



Fraternal Order of Police United States Park Police Labor Committee

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July 7th, 2022

Acting Chief Christopher Stock
United States Park Police
1100 Ohio Dr SW
Washington, DC 20024
RE: USPP Case #PP22-061236/Hazardous Conditions

Dear Acting Chief Stock,

I am writing you on behalf of the rank-and-file members of the United States Park Police Fraternal Order of Police (USPPFOP) in reference to the events that transpired on Saturday, July 3rd, 2022. I wanted to share the perspective of these events and how our dire staffing levels negatively impact our officers, and more importantly, the public we are sworn to protect on a daily basis. My goal is to motivate your office to hold National Park Service (NPS) officials accountable for years of neglect. We urge you to take the information in this letter seriously and work with the Union to demand that NPS takes drastic and immediate measures to rectify this problem. We now have less officers than we had in 1975 and we continue to lose more almost weekly. With an annual attrition rate of approximately 35 officers per year, hiring 75 officers next fiscal year will do almost nothing to help. Radical changes to our pay, recruitment incentives, and retention efforts must happen NOW. Please convey the events in this letter to the attention of NPS management and personnel within the Department of Interior (DOI) legislative affairs office. Help us by bringing our situation to light with people who can take measures to make sweeping changes and put us on equal footing with partner Federal Law Enforcement agencies. Nights like July 3rd, will continue to occur and will only get worse if something doesn't change:

On Saturday, July 3rd, 2022 from approximately 2200-0600 hours, a multitude of hazardous conditions occurred across United States Park Police Force jurisdiction in the Washington Metropolitan Area (WMA) due to extreme weather and the continued staffing neglect by USPP, NPS, DOI mismanagement.

Extreme weather caused flooding, downed trees, trapped motorists, and motor vehicle crashes across the WMA. USPP Officers, who continue to operate daily with dangerous staffing levels, struggled to keep up with calls for service at great risk to themselves and the public.

Our brave USPP Officers were unable to make proper road closures to ensure the safety of the public. Outside support from partner Law Enforcement was extremely limited. NPS support staff (maintenance, tree

crews, roads/trails) was almost nonexistent and failed to respond and assist. The tow truck and crane provider, AnA Towing did not respond to calls. The Shift Commander made no attempt to call off-duty personnel when the situation became a disaster and failed to provide guidance to the rank-and-file officers handling multiple emergencies. In addition, despite DC Fire conducting water rescues on our roadways with a full Command Center activated under the control of a Battalion Chief on our primary jurisdiction, the Shift Commander did not respond to the scene to support the two officers who were on duty in that District.

Two USPP supervisors described the inability of the agency to handle these events as “the worst they had seen in their 20-year careers,” despite the monumental efforts made by officers on scene.

Officers faced multiple needless hazards throughout the evening due to the lack of support by our leadership and the National Park Service:

Lack of NPS support led to dangerous conditions for Officers and the public:

- District 1 – NPS personnel did not respond, and no support was received for road closures, tree hazards, or flooding.
- District 2 – NPS tree crew responded; however, NPS did not respond for road closures or flooding support.
- District 3 – NPS personnel did not respond, and no support was received for road closures, tree hazards, or flooding.
- District 4 – NPS personnel responded and provided road closure assistance, flooding support, and tree removal.
- District 5 – NPS personnel did not respond, and no support was received for road closures, tree hazards, or flooding.

The USPP mission was severely damaged due to the lack of NPS support. Officers attempted to contact multiple NPS entities during this emergency – to no avail. This endangered the lives of the public and the officers who desperately needed this help. District 4 officers and Supervisors can attest to the unmeasurable difference receiving NPS support provided to them in comparison to the other Districts, who were left with virtually no support from NPS. Park Service leadership should be ashamed of their reckless negligence for public safety.

AnA Towing (Tow and Crane Provider):

- District 1- An officer waited almost 3 hours for a response to a disabled police cruiser.
- District 3- A different private crane service was required to handle 5 disabled vehicles. AnA handled only one disabled vehicle during the same timeframe.
- AnA consistently failed to respond to multiple disabled vehicles leaving abandoned vehicles in the roadway for the entire shift.
- AnA took at least two hours to respond to assist (if they showed up at all).

- The USPPFOP has alerted the agency of the hazards produced by our current crane situation for over 2 years, yet nothing has been done to rectify the situation. This lack of attention is blatant and purposeful neglect at this point as **2 more officers were struck and injured waiting for cranes on top of the ones who have already been injured in the past.** The National Park Service is responsible for their injuries and should be held accountable for this glaring safety hazard they have created for our officers.

U.S Park Police – DC Dispatch (COMSEC)

- COMSEC was understaffed during 1/3 of the shift (coincidentally during the most extreme conditions).
- A roach infestation has made a comfortable home in COMSEC - further complicating the ability of Dispatch Personnel to assist officers. Furthermore, despite the shameful results of the DOI IG Report highlighting the dilapidated conditions in COMSEC, nothing has been done to rectify the working conditions and it continues to deteriorate.

