

Looking Back

The History of the Washington State Patrol

1921 to 1930

June 8, 1921, was the date legislation authorized the appointment of highway police with the power of peace officers. The first six patrolmen (Harold Lakeburg, Harry Harkins, Henry Shuk, William Clark, Eugene Russel, and George Potter) were commissioned September 1, 1921. The initial appropriation for maintenance of the



motorcycle patrol was \$70,000. Pictured above is the first known picture of the Patrol, taken in December of 1922. Row 1, left to right: Patterson, Lakeburg, Palmer, Waller, Clark, McArdle (Department of Efficiency Director), and Liedy (Supervisor). Row 2: Ward, Friffith, Newell, Jones, Roush, Williams. Row 3: Cottle, Connick, Hyde, Fortin, Harkins, Cormier.

The first two Highway Patrol directors were called supervisors. The original issue was a badge, cap emblem, and a gun. It wasn't until 1924 that every patrolman became uniformed.



In 1924, the Patrol made arrangements with a local clothing store, which agreed to provide the same uniform for every man. Attired in motorcycle caps, grey Norfolk jackets, riding breeches, brown leather puttees and boots, the Division began to realize the

value of good public relations. Pictured above are the first uniforms. From left to right, Row 1: Harkins, Roush, Palmer, Leidy, Clark, Shuk, Lakeburg. Row 2: Cockell, Novak, Cottle, Coffmann, Williams, Brenton, Hyde. Row 3: Potter, Griffith, Jones, O'Brien, Ward, Lum, and Waller.

In 1925, the first Chief, William Cole, was appointed and by 1927, the Patrol soon bought its first "paddy wagon"--a Ford panel delivery truck, which was assigned

to the major mountain highway at Snoqualmie Pass. Prior to Chief Cole's appointment, Helen Shaw (Christensen) assumed the duties of Chief for 1-2 weeks (she was not appointed by the Governor).

Chief Cole changed the color of the uniform from grey to forest green, and in 1928, added black trim, Sam Brown belt, and "cap" style hat.

1931 to 1940

In 1933, the Legislature acknowledged the need for a police organization that was mobile and could be concentrated immediately at any place in the state where public safety was endangered. The Highway Patrol Division officially became known as the Washington State Patrol, which had been given full police powers. However, the police powers were not to be used unless ordered by the Governor or requested by other law enforcement agencies. The State Patrol was placed directly under the Governor, who was authorized to appoint the Chief.

Communications were haphazard, with patrolmen receiving some of their orders through the mail, some from county sheriffs, and some from their supervisors by telephone. The first radio was installed on a motorcycle in the Vancouver area in 1933 by Patrolman Harry Williams. Operating on a City of Portland (Oregon) Police frequency, the unit gave accident and traffic information.



While radio communications had a brilliant future, motorcycles were on their way out by 1933. Right is a picture of the car which began to replace the motorcycles. These cars were light, fast automobiles of the panel delivery type, which could be used as a combination patrol car, mobile jail, and ambulance, and proved much more versatile for all-weather work than the motorcycle.

In 1936, the Patrol divided the state into four Patrol districts, with a captain in charge of each district: District 1, with headquarters in Tacoma consisted of 14 counties, including all of Southwest Washington and the Olympic Peninsula; District 2, with headquarters in Seattle, consisted of six northwest counties;



District 3, with headquarters in Yakima, consisted of eight southeastern counties; and District 4, with headquarters in Spokane, consisted of 11

counties in the Big Bend and Palouse areas and the northeastern part of the state.

As the uniform was designed and redesigned, one apparel feature was introduced in 1937 that remains to this day--the bow tie, unique in law enforcement. Originally red, the bow tie was changed to black after a couple of years and has remained a fashion constant as the WSP uniform evolved to its present crisp blue shirt with dark blue pocket flaps, French blue pants striped with dark blue, and royal blue campaign hat. Pictured above is Sergeant George Fisher, in the new uniform, along-side one of the coupes that replaced the panel-delivery cars.

In 1937, the first cadet class was initiated, and the Criminal Investigation Bureau was formed.

In 1939, District 5 was established, with headquarters in Vancouver, and included some of the counties formerly in District 1.

In 1940, the Patrol had one of the largest fingerprint files west of the Mississippi.

