human Interactions with Injury
- **214 Hunting/Fishing Related Matters**
  - 62 Hunting Checkpoints/Special Patrols
  - 56 Hunting/Fishing Violations (e.g., Illegal Hunting/Trespass to Hunt//Spotlighting/Decoy Hunting on DCR Property)
  - 1 Felon Hunting/Using Firearm to Hunt
  - 95 Hunting/Fishing/Game License Checks

## EDUCATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff prioritizes educational law enforcement when interacting with violations and the public. Such actions can include educational interactions, warnings (verbal or written), advice given, or diversionary action such as issuing DCR Citations, which do not require the person to enter the judiciary/court system in exchange for a civil fine unless appealed. During 2024, based upon community policing and agency data, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff:

- Recorded Providing the Public Advice 408 times on DCR Related Matters
- Recorded 1,254 Verbal or Written Warnings
- Issued 2212 DCR Citations, for violations including:
  - 1,402 Failure to Pay Fees
  - 642 Parking in a Prohibited Area
  - 25 Parking in a Handicapped Zone
  - 143 Other DCR Violations

## TRADITIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

While the philosophy within the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff is educational enforcement, traditional enforcement methods are also utilized when the situations require. Custodial Arrests result in the individual making an appearance and entering the court system. Summonses are issued and require entry into the courts. During 2025, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff:

- Issued 1,683 Summonses
- Made 80 Custodial/On-View Arrests

## Virginia Data Collection and Reporting

To view Virginia's Crime Statistics, visit: <https://www.vsp.virginia.gov/?s=Crime+Statistics>





## HIGHLIGHTS AND IMPACT

The day-to-day operations of our Law Enforcement Rangers resulted in responding to emergency and non-emergency calls for service. Making a difference in people's lives is an essential part of why the Law Enforcement Rangers within the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff take on such challenging roles. During 2025, Law Enforcement Rangers responded to numerous instances of people in crisis and dealt with many incidents. The quick thinking, professional, and strategic steps an arriving Law Enforcement Ranger takes matter.

- In April 2025, Law Enforcement Rangers at Grayson Highlands State Park were made aware of a possible overdose. The Ranger responded, observed an unresponsive subject, and administered Naloxone, resulting in the subject becoming stable. The subject was subsequently transported by rescue, receiving care for their overdose.
- In April 2025, Law Enforcement Rangers were on patrol in Westmoreland State Park and approached a group after seeing an individual consuming alcohol. Upon identifying one of the subjects and checking them for warrants, it was discovered that they were wanted on a warrant for Failure to Appear – Original Charge: Assault and Battery of a Law Enforcement Officer. At this time, the subject fled on foot and was subsequently caught. While conducting the arrest of the resisting wanted subject, a second unknown subject also became physically engaged, assaulting/interfering with Law Enforcement Rangers in an apparent attempt to free the wanted person. The wanted subject was successfully taken into custody by Law Enforcement Rangers and was charged with 4.1-308. Drinking alcoholic beverages, or offering to another, in public place; 18.2-57. Assault and battery law enforcement officer; 18.2-119. Trespass after having been forbidden to do so; 18.2-137. Injuring, etc., any property; 18.2-460. Obstructing justice; resisting arrest; fleeing from a law-enforcement officer.
- In April 2025, Rangers at Fairy Stone State Park responded to an injured hiker. Law Enforcement Rangers and the Park Manager were able to locate the individual, who had purportedly gone off the trail and ended up down a steep rock face. With the assistance of the Assistant Park Manager, EMS, Patrick Springs Volunteer Fire Department, the Patrick County Sheriff's Office, and the Patrick County Special Operations Team, additional resources responded to provide aid. Due to the terrain, rope rigging had to be set up, and the individual was secured into a Stokes basket and pulled up the slope back to the trail, from where responders then carried the victim out to an awaiting ambulance.

