

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 left 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: Cprtle, 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 Highway Patrol began to realize the value of good public relations. Pictured to the right 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, a 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 the 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. Left 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, were proving much more versatile for all-weather work than the motorcycle.



In 1936 the State was divided 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. 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 right is Sergeant George Fisher, in the

new uniform, with 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, from 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 located in



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

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. Olympia.



In 1945 President Harry S. Truman reviewed our patrolmen on the Capitol Campus. Pictured right (from left to right) are: Austin, Rigg, Jones, Morgan, Whittall, Chief Algeo, President Truman, Spencer, Kinzel, Furseth, Mullins, Hall, Olsen.

In 1946, the Patrol was 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 left).



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 trade away the "paddy wagons" in favor of four-door sedans, with improved police equipment and special engines, transmissions, and high-speed rear ends.

1951 to 1960



located around the 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, a diagonal royal blue spear and black and white badge replica.

In 1959 the Patrol aviation program was begun 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 left is the airplane working traffic.

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 headquarters to the General Administration building (current location). Prior to this it had been variously



1961 to 1970

In 1962, District 7 was established with headquarters in Everett, from 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 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 new quarters at the Olympia Airport.

By 1968, the State Patrol had converted all patrol vehicles to 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. Pictured left is a picture of the flag ceremony which starts and ends each day at the Patrol academy.

In 1970 the Drug Control Assistance Unit was created.

1971 to 1980

In 1971 the district 2 headquarters was moved to Bellevue.

In 1972, the Vehicle Identification Section began with eight men assigned to wrecker yard inspections, and 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, including the Narcotics Section, Organized Crime Intelligence Unit, Missing Children Clearinghouse, and a Clandestine Laboratory Response Team. The Investigative Assistance Division 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 to help those who had personal needs.

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

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

1980 "The Safety Education Program" ceased, due to lack of funds.



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

In 1980 the Legislature created the WSP 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 WACIC (Washington Crime Information Center) data base was brought on-line, providing faster response time as well as access to the FBI'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 that 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 WSP 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 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 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, used as survey devices in traffic collision investigations.

In 1990 the Goodwill Games were held statewide in which 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 linking laptop 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 WSP personnel for security.

Chief Annette Sandberg is the first woman to head a state law enforcement agency. She also may have been the youngest of either gender when she was appointed in April 1995 at the age of 33.

The [State Fire Marshal's Office](#) joined the agency when the Legislature transferred the Fire Protection Services to the Patrol in July 1995.

*** Picture of the first CVEO class *** 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 (SWAT) Team combined with the Methamphetamine Lab Response Team, which created 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 deployed two explosive detection teams.

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 WSP 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 will 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, to increase accountability among employees.

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 State Patrol is ensuring that the service needs of Washington's citizens are met.

2001 – 2005

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 9/11/2001.

In 2003 the “Tom Neff Industrial Park” was completed in Tumwater to house the WSP Fleet, Supply, and Property Management Sections. Mr. Neff was instrumental in a large land swap with the old 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 provided educational materials to people with limited English speaking abilities.



In 2003 the WSP implemented a Tissue Donation program which works to ensure that potential donors, via next-of-kin were 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 WSP 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 WSP played an integral part in this public/private partnership.

In 2005 the WSP developed a Vessel and Terminal Security division which provides security for the Washington State ferry system.