1941 to 1950

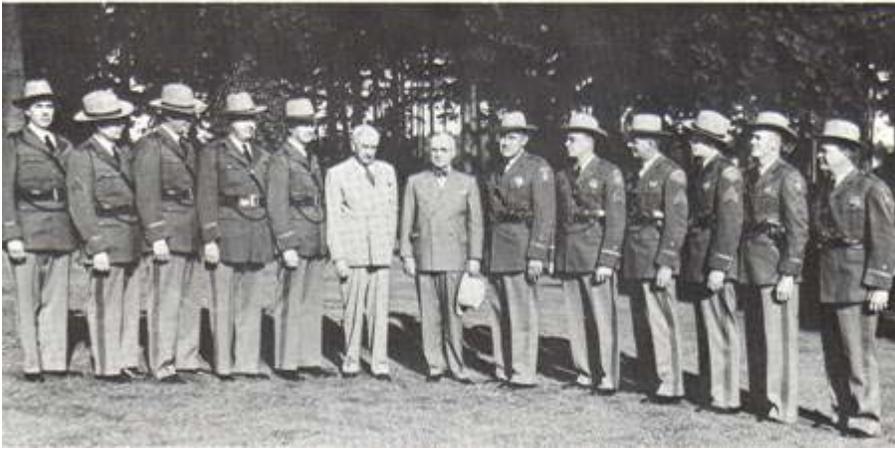
In 1942, the Patrol's first radio station (communications center) was installed in Olympia. Pictured right is Dwight Johnson, one of the Patrol's first radio operators at the controls of the Patrol's first station.



Safety Education, which started in 1929, was formalized in 1942 with the formation of a Public Relations Division staffed by seven officers.

The Motor Vehicle Inspection Division and Weight Division, created in 1943, were responsible for checking trucks for size, weight, and license violations. Both divisions previously were under the Department of Highways.

It was in 1943 that the Patrol set up its own communications network, completing the installation of two-way sets in all vehicles.



In 1945, President Harry S. Truman reviewed our patrolmen on the Capitol Campus. Pictured left (from left to right) are: Austin, Rigg, Jones, Morgan,

Whittall, Chief Algeo, President Truman, Spencer, Kinzel, Furseth, Mullins, Hall, Olsen.

In 1946, the Patrol had the distinction of being number 1 out of 11 western states regarding traffic safety.

Then, in 1947, the Patrol gained its own training center in the former Navy bachelor officers' quarters near the Shelton Airport (pictured to the right).



In 1948, District 6 was established, with headquarters in Wenatchee, from some of the counties formerly in District 4.

In 1949, the Patrol began to phase out the "paddy wagons" in favor of four-door sedans, with improved police equipment and special engines, transmissions, and high-speed gears.

1951 to 1960



In 1951, the Patrol began using radar with a stationary type unit.

In 1954, the Patrol was awarded the National Safety Council's Grand Award, recognizing the Patrol as one of the finest law enforcement organizations in the nation.

The Patrol began to hire civilian weighmasters in 1955 to work stationary and portable scales. Most of the troopers working weight control in

the field were later transferred to traffic duty. The Weight Control Division is now known as the Commercial Vehicle Division.

In 1956, the Patrol moved its headquarters to the General Administration building. Prior to this, Patrol offices had been located around the Capitol campus (Insurance building and Legislative building) and the Old Capitol building in downtown Olympia.

By the late 1950s, the Patrol began to phase in its current patrol car door design--diagonal royal blue spear and black and white badge replica.

In 1959, the Patrol's aviation program started with its primary responsibilities being search and rescue operations, aircraft accident investigation, and enforcement of aeronautics laws. In 1960, the Patrol leased its first aircraft, a Cessna 172. A year later, realizing the value of aircraft, the Patrol purchased its own Cessna Skylane and subsequently used it for the traffic surveillance and enforcement, search operations, emergency relays, and transportation duties. Pictured right is the Cessna working traffic.



1961 to 1970

In 1962, District 7 was established with headquarters in Everett, and included some of the counties formerly in District 2.

In 1962, Seattle hosted the World's Fair "Century 21", and the Patrol received the Governor's Distinguished Award for Outstanding Service.

In 1965, the Patrol became responsible for the safety and protection of the Governor.

In 1967, the Aviation Division was given statewide responsibility for aircraft registration. In 1968, the Aviation Division moved from Boeing Field to their new quarters at the Olympia Airport.



By 1968, the Patrol had converted all patrol vehicles to the color of white. The new WSP Training Academy was built on 23 acres

near the existing facility. The Patrol's drive course was constructed on 165 acres adjacent to the Academy and is considered one of the finest in the country. The above picture is of the flag ceremony which starts and ends each day at the Academy.

