

# Case Study: Peer-to-Peer and Self-Observations Assist Law Enforcement at Olympic National Park<sup>1</sup>

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Behavior-based safety (BBS) includes employee involvement in identifying at-risk behaviors, analyzing the reasons they are performed, and implementing and evaluating interventions to increase safe behavior and reduce at-risk behavior. In addition, the process is meant to increase both formal and informal safety communications. One key component of BBS is observation and feedback. Employees determine critical safety behaviors, observe these behaviors among each other and give rewarding and correcting feedback in a non-threatening, non-punitive way.

Olympic National Park began BBS, called “safety discussions” in October 1997 with assistance from training and consulting company Safety Performance Solutions, Inc. of Blacksburg, VA. This training was combined with expertise from within Olympic National Park, assistance from the park service’s intermountain region safety manager and networking with private industry contacts such as Hercules and Hewlett Packard attained through participation in the Safety Performance Solutions annual user’s conference.

These efforts have led to a very successful BBS implementation within Olympic. The park has reduced it’s lost time injury rate from a 8-year average of 5.8 before the process to a rate of 2.8 after the first year of involvement in 1998 to a rate of 1.8 in 2000. The park has also reduced the total incident rate from an 8-year average of 18.1 before the process to 14.8 in 1998 to a rate of 8.3 in 2000.

Although very successful overall, all areas within the park have not been involved at the same level. Law enforcement at the park is necessarily a risky job. For approximately 50 rangers, it involves the uncertainty of arrests and car stops, approximately 300 miles of road and hundreds of campsites to patrol, as well as numerous residences resulting in occasional domestic problems. In addition, these rangers often work alone. This not only increases risk on the job, but also makes participation in the park’s safety discussion processes more difficult.

## 1. People, Land, & Water, in press.

Olympic National Park Safety Discussion Card Law Enforcement			
Date:	Time:	Observer:	
	Safe	At-Risk	Feedback
<b>VEHICLES</b> Mechanical Emergency Equipment Administration			
<b>COMMUNICATIONS</b> Mechanical: radio operation Procedures Car Stop Person Contact			
<b>PPE</b> Weapon Body Armor Footwear Outerwear EMS			
<b>TRAFFIC STOPS</b> Attitude/Awareness Communications Location Approach Contact Surroundings Breaking Contact			
<b>ARRESTS</b> Communications Handcuffing Search of Arrestee/vehicle Safety of Officer			
<b>TRANSPORT</b> Prisoner Search Safety of Officer			
<b>PURSUIT</b> Knowledge of Policy Within Policy			
<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>			

The BBS steering committee at Olympic includes employee representatives from each of the major areas within the park. The ranger representative developed the first draft of a critical behavior checklist focused specifically on the rangers. He then brought it to a group of about 20 other rangers for refinement and buy-in.

The rangers began using the card as a tool for conducting both peer-to-peer as well as self-observations in May 2000. However, because the rangers often work alone, most have been self-observations. Over 120 observation cards have been turned-in over the last 4 months of the fiscal year by the 50 rangers.

Because the self-observation process does not have a natural discussion or communication component built in, as does the peer-to-peer process, it is critical to create an opportunity for discussion regarding the observations. Therefore, the cards are collected by the 10 district rangers, who review the data and comments from the cards at the district meetings. The cards are then sent to the chief ranger who reviews them and discusses the information at the staff meetings.

The rangers have seen a very promising relationship between injury rate and participation in the observation and feedback process. In 1998 only 6 safety discussions occurred within the ranger division. Because there was not a specific observation card for the rangers, they used the park's generic card. The total incident rate for the rangers in 1998 was 15.7 and their lost time rate was 3.9. In 1999, the rangers increased their safety discussions to 66, and their total incident rate dropped to 8.1 and the lost time rate dropped to 2.5. In May of 2000, the rangers completed their job specific checklist and began conducting self-observations combined with the peer-to-peer safety discussions. In 2000, 183 observations had taken place by the ranger division and the total incident rate dropped to 4.3 and the lost time rate was 0.

Although the increased awareness of safety issues from the observations and resultant discussions is a critical aspect of the safety improvement process, the process is also meant to identify behavioral trends. These trends are analyzed and the rangers participate in determining appropriate corrective actions. So far, at least 5 major actions have been taken as a result of the data collected during the ranger's observations. Vehicles have been repaired, use of body armor has increased, the way rangers approach a car during an arrest has been modified, and radio communications during an arrest have been increased. The chief ranger, Curt Sauer, said "this is a way to get at these issues that have been going on for a while without pointing the finger at anyone."