Further investigation by the Patrick County Sheriff's Office found that all was not what appeared, and the victim was not actually injured and had a history of staged rescues in his home state of North Carolina. As a result of the victim's actions in utilizing crucial resources, the subject was charged by the Patrick County Sheriff's Office for their actions.

*Media Attention:*

**Fall from remote cliff was staged by North Carolina man, Virginia rescuers say**  
The Charlotte Observer (5/4/25) <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/state/north-carolina/article305648736.html>

**Man facing charges after allegedly staging a fall off ledge**  
WDBJ7 (5/3/25) <https://www.wdbj7.com/2025/05/03/man-facing-charges-after-allegedly-staging-fall-off-ledge/>

- In June 2025, Law Enforcement Rangers with High Bridge Trail State Park assisted their peers, including the Virginia State Police and area law enforcement, in the search for a person considered armed and dangerous, wanted for questioning in a homicide in Roanoke County. Citizens in the area had been urged to shelter in place after troopers said the “armed and dangerous” suspect was spotted there. The suspect was seen not far from the High Bridge Trail and the trailhead at Elamin and subsequently shot at law enforcement before fleeing on foot. The suspect, accused of firing at a Farmville Police officer, was taken into custody without incident.

*Media Attention:*

**Roanoke murder suspect arrested after manhunt in Prince Edward County**

WSET13 (6/29/25) <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/state/north-carolina/article305648736.html>

**Homicide suspect in Prince Edward in custody after Roanoke murder, shooting at officer**

WRIC8 (6/29/25) <https://www.wric.com/news/local-news/prince-edward-county/prince-edward-armed-suspect-officer-shot-june29-2025/>

- In July 2025, the District 3 Law Enforcement Ranger received a call from Bath County Sheriff’s Office requesting assistance locating a lost/injured person in the Douthat State Park/Bath County Area. Initial information was that the person had left their residence near the park, walked down an area road, and fallen down a steep embankment. The poor cellular service was allowing the party to text, but not make phone calls. District Rangers responded to the park area and worked with the Park Manager in supporting the rescue operation along with rescuers and resources from Alleghany County Emergency Management, Clifton Forge Rescue Squad, Sharon Fire Department, Bath County Sheriff’s Office, and Virginia State Police.

The subject was located by a thermal imaging drone operated by Alleghany County Emergency Management, and upon reaching the person, rescuers found that the individual was unable to walk due to an injury to their right leg, which resulted in laceration, severe swelling to the knee, and numbness from the knee to the foot. DCR staff utilized UTVs on an old fire road to gain closer access to the patient’s position. Once on scene, the patient had to be lowered the rest of the way down a steep ravine and carried out in a Stokes basket for a couple hundred yards to where rescuers could use the UTV to transport him back to the ambulance about a quarter mile away.

- In July 2025, Law Enforcement Rangers were on patrol at Leesylvania State Park and approached a group reportedly using illegal substances. During an investigation, the suspect provided ongoing false information, became uncooperative, and subsequently ran. The suspect got into a vehicle with a friend, and while trying to flee, they drove at one Law Enforcement Ranger and a fully marked DCR law enforcement vehicle, endangering their lives and that of the ranger. The two subjects were subsequently stopped, arrested, and charged with 18.2-460. Obstructing justice; resisting arrest; fleeing from a law-enforcement officer; penalties; 18.2-26. Attempts to commit felonies other than Class 1 felony offenses; how punished; 18.2-51.1. Malicious bodily injury to law-enforcement officers, firefighters, search and rescue personnel, or emergency medical services personnel; penalty; lesser-included offense; and 46.2-864. Reckless driving on parking lots, etc.

## Service to Others

Not only do our Law Enforcement Rangers undertake outstanding efforts to serve and protect the employees, guests, and resources of Virginia's State Parks and Natural Area Preserves, but we are also furthering our commitment to our communities, the commonwealth we are sworn to protect, and the honorable profession we are part of. Being partners and peers within our communities and the commonwealth and furthering our profession is part of our community policing approach.