In 1970 the Drug Control Assistance Unit was established by state law due to increasing drug trafficking and abuse.

1971 to 1980

In 1971, the District 2 headquarters was moved to Bellevue.

In 1972, the Vehicle Identification Section began with eight employees assigned to wrecker yard inspections. In 1973, operations were expanded to the inspection of all vehicles first licensed in Washington, except new vehicles sold by a Washington dealer. This section became known as the Auto Theft Section.

The Investigative Assistance Division (IAD) was established in 1973, and included the Narcotics Section, Organized Crime Intelligence Unit, and a Clandestine Laboratory Response Team. The IAD is also the law enforcement contact with Interpol for the state of Washington.

The Identification and Criminal History Section was established in 1974, and two full-service crime laboratories were set up in 1975, in Seattle and Spokane.

The first female troopers were hired by the Patrol in 1975.

In 1977, the Patrol hired its first Department Psychologist.

In 1979, the Walla Walla State Penitentiary was set on fire by rioters. The Patrol was involved with security, and Troopers walked the prison walls for weeks.



After being without motorcycles for years, in 1979, a federal grant allowed for the purchase of several motorcycles for traffic control.

In 1980, "The Safety Education Program" was discontinued, due to lack of funds.

In 1980, Chief Robert Landon attempted to talk Mr. Harry Truman, Mt. Saint Helens Lodge caretaker, into leaving the Spirit Lake Lodge at Mt. Saint Helens, and 12 hours later the volcano erupted.

In 1980, the Legislature created the Patrol's crime laboratory system.

1981 to 1990

In 1981, four more crime laboratories were added in Tacoma, Marysville, Kelso, and Kennewick.

In 1982, the WSP Historical Advisory Board was established.

In 1983, an entirely new Washington Crime Information Center data base was brought on-line, and provided faster response time, as well as, access to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Crime Information Center computer system and direct entry of missing adults and runaway children.

In 1983, the Washington State Patrol Memorial Foundation was created as a non-profit charitable organization, which provides financial assistance to employees in time of need, including the children of WSP officers killed in the line of duty.

In 1985, the first African American trooper was promoted to sergeant, and the Missing Children's Clearinghouse was established.



In 1986, the Patrol formed an Athletic Association.

In 1987, the first woman trooper was promoted to RCW Sergeant. In addition, the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system was installed as a pilot program in Olympia (which was used statewide in 1989), the Academy's multi-purpose building was completed, an Automated Fingerprint Identification System

(AFIS) was implemented, and the Safety Education Officer program was reestablished.

In 1988, the Patrol received national accreditation through Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), the fourth state to receive this honor. Troopers were issued portable pre-breath test instruments (PBTs) for measuring blood/alcohol content on scene. The Patrol's Communication Centers became answering centers for statewide cellular 9-1-1 calls. In addition, the Patrol also provided security for the Western Governor's Conference in Seattle.

In 1989, the Legislature passed a bill to incorporate a DNA typing laboratory into the existing Seattle Crime Lab, staffed by specially trained personnel. This also helped in the creation of a DNA data bank to aid future investigations.

The Patrol purchased five “Total Stations” in 1989, which are used as survey devices to determine the reconstruction of traffic collisions and aiding in the investigations.

In 1990, the Goodwill Games were held statewide. The Patrol was responsible for the security of the 2,500 athletes.

1991 to 2000

The Washington State Patrol gained international recognition for its development of the Mobile Computer Network (MCN), an innovative system that links computers in patrol cars with satellite and land-based radio communication technology. The MCN became operational in 1991.

In 1991, the National Governor’s Conference deployed over 200 Patrol personnel for security.

In April 1995, at the age of 33, Annette Sandberg was appointed Chief by Governor Mike Lowry. She became the first woman to head a state law enforcement agency. She also may have been the youngest of either gender to head a state law enforcement agency.



The State Fire Marshal's Office joined the agency when the Legislature transferred Fire Protection Services to the Patrol in July 1995. The office provides for mobilization of resources to wildfires, firefighter and hazardous materials training, fire and life safety inspections, and other services.

In the spring of 1996, Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Officers (CVEOs) began special training, which included firearms. CVEOs are being armed for the first time in more than 20 years, when the last of the troopers assigned to weight control returned to traffic duty.

In 1996, the Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT) combined with the Methamphetamine Lab Response Team, to create a Statewide Incident Response Team (SIRT).

