

# Accreditation: Should Wildlife Law Enforcement Participate?

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*Abstract:* The concept of accreditation for law enforcement agencies became a reality in 1983 when the first agencies were accredited with the newly formed Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. Accreditation provides a means for all law enforcement agencies, regardless of primary function, to document their commitment to the furtherance of professionalism in services provided to the public.

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That we live in a fast paced and ever changing world is no secret to anyone. Neither is the fact that, regardless of whatever the field, vocation, profession, or business, all entities must be prepared to meet the challenges, changes in work habits, technology, and procedures that are mandated by such fast paced times. The field of law enforcement is no exception. One familiar method that has long been utilized by certain educational institutions as well as many emergency medical service institutions is accreditation.

The concept of accreditation for law enforcement was developed primarily from the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice during 1967, The National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals in 1973, and the American Bar Association and International Association of Chiefs of Police Standards for the Urban Police Function in 1973.

During 1979, The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA) was formed with the selection as Commissioners of 21 persons from across the nation representing state, county, and local law enforcement, as well as the public and private sectors, courts, college professors, business persons, and elected officials. From 1979 through 1982 the Commission developed and drafted over 1,000 standards and a process for achieving accreditation. Eventually 944 standards contained in 48 chapters were adopted. Today there are 908 standards in 48 chapters. Prior to adoption of the original standards, selected agencies from throughout the nation were asked to review the standards and to file evaluations as

to whether the standards were reasonable and achievable. Evaluations returned were favorable toward the concept.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), the National Sheriffs Association (NSA), and the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), were instrumental in development of the original standards. Committees from these same institutions still play a major role in the revision/discarding of existing standards or the adoption of new ones. We are indebted to the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) for the allocation of about \$1.5 million as seed money to initiate standards development and an accreditation process for law enforcement. Administration of CALEA is now the responsibility of an executive staff with headquarters in Fairfax, Virginia. The Executive Director reports directly to the Commission.

Upon formation of CALEA in 1979, the primary objective was to establish a body of standards designed to: 1) increase law enforcement agency capabilities to prevent and control crime; 2) increase agency effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of law enforcement services; 3) increase cooperation and coordination with other law enforcement agencies and with other agencies of the Criminal justice system; and 4) increase citizen and employee confidence in the goals, obligations, policies, and practices of the agency. In addition, CALEA was formed to develop an accreditation process that provides state and local law enforcement agencies an opportunity to voluntarily demonstrate that they meet an established set of law enforcement standards.

Recommendations of previous standard-setting efforts were not adopted on anything approaching a systematic basis. CALEA, as an ongoing accreditation organization, is in a position to supply a number of critical and heretofore missing ingredients that enhance the prospects of widespread acceptance of its standards.

First, CALEA can keep the standards up to date by adding new standards or changing or deleting old ones in response to new technology, new procedures, new research findings, and continued feedback from accredited agencies.

Second, realizing that not all standards are applicable to all agencies, CALEA introduces flexibility by identifying those standards that are not applicable to a given agency due to its size or functions formed.

Third, CALEA serves as an independent means by which agencies can verify, and receive appropriate recognition for, compliance with the standards.

Finally, with its creation and with standards originating from within the law enforcement community, CALEA is a central source and the catalyst that provides appropriate encouragement and support for agencies exploring the desirability of complying with the standards and for those actively pursuing accredited status.

CALEA meets quarterly in different parts of the country. During its meetings, agencies who have progressed through the accreditation process and have been recommended by an on-site assessment team for accredited status are considered. Other items of business include the review, revision, interpretation, or deletion of existing standards, review/revision of manuals or publications, and occasional

adoption of new publications. The meetings also provide a resource room and the opportunity for agency representatives to share what has worked for them or to exchange other information of mutual interest.

The accreditation process is comprised of 24 steps that are contained in the following 5 phases:

1. **Application.** The process begins when, after having received information concerning accreditation, an agency applies to CALEA for applicant status. If the agency is deemed to be eligible, a contract that identifies what is expected of each party is signed by the agency's chief executive officer and the executive director of CALEA.

2. **Agency Profile Questionnaire (APQ).** The agency completes and files an APQ, which provides information CALEA uses to assist in determining those standards with which the agency must comply. The APQ asks about agency size, mandated responsibilities, and functions performed (the primary determination of the standards an agency must meet to be accredited).

3. **Self-Assessment.** CALEA furnishes the agency with a listing of standards with which they must comply. After review by the agency, any questions concerning applicability of standards on the basis of functions performed are handled by telephone between agency and CALEA staff. The self-assessment process is then initiated, which involves an extensive examination by the agency to determine whether or not it believes that it complies with all applicable standards, and to develop policies or procedures for any standards with which it is not in compliance. Proofs of compliance are prepared and documentation assembled for utilization during on-site assessment.

4. **On-site Assessment.** Upon satisfying itself that compliance with all applicable standards has been achieved, the applicant agency notifies CALEA. CALEA then identifies a team of assessors, permits the agency to review the team make-up to avoid possible conflicts of interest, and dispatches the team to the agency. Assessors examine proofs of compliance to determine if the agency complies with all applicable standards.

5. **Commission Review and Decision.** The on-site assessment team submits a report of its findings to CALEA. CALEA, at its next quarterly meeting, grants full accreditation status, or defers accreditation status. In case of the latter, CALEA advises the agency what steps are necessary to gain accreditation.