### SERVICE TO OUR COMMUNITIES

Each of the state parks and natural area preserves is part of various communities, and we owe an obligation to each for their support and assistance. When resources allow, we participate in a wide range of service and outreach activities designed to support the communities we are part of, to say "thank you." During 2024, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff recorded 193 public outreach events, interacting with over 32,000 people.

### National Night Out

During the 2025 National Night Out events, DCR Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff joined with their park and law enforcement peers in attending numerous events with over 3,000 people estimated in attendance at these events. These events enhance the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement while bringing back a true sense of community. Furthermore, it provides a great opportunity to bring law enforcement and neighbors together under positive circumstances. During 2025, these included the following:

#### Douthat State Park

Rangers attended Clifton Forge's National Night Out around Douthat State Park, with approximately 300 people attending. The presence of the DCR Command Trailer was described as a conversation starter with the young kids enjoying going inside and then exiting onto the little rear deck with the door down. Adults asked a lot of questions, providing the opportunity to tell them how the trailer is used for large incidents or more regularly special events, and explaining the benefits of being able to use it as a central location for dispatching tasks, tracking the event, and providing a cooling or heating station for rangers working the incident or event.

#### New River Trail State Park

Rangers attended this local National Night Out in the area of New River Trail State Park, with approximately 500 people attending. This provided an opportunity for area residents to learn more about DCR's Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff and see the tools and resources (including the new e-bikes) available for protecting DCR's employees, guests, and resources.

#### Sky Meadows State Park

Rangers attended a successful National Night Out at Erin's Elderberries in Vint Hill, having a cornhole toss to win prizes, a scavenger hunt, displaying one of DCR's new law enforcement vehicles, and sharing park information. Roughly 1,500 people were reported at the event.



## National Night Out Natural Bridge State Park

Rangers participated in Rockbridge County's National Night Out with over 300 participants. Representatives referred to this year's event as possibly the most successful to date. This provided an opportunity for area residents to learn more about DCR and see the tools and resources (including controlled burn equipment and law enforcement vehicles) available for protecting DCR's employees, guests, and resources.



## Community Outreach

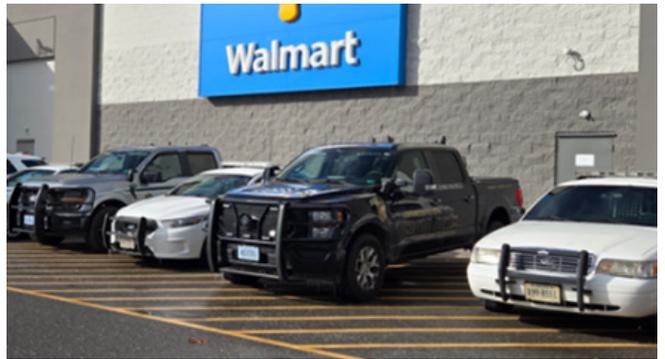
Outreach and community support is important. This year, it included seeking out future Law Enforcement Rangers, including at school and public events across the Commonwealth. The PSandLE Staff conducts outreach whenever possible to broaden recruiting from various and diverse backgrounds. In building a workforce, DCR benefits from the talents, backgrounds, and ideas brought forth by a diverse applicant pool. Our ability to understand and successfully operate while meeting the needs of our stakeholders and employees is essential to meeting our mission.

During 2025, this included events such as Special Olympics Polar Plunges, Career Days, Appreciation and Public Outreach Events, Natural Resource Conferences, Outdoor Sport Expositions, Kids Fishing Days, County Festivals, Touch-A-Truck Events, Shop with a Cop, Holiday Parades, and other area events.

## Special Olympics Polar Bear Plunge

In February 2025, Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff and Park Staff from Leesylvania State Park supported the Prince William County Police Department and their Police Chief, Colonel Peter Newsham, for the 2025 Polar Plunge, raising \$130,000 in support of Special Olympics. In addition to the plunge, the event included a public law enforcement display where many agencies displayed police and fire gear, including DCR's Command Trailer.





