



Teamwork by Park Ranger Sara Girard

Never forget the phrase There is no "I" in team. If it is daily functions or special events, it takes a team to make the best of our parks. This is an interesting time as most park's staffs has been reduced and the visitors are more dependent on their local parks. The team is always there to make sure the visitor finds a clean and safe facility and a friendly smile from park staff.

Parks are being affected by the recent economic downturn along with so many other public services. Now more than ever we call on the team spirit to operate, plan and maintain the parks. In some ways the parks are more popular than in times past due to the fact that parks provide a sanctuary from daily strife and bring peace to the soul. While entry fees remain reasonably priced, parks act as a fitness center, educational source and valuable means of entertainment for the entire family.

Teamwork is the cooperative effort of many to complete a task. Keep your team happy and healthy while our parks play their important role during these tough times.

Signpost, PRACnet & Our Website

Member Benefit Considerations

by Jeff Price, Region 4 Member and PRAC Web Guy

There are several useful and practical member benefits you should consider for solutions to common park administration, operation and employee issues, as well as staying in touch with events in California and Nevada parks.

First, the Park Rangers Association of California's primary formal communication and information tool is our newsletter, *The Signpost*. Your Board made the determination to go with an electronic version and have mailed copies only upon request. Be sure that you watch for notification or check the website to see when the latest issue is available.

Not only should you read the great articles assembled by Editor David Brooks, but you should write a few your self about what affects you locally. We are interested in what other park agencies do and want to hear from you. *The Signpost* can be found online in the Members Section of the PRAC website. <http://www.calranger.org>. Check it out every 2 months for the latest *Signpost*. You will find the submission guidelines for articles there as well.



Reminders of the Trade

by Kenneth Wong, Region 1

Recently, I was involved in an investigation that involved a crime scene where too many non law enforcement personnel were present at the actual scene itself. I understand that our primary response to any scene is to assist and provide medical attention to any injured parties, but when it is obvious that medical rescue has become recovery; other public safety personnel need to understand and allow the investigators to do their job. So, my topic of discussion:



Crime Scene Preservation

Introduction:

The crime scene itself is a form of evidence and should be treated by law enforcement personnel just as carefully as any other form of evidence.

Role of responding LE personnel:

It is the responsibility of the initial primary responding LE personnel to secure and protect the integrity of the crime scene until officially and properly relieved.

Initially, LE personnel should not touch anything or do anything that could alter a crime scene in any way except to preserve life or administer aid to a victim.

Contamination:

When two objects touch each other, it is possible for trace substances of one to be transferred to the other. For example, whenever an individual enters a crime scene, it is possible for that individual to introduce physical evidence to the scene (e.g., fibers, hair, fingerprints, etc.) as well as to remove physical evidence from the scene (e.g., fibers on clothing, soil on shoes, etc.). Such transfers can take place not only to potential suspects, but also LE personnel who enter or leave a crime scene. For this reason, crime scenes must be carefully protected and secured from any intentional or unintentional forms of contamination.

Protecting the crime scene:

A crime scene encompasses not only the immediate area where a crime took place, but also other areas related to the crime (e.g., vehicles, escape routes, etc.). The following table identifies actions that can be taken by responding LE personnel to protect the scene of a crime.

Action: Establish a perimeter.

Additional Information:

- An inner perimeter should include that area which contains specific evidence of the crime.
- An outer perimeter may be established as a means of securing and controlling access to the inner perimeter.
- Access to the inner perimeter should be limited to only those authorized individuals directly related to the criminal investigation.
- Isolate the scene and deny entry.
- A perimeter should be larger than is apparently necessary. One rule to follow is to double the distance from the center of the crime scene to the farthest location of any piece of evidence.
- Prevent all unauthorized people from entering the scene (e.g., family members, neighbors, media, etc.).

Action: Assign personnel.

Additional Information:

- The primary responding LE personnel officer should assign law enforcement personnel to maintain inner and outer perimeters.
- If necessary, assistance for perimeter containment may be obtained from those other than law enforcement personnel.

Action: Place fixed barriers.

Additional Information:

- Tape can be used to establish clear boundaries to maintain crime scene integrity.

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Be always at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors,
and let each new year find you a better man.
Benjamin Franklin

Reminders of the Trade

(Story continues from page 3)

- Use cones and other traffic barricades to restrict access to the area.
- Vehicles or other items can be strategically positioned to block traffic.

Action: Maintain a crime scene log.