Agencies interested in accreditation, naturally, want the benefits identified. While costs associated with accredited status are easily identifiable, the benefits may be less obvious, but just as tangible. It is difficult, for example, to place a dollar value on the enhanced reputation an agency gains through successful completion of the accreditation process, yet that reputation may later pay dividends in a number of areas, some that may be difficult to positively attribute to accreditation. Following, however, is an excerpt from the CALEA publication, *Accreditation Program Handbook*, CALEA (1985), that contains known benefits of law enforcement accreditation:

## **Benefits of Law Enforcement Accreditation**

### **Accreditation Benefits for the Agency's Chief Executive Officer and the Agency's Command Staff**

1. Accreditation requires an in-depth review of every aspect of the agency's organization, management, operations, and administration—including:
  - establishment of agency goals and objectives, with provision for periodic updating;
  - re-evaluation of how agency resources are being utilized in accord with agency goals, objectives, and mission assignments;
  - re-evaluation of agency policies and procedures—especially as documented in the agency's written directive system; and
  - allowing the agency an opportunity to correct deficiencies before they become public problems.
2. The accreditation standards provide neutral guidelines for developing strong budget justifications—especially for personnel and their allocation across functions and activities.
3. The accreditation standards provide norms against which agency performance can be measured and monitored over time.
4. Accreditation provides the agency with a continuing flow of information about exemplary policies, procedures, and projects as distributed by the Commission.
5. Accreditation provides the agency an opportunity to participate in the development of new or revised standards.
6. Accreditation provides recognition that the agency's managerial and operational policies and procedures are in accord with a body of nationwide standards—and that the agency has made a concerted effort to attain professional status.

### **Accreditation Benefits for All Other Members of the Agency Including Sworn and Civilian Employees**

1. Accreditation assures that agency policies and procedures are in written form—available to all agency personnel.
2. Accreditation assures agency personnel that every aspect of its personnel system is in accord with nationwide standards and that it is both fair and equitable.
3. Accreditation enhances the morale of agency personnel building the confidence of employees in the effectiveness and efficiency of their own agency.

### **Accreditation Benefits for Neighboring Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Agencies**

1. Accreditation promotes relationships with other neighboring law enforcement agencies, as well as prosecutors, courts, correctional agencies, and state and local governmental officials.

2. Accreditation requires the establishment of mutual aid, i.e., agreements between law enforcement agencies; such agreements are in writing and well understood by all parties.

3. Accreditation promotes standardization of operational policies—thereby increasing efficiency in handling calls for assistance, referrals, and joint investigations.

4. Accreditation requires participation in statewide radio, fingerprint, crime information, and crime reporting systems.

**Accreditation Benefits for State, County, and Local Governments and Their Elected Leaders and Appointed Managers and Administrators.**

1. Accreditation provides assurance that the government unit's law enforcement agency is delivering a high level of service to citizens of the agency's service area.

2. Accreditation provides objective measures to justify decisions related to budget requests and personnel policies.

3. Accreditation reduces the likelihood of vicarious liability suits against the agency.

4. Accreditation reduces the cost of liability insurance for the agency.

**Accreditation Benefits for Citizens in the Agency's Service Area.**

1. Accreditation demonstrates the commitment of the agency to professionalism—in terms of adherence to a body of national standards.

2. Accreditation assures the community that its law enforcement agency is committed to the provision of services of the highest quality and that its policies and procedures are effective and responsive on the one hand, and fair and equitable on the other.

3. Accreditation enhances community understanding of the law enforcement agency's role—as well as its goals and objectives.

4. Accreditation commits the agency to a broad range of programs of direct benefit to the public (e.g., community crime prevention) as well as to programs to cope with man-made or natural disasters.

5. In summation, accreditation promotes community cooperation and understanding.

When an agency successfully completes the accreditation process there are certain requirements in order to maintain an accredited status. The agency is expected to maintain its compliance with those standards under which it was accredited. It is required to file an annual report certifying continuing compliance. It is expected to come into compliance with more of the applicable nonmandatory standards that it may have chosen to place in the 20% noncompliance category at the time of accreditation. With respect to new standards, an accredited agency is expected to come into compliance with new applicable standards at the time of re-accreditation.

**Table 1.** Accreditation fees as of 1 July 1989.

<i>N</i> Employees	Fee: 2 Equal Payments	Single Payment in Advance (5% discount)
1-9	\$ 5,500	\$ 5,225
10-24	8,000	7,600
25-49	9,000	8,550
50-199	11,500	10,925
200-499	14,500	13,775
500-999	17,000	16,150
1,000-2,999	19,000	18,050
3,000 up	22,000	20,900

If an agency finds it cannot maintain compliance with an applicable standard, it must notify CALEA and the matter will be considered at a future CALEA meeting.

When accredited status is granted to an agency it is valid for 5 years. Prior to the end of the 5-year period, the agency must notify CALEA if it intends to pursue re-accreditation. Re-accreditation requires another on-site assessment and payment of another fee. Fees are determined by the number of authorized full-time employees an agency has and as of 1 July 1989, fees outlined in Table 1 were in effect.

Now, to address the question, "Is accreditation beneficial to wildlife law enforcement agencies?" Law enforcement accreditation can simply be defined as a means or instrument by which all law enforcement agencies can voluntarily demonstrate that all policies, procedures, goals and objectives, and operational components are clearly defined, in writing, in order that the primary function or functions of an agency may be delivered in a manner that provides citizens prompt, courteous, efficient service in a truly professional manner. This should be the goal of any agency, regardless of how specialized or general their primary area or areas of responsibility may be.

Colonel Gerald Simmons, Law Enforcement Division Chief of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, is a long-time proponent of the concept of accreditation for law enforcement. He firmly believes it applies equally to agencies such as the one he directs and is proud of the fact that his is the first wildlife enforcement agency to apply and, hopefully, will be the first to receive accredited status.

### Literature Cited

- Executive Staff, Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. 1985. Accreditation Program Handbook. Exhibit B.1. Pages B-3 and B-4.