### Shop with a Cop

In December 2025, Rangers represented DCR with peers from the Pulaski County Sheriff's Office, Town of Dublin, Town of Pulaski, State Police, and the Department of Wildlife Resources at the Dublin Walmart for Pulaski County's Annual Shop with a Cop holiday event.

### Community Support

Law Enforcement Rangers regularly provide support to our law enforcement peers. From assisting with traffic stops and emergency calls to searches for fugitives, in many instances, Law Enforcement Rangers provide support when no other may be available, ensuring the safety and well-being of communities, citizens, and peers. During 2025, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff provided 199 instances of assistance and support to multiple agencies at crash scenes, at crime scenes, and when our Law Enforcement Rangers were the lifeline that state and municipal agencies needed most.

During 2025, this included multiple instances where Law Enforcement Rangers assisted law enforcement peers from federal, state, and local agencies in protecting our communities while working to locate fugitives from justice, and responded to assist others addressing disasters.

### Civic Organizations

Members of the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff participate as volunteers, leaders, and officers in several civic organizations in their communities. Many employees also act as volunteer coaches and mentors in local sports leagues and after-school programs. Being a member of these organizations helps our personnel and community members build stronger connections outside standard police interactions. It also enables our employees to showcase community leadership beyond their roles in the police department.

## SERVICE TO THE COMMONWEALTH

Part of being good stewards and peers is sharing and supporting the Commonwealth. To that end, as part of our community policing and partnership efforts, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff routinely interacts and provides support to improve governmental operations and further intergovernmental cooperation and information sharing.

### Intergovernmental Cooperation

#### **Virginia Department of Human Resource Management Office of Workers Compensation Law Enforcement Safety Committee Steering Group.**

During 2025, Public Safety and Law Enforcement Leadership participated in the formation of the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM), Office of Workers Compensation (OWC), Law Enforcement Safety Committee Steering Group. Given the unique challenges within law enforcement, the committee will focus on employee safety, other relevant topics of mutual concern (e.g., physical and mental health), and work to foster collaboration among agencies to improve the safety of law enforcement employees. As the group developed, Public Safety and Law Enforcement Leadership expanded their participation undertaking the position as Chair of the Mental Health and Wellness Subcommittee.

#### **Association of Southeastern State Park Directors**

During October 2025, staff within Public Safety and Law Enforcement provided security and transportation escort duties for events related to the conference for the Association of Southeastern State Park Directors. This included overseeing and completing security plans for the field trip park locations and coordinating inter-agency awareness and support with peers at Virginia Beach Police Department, Virginia Beach Sheriff's Office, and Williamsburg Police Department. Additionally, Public Safety and Law Enforcement Leadership provided an overview presentation on the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Career Specialization and Career Pathing Plan. This presentation was well received, with questions and inquiries being received on how Virginia was developing their programs.



## **SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION**

We jointly operate with and support our professional peers and partners. To that end, we attend, partner, and present at various professional trainings and support publications whenever the opportunity allows. Whether speaking to classes in schools, criminal justice academies, colleges or furthering the profession through our affiliations with professional organizations, service is part of our community policing approach.

### **Presentation to APCO/NENA 2025 Spring Conference**

In May 2025, Public Safety and Law Enforcement Leadership joined Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), Conservation Police Staff and the Director of the DCR/DWR Communications Center in presenting an operational oversight of the communications center and agency responsibilities to members attending the 2025 Spring Conference of the Virginia Chapters of the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO), and the National Emergency Number Association (NENA).

### **Executive Board Chairmanship Cardinal Criminal Justice Academy**

In May 2025, Chief Vantrease was unanimously elected to a second term as the Chairman of the Executive Board for Cardinal Criminal Justice Academy by representatives of the 36 member agencies. In this capacity, Chief Vantrease serves in support of the Executive Director and the Executive Board in operational issues dealing with the academy.