Additional Information:

- Record information on who had access to the crime scene.
- Include information such as:
 - date,
 - time in and out,
 - name and rank,
 - badge or ID number,
 - agency, and
 - reason for entry.

Evidence protection:

Evidence within a crime scene may be moved, damaged, or obliterated by even the smallest disturbance. Because of this, initial responding LE personnel must take actions to protect physical evidence.

If...

- the crime scene may be affected by:
 - environmental factors, (e.g., rain, wind, etc.) or

individuals not authorized to participate in the investigation, (e.g., bystanders)

Then....

- action may be necessary to protect the evidence such as, but not limited to:

providing a tent covering to protect from rain or sunlight,

erecting temporary walls or barriers to reduce wind contamination, or

using cardboard to temporarily cover tire tracks or footprints.

If...

- movement of evidence is required, (e.g., to transfer a victim, officer safety, etc.)

Then....

- officers should:

verbally notify appropriate personnel of the action taken,

document and photograph, if appropriate, the original location and condition of the evidence, and

document all actions taken.

So the moral of the story: You are responsible; protect, control and document your scene. Take care.

Attention Conference Attendees

Attending the California Parks Conference in South San Francisco. Jeff Ohlfs (NPS-Joshua Tree) is looking to trade your agency patches for foreign ranger patches which he brought back from the 6th World Ranger Congress. So look him up!

California Natives

by Park Ranger Sara Girard

Fire and Rain. In Southern California this is the perfect combination for the spring wildflower explosion. Fire is an integral component of the ecosystem structure in the chaparral and coastal sage scrub environments. The soils of this area are low in nitrogen and phosphorus which are replenished by the ash that remains after a burn. Seeds and bulbs that require fire for stratification and the removal or softening of outer protective layers make up a list of true fire followers. Rain assures the growth of annuals and perennials for a spectacular floral display. Some incredible specimens to watch for are: *Mimulus aurantiacus* (sticky monkeyflower), *Eriastrum sapphirinum* (sapphire woollystar), *Calochortus* sp (mariposa lily), *Eschscholzia californica* (California poppy) and the always interesting *Fritillaria affinis* (chocolate lily).

Look for websites with alerts announcing blooming and locations such as theodorepayne.org and ocparks.com.



Signpost, PRACnet & Our Website

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Second, if you are not already a member of the Park Rangers Association of California's "members only" e-mail list server called PRACnet, you really should get connected. Here's an opportunity to share ideas on a myriad of topics in an informal electronic forum with other Rangers, just like you. To join PRACnet you can visit the website for information or send your

name and personal e-mail address to webmaster@calranger.org and we'll take care of it for you. If you use an agency address, which we do not recommend (the topic of a future article), please do not join PRACnet with it and then set your out of office, auto reply e-mail feature. This will overload the group system with a perpetual chain of replies, and that can be embarrassing.

Recently, the PRACnet discussion forum has focused on topics such as an upcoming CalPoly SLO speaker panel, State Park Interpreter, MRCA Firefighter and City of Escondido Lake Superintendent job opportunities, and an NAI training class being offered. Quite a variety of chat!

The third member communication tool available to you is the PRAC website. <http://www.calranger.org> There will usually be up to date information on current events, policies, board actions and member activities. One of our members is currently exploring the concept of setting up a "Ranger Photo Gallery" online and if that works, we hope that will be a place where you can upload images and share ideas in graphic form.

The PRAC website has a separate password protected area for members only, where we post current job opportunities in the park and recreation field (JOBmart), Scholarship information, Ranger Certification, Ranger Directory, upcom-

ing training presentation information and other professional development prospects. When you have time-sensitive information to share that fits one of the website member areas, send it along by e-mail to your Regional Director for consideration, and we'll get it online for everyone.

There are many topics that could be shared on the PRAC website or by using the power of PRACnet. Here's a quick list of park related topics that come to mind:



- Advertise local events or park fundraisers
- Find other parks with help or equipment you need
- Help reliable departing Camp Hosts find a new park
- Solicit contributions to a memorial or similar park fund
- Place laid off seasonal staff in good jobs elsewhere
- Get help with large projects (collect signatures for the Park Initiative?)

It is essential that our professional membership be free to communicate and share ideas, problems and solutions. In these challenging times, no Ranger needs to go it alone! We need more than the annual Parks Conference to stay ahead of the curve. Please make use of the tools provided with your PRAC membership, those benefits are not only the real deal, they are PRACTical.

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