The Problem Oriented Public Safety (POPS) philosophy was initiated by the agency in 1997, following the award of a Community Oriented Policing grant from

the federal government. The award added 72 trained POPS officers to the Patrol over the ensuing three years.

POPS signaled the beginning of a new problem-solving philosophy that fosters the development of partnerships among the WSP, citizens, and other stakeholders, who together help solve public safety problems in communities throughout the state. The department made a commitment to bring POPS and Governor Gary Locke's Quality Improvement Initiative together and to train all employees in this new philosophy of public service.

In 1997, the WSP Canine Unit began with the deployment of two explosive detection teams.

In 1997, the Computer Crimes Unit was established as a full-service computer evidence retrieval and analysis unit.

The Criminal Records Division launched a new Web site in January of 1998 called WATCH (Washington Access To Criminal History), where the public can obtain criminal history information online.

The Patrol started its Aggressive Driving Apprehension Team (ADAT) program, utilizing unmarked patrol cars to proactively locate and arrest those who drive aggressively on Washington roadways.

In May of 1998, the Patrol published a five-year strategic plan after a year-long effort. As part of this, all organizational units of the department are required to develop operational plans and performance measures that support the goals of the strategic plan.

In 1999, the Patrol began a Strategic Advancement Forum (SAF) process, ensuring increased accountability among districts and divisions.

Strategic planning was integrated with POPS and a quality philosophy to help the agency meet future demands. By integrating long-range planning with quality business practices, and by developing partnerships, the Patrol ensures that the service needs of Washington's citizens are met.

2001 – 2010

In 2002, SIRT was changed back to SWAT after tactical responses began to arise as a result of the Terrorism Attacks on the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001.

In 2003, the “Tom Neff Industrial Park” was completed in Tumwater and houses the WSP Fleet, Supply, and Property Management Sections. Mr. Neff was instrumental in a large land swap with the Patrol’s Martin Way property, in order to gain the new property.



The EI Protector program began on February 20, 2003. This program was implemented to address the increasing concern of Hispanic/Latino-surnamed drivers being over represented in fatal and felony collision in the Mid-Columbia Valley. The program provides educational materials to people with limited English speaking abilities.

In 2003, the WSP implemented the Tissue Donation Program which, works to ensure that potential donors, via next-of-kin, are given the opportunity to donate useable tissue/organs to save and/or improve the quality of life of fellow citizens.

The Drug Control Assistance Unit (DCAU) was established in 2003.

In 2004, the Patrol provided approximately 500 personnel for security and other responsibilities during the National Governor’s Association (NGA) Conference in Seattle. At the NGA Conference, the AMBER Alert Web Portal was launched as a national model for recovering missing children. The Patrol played an integral part in this public/private partnership.



In 2005, the Patrol developed a Vessel and Terminal Security Division which provides security for the Washington State Ferry System. (Pictured on the left)

On June 28, 2005, WSP opened a new Crime Lab at Eastern Washington University.

In 2005, the SWAT Team participated in the largest fugitive operation in American history. Operation FALCON, sponsored by the U.S. Marshal Service, arrested a total of 10,340 fugitives and cleared more than 13,800 felony warrants.

In 2006, the Patrol began deploying Tasers to troopers throughout the state in an effort to reduce injuries to officers and non-compliant individuals.

In 2007, the longest serving female trooper, Trooper Judy Lewis, retired with more than 33 years of service.

In 2007, The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) named the WSP as the best state police agency of its size. The agency was also recognized as the “best dressed state law enforcement agency” by the National Association of Uniform Manufacturers and Distributors (NAUMD). Judges for both awards reviewed many aspects of the agency to include professional appearance and operations.

In 2008, WSP launched an innovative, first in the nation DUI Aerial Response Team (DART). This effort combines fixed-wing aircraft using forward-looking infrared cameras (pictured left) and ground troopers to respond to citizen complaints of DUI as well as initiate stops of intoxicated and reckless drivers. The Patrol also became the first state police/highway patrol agency to host the International Problem Oriented Public Safety (POPS) conference.



The transition to new side-arms was begun in 2009. The Smith & Wesson M & P (Military & Police) 40 caliber semiautomatic was selected as the standard issue weapon for all officers throughout the agency.

In 2010, the Patrol underwent re-accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). Being accredited by CALEA requires police agencies to prove their compliance with 459 standards that detail every major aspect of law enforcement, including traffic operations, crime analysis, performance evaluation, recruitment, evidence collection, strategic planning, public information, and communications. These standards are designed to make an agency more efficient, more accountable, and more responsive to the needs of citizens.