### **Chief Vantrease Appointed as Commissioner to Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission**

During September 2025, Chief Vantrease was honored to be nominated by the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police to receive an appointment to serve a multi-year term as a Commissioner of the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission. In this role, Chief Vantrease will serve with other active Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police, establishing professional standards and administering the accreditation process by which Virginia agencies can be systematically measured, evaluated, and updated.

# Community Policing

Community policing reflects our philosophy and organizational strategy that fosters a partnership between operating staff, guests, community citizens, and the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff, focusing on problem-solving and crime prevention. It is founded on the belief that both law enforcement and the community must collaborate to identify, prioritize, and address contemporary issues such as:

- Crime
- Fear of crime
- Social and physical disorders
- Improving the overall quality of life.

DCR's community policing involves everything we do daily as Law Enforcement Rangers and employees. Whether engaged in education, enforcement, partnerships, prevention, or problem-solving, we adhere to the community policing philosophy.

## Crime Prevention Activities and Programs

Efforts continued by the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff in 2025, which included a review of agency crime prevention activities and programs. A special balance exists in this, as some traditional approaches and public awareness strategies do not fit the environment staff works so diligently to maintain.

### Take It; Hide It; Lock It; or Lose It

One area where criminals have continued targeting is thefts from vehicles. Visitors often leave a package, purse, cash, or electronic devices in an unattended (and sometimes unlocked) vehicle. The outcome can be a disappointing visit. Utilizing a crime prevention program consistent with others used across North America to address thefts from vehicles, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff continued its Take It; Hide It; Lock It or Lose It program. Continuing and adding public spaces for the Division of Natural Heritage, this program is a campaign designed to educate employees and visitors, and remind them to take basic precautions to reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim.

Our goal remains education. While the consequences of failing to lock your vehicle or hide valuables may result in theft, our sincere hope is to work together to send the message to criminals and reduce crime.



## Recruiting and Public Education

Efforts undertaken in recruiting and educating the public and potential employees regarding the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff in 2025, included the publication of a new recruiting and outreach flyer.



### Blog - 4 women in law enforcement at Virginia State Parks

During March 2025, 4 women in law enforcement at Virginia State Parks was featured in a Virginia State Parks blog by Starr Anderson. The article supported women in law enforcement, highlighting DCR's remarkable female Law Enforcement Rangers and how these women are breaking through barriers in a historically male-dominated field. The blog outlined four female Law Enforcement Rangers and their paths into law enforcement, and what motivates them to preserve the past and protect the future.

### Blog - Becoming a law enforcement ranger with Virginia State Parks

In September 2025, Becoming a law enforcement ranger with Virginia State Parks was featured in a Virginia State Parks blog by Starr Anderson. This blog provided an overview of DCR's Law Enforcement Rangers and included topics such as the path to becoming a law enforcement ranger and the duties of law enforcement rangers.



### Career Fair Randolph-Macon College

In November 2025, members of the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff, along with peers from across the state and federal agencies, attended a recruiting fair at Randolph-Macon College, exposing Criminal Justice Students to career opportunities as a Park Law Enforcement Ranger.

# Agency Accreditation

The accreditation of law enforcement agencies in Virginia may be sought through the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC). The Virginia Sheriffs' Association, the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) make up VLEPSC. Commission members consisting of active Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police establish professional standards and administer the accreditation process by which Virginia agencies can be systematically measured, evaluated, and updated.

VLEPSC's mission is to advance law enforcement professionalism through the establishment of professional standards and the administration of a formal mechanism by which Virginia agencies can be systematically measured, evaluated, and updated. The Commission goals include:

1. To increase the effectiveness and efficiency of law enforcement agencies in the Commonwealth in the delivery of services.
2. To promote cooperation and coordination among all components in the criminal justice system.
3. To ensure the appropriate level of training for law enforcement personnel.
4. To promote public confidence in law enforcement; and
5. To promote the professionalism of law enforcement agencies in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

In March 2010, the Department of Conservation and Recreation became accredited by VLEPSC. The department has pursued and maintained its accredited status to benchmark our policies and procedures and ensure effective service delivery of public safety and law enforcement needs to employees and guests, demonstrating a commitment to professionalism through voluntary adherence to standards.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation is currently within its fourth re-accreditation from the VLEPSC Commission, which is eligible for renewal in 2026. As part of this process, the agency must submit annual reports and department statistics and undergo reviews to verify ongoing compliance with the standards essential for law enforcement accreditation. The Department adheres to the VLEPSC Standards manual, which encompasses 193 Standards and over 570 individual items divided into four general subject areas: Administration, Operations, Personnel, and Training. This is reflective of the professionalism and dedication of the staff, which is one of the longest-standing state-level accredited law enforcement agencies in Virginia.

For more information regarding the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission, please contact them c/o Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, 1100 Bank Street, Richmond, VA 23219, or visit their website <https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/law-enforcement/programs/vlepsc>.



## Internal Complaint Investigation

The agency will effectively process and conduct thorough and appropriate investigations of all complaints against the department or its personnel to maintain integrity and ensure public trust. Complaints investigated through the Internal Affairs process may result in disciplinary actions subject to appeal and grievance procedures. Complaints are generally categorized as either allegations of serious misconduct or performance-related issues.

Allegations of serious misconduct refer to complaints that claim corruption, misuse of force, violations of the law, infringements of an individual's civil rights, or significant breaches of department policy or employee conduct rules. Performance complaints usually claim inappropriate behavior or response by an employee, improper operation of a police vehicle, violations of department policies or employee rules, or any other actions or inactions that do not equate to an allegation of misconduct. Upon conclusion of an investigation, each complaint is assigned one of the following findings:

**Sustained** – Findings indicate sufficient evidence to prove the allegation or complaint.

**Not-Sustained** – Findings indicate insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation or complaint.

**Exonerated** – Findings indicate sufficient evidence to prove the incident occurred, but the actions or demeanor of the employee were proper, lawful, and within policy.

**Unfounded** – Findings indicate sufficient evidence to prove the allegation or complaint did not occur or was demonstrably untrue or false.

**Policy Review** – Findings indicate sufficient evidence to prove the allegation or complaint occurred, but the employee's actions were within GPD policy when the incident occurred. This finding indicates that the policy is faulty and needs review or revision.

During 2025, 17 internal affairs/citizen complaint matters were reviewed, with two (2) resulting in the initiation of an internal affairs investigation. Of the internal affairs investigations two (2) were sustained with appropriate action taken involving the employee or policy. There was one (1) complaint that resulted in a verbal counseling of the employee.

The rate of policy violations or misconduct is extremely low, given that the department had 9,834 calls for service contacts often involving multiple individuals. In summary, an external complaint or citizen concern was identified in less than 0.17% of all call for service contacts.

# Employee Accomplishments, Awards, and Recognitions

## New Law Enforcement Rangers

New park and natural heritage law enforcement rangers, who require training as outlined by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, attend our home academy – the Cardinal Criminal Justice Academy. Here, they work with peers from 36 agencies across the area to learn valuable skills, including how to de-escalate and address many issues seen in our contacts with visitors and guests. This allows them to learn how to lessen chances for situations to become hazardous to themselves, any subject they may deal with, or the public. This includes receiving certification in Mental Health First Aid. Once each person completes the academy, they are sworn in at a ceremony at Natural Bridge State Park before beginning their field training.

### 85<sup>th</sup> Basic Law Enforcement Academy

In June 2025, the 85th Basic Academy Law Enforcement Ranger Swear-In was held at Natural Bridge State Park. Beyond an opportunity for rangers to take their oaths, this celebration reminds staff why they are undertaking their responsibilities and to instill in each new Law Enforcement Ranger their important mission: “Preserving the Past - Protecting the Future” for generations to come. The newest Law Enforcement Rangers included: Carl Huber, Sweet Run State Park; Joshua Schaeffer, Caledon State Park; Caleb Stanger, Powhatan State Park; Samantha Williams, Widewater State Park; and Kristian Woodall, Natural Tunnel State Park.



## 86<sup>th</sup> Basic Law Enforcement Academy

In October 2025, the 86th Basic Academy Law Enforcement Ranger Swear-In was held at Natural Bridge State Park. The newest Law Enforcement Rangers included: Christopher Behre, First Landing State Park; Dalton Brown, Shenandoah River State Park; Charles Catlett, Westmoreland State Park; Garrett Every, Bear Creek Lake State Park; Luke Gilliland, Leesylvania State Park; Tyler Warren, Kiptopeke State Park; and Ivy Young, Twin Lakes State Park. Garrett Every and Ivy Young received recognition for receiving academy certificates for both Community Service during their academy time and for obtaining 100% the Physical Fitness Award. Additionally, Charles Catlett received a Letter of Recognition for Outstanding Public Safety and Law Enforcement Service Integrity for his response to an incident during training at the academy.



## Career Progression Advancements

The following personnel earned career progression elevations based on educational, training, and a competitive selection process:

- Christopher S. Doss – Former Park Manager at Occoneechee State Park was promoted to Deputy Chief.
- Travis Bozeman – Former Assistant Park Manager at Westmoreland State Park was promoted to District Ranger
- Baine Self Jr. – Former Assistant Park Manager at Lake Anna State Park was promoted to District Ranger

## Specialized Assignment Selection

The following personnel participated in competitive selection processes and were selected for specialized positions in addition to their current duties:

- Stephanie Venarchick – Assistant Park Manager at Kiptopeke State Park was selected as a Field Training Officer
- Luke Hixon – Chief Ranger LE at Hungry Mother State Park was selected as a Field Training Officer

## Other Recognitions

The following personnel received recognition for their work by outside agencies:

### Gary Brumfield – VLEPSC Commissioners Award

In October 2025, Gary Brumfield, Accreditation Specialist for DCR, received the “Commissioner’s Award” at the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC) meeting. The award was presented for his over 20 years of service as an accreditation assessor and manager with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and his efforts and impacts on the accreditation community.

### Kenneth Ashdown – 2025 Mothers Against Drunk Driving Award

Park Manager Kenny Ashdown was honored in December 2025 with a 2025 Virginia Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Law Enforcement Award. This statewide award recognizes state and local law enforcement professionals for their dedication and efforts in keeping us safe through traffic enforcement by removing impaired drivers from our roadways.



Ranger Ashdown’s efforts in this area recognize the challenges DCR’s Public Safety and Law Enforcement operations face. Visitors come to these remarkable locations for recreation and enjoyment; however, in some cases, this includes excessive alcohol consumption followed by driving or engaging in other risky behaviors, which can lead to serious injury or death.

Over the past several years, Ranger Ashdown has undertaken numerous efforts to reduce alcohol related issues at Leesylvania State Park, increasing vehicle and watercraft-related alcohol enforcement, and leading efforts to reduce the illegal public consumption of alcohol. This has resulted in an overall decrease in related crime and other incidents, including drownings.



## In Memoriam

### Paul Salyer

Breaks Interstate Park

End of Watch: Thursday, Aug. 14, 1975



PAUL H. SALYER •

Ranger Paul Salyer was shot and killed while investigating a disturbance at a campsite in Breaks Interstate Park. The campsite occupants had been involved in a domestic disturbance the previous night. Ranger Salyer was shot when he went to the campsite to check on the occupants.

Ranger Salyer was a Korean War veteran. For two years, he had served with the Breaks Interstate Park and held a commission as a part-time deputy with the Dickenson County Sheriff's Office. He was survived by his wife, mother, three brothers, and grandmother.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Park Ranger Paul Herbert Salyer, Breaks Interstate Park Police Department, Virginia (odmp.org)



LAW ENFORCEMENT

PARK RANGER

VIRGINIA STATE PARKS



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