District 1 (Central District – National Mall, Rock Creek Parkway, and Downtown Area)

- District 1 has a minimum staffing of 12 Officers. The shift was understaffed by 1/3 of the personnel required to handle the mission on a normal shift; never mind the weather emergency that was presented during this particular tour.
- Car 113 was out of service for approximately 3 hours due to a Force vehicle issue. Car 111 was also subsequently out of service checking on the safety of Car 113. This left only one unit available for calls during a large portion of the shift.
- At approximately 0200 hours, the Rock Creek Parkway had large sections under water due to flash flooding. D1 did not have the required staffing to make closures causing more vehicles to be stuck and exposed to dangerous flooding. The officers were overwhelmed by this situation; however, no support was provided by USPP management or NPS leadership. Once flooding receded, AnA Towing failed to respond to remove disabled/abandoned vehicles from the roadway – further burdening our officers and putting everyone at a serious safety risk. The DC community deserves better service from our agency.

District 2 (GW Parkway, Clara Barton Parkway, Great Falls, Fort Hunt)

- At approximately 2200 hours, District 2 Officers were inundated with multiple downed trees on the GW Parkway in the area of Spout Run. Again, because of staffing, District 2 personnel were unable to make the appropriate road closures in order to prevent the public from driving into these road hazards. The inability to effectively close a major highway during an emergency caused members of the public to be trapped on the roadway due to flash flooding and downed trees. District 2 officers were not only unable to shut down the road, but they were also unable to turn vehicles around and

clear the roadway for the safety of the drivers. This will happen every single time we have extreme weather due to our current staffing and lack of motivation by NPS leadership to fix our agency.

- District 2 officers had to wait for NPS tree crews to respond from home. Additionally, they had to beg COMSEC to contact surrounding agencies for support.
- At various times, Fairfax and Virginia State were able to assist, but not consistently or for extended periods of time due to their own call volume. This sporadic assistance further highlighted the safety issue officers were facing during the delayed the ability of the tree crews to clear the roadway. This was a recipe for disaster that could have easily led to serious injuries or deadly consequences.
- Due to extreme flooding, District 2 officers received emergency calls and were unable to respond to sections of the GW Parkway. In addition, they were unable to get into DC to assist District 3 officers for emergency calls – despite the fact they were assigned by management to cover multiple patrol areas within both Districts.

District 3 (Rock Creek Park, Beach Drive, Georgetown Waterfront, NE/NW DC Parks)

- District 3 only had two officers on duty. At approximately 2300 hours, most of Beach Drive was experiencing extreme flash flooding.
- District 3 officers responded to three blown manhole covers in the area of the Zoo Tunnel on Beach Drive in a matter of minutes. ***Officers responded to 9 vehicles that were completely disabled by the open manhole covers and were blocking the roadway over a stretch of two miles.*** The two officers working were unable to check on citizens trapped in their vehicles and shut the roadway at the same time. District 2 was unable to assist due to the previously mentioned incidents. Flooding made District 3 unreachable. District 1 was also unable to assist due to an arrest and two disabled patrol vehicles.
- District 3 officers made numerous requests for road closure assistance and help getting the heavy manhole covers back into place to prevent further hazards. No assistance was provided.
- District 3 officers were advised no contact could be made with NPS maintenance or tree crews to assist with clearing the roadway of hazards. While the two District 3 officers were attempting to gain control of the situation, two more vehicles became disabled by the exposed manholes; ***bringing the disabled vehicle total up to 11.***
- Eventually, with assistance from a passing Secret Service Unit, District 3 was able to remove all vehicles through a private crane (not AnA Towing). AnA Towing was unable to handle the call volume.
- At approximately 0100 hours, District 3 again suffered heavy flooding on Beach Drive in the area of Porter Street. Multiple vehicles were disabled with drivers climbing out of their windows and sitting on top of their vehicles attempting to escape flood waters. Again, the only two District 3 officers on duty could not make the necessary road closures to prevent more vehicles from driving into flooded area. This also prevented a safe area for DC Fire to assist.
- DC Fire assisted by setting up a command center, with a Battalion Chief, and began making water rescues on Beach Drive. DC Fire personnel were extremely frustrated and questioning why we were

not closing the roads for the safety of his personnel and the public. District 3 officers had to explain that we only had 2 officers on duty in District 3. Officers further explained no other USPP District could provide any assistance. District 3 requested assistance multiple times to no avail - due to the magnitude of the situation in the WMA. DC fire subsequently requested assistance from MPD - also to no avail.

- District 3 personnel were also experiencing radio failures, zero support from Rock Creek NPS personnel, and isolation from the other Districts. USPP management also ignored requests for assistance. Virtually every member of USPP management has home-to-work vehicles assigned to them. No one from USPP or NPS leadership responded in to assist with a public safety emergency.

District 4 (Route 295/BW Parkway, Greenbelt Park)

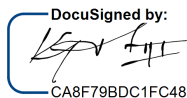
- Severe flash flooding occurred from DC Route 295 through Northbound BW Parkway was caused by overwhelmed storm drains. This required three USPP units for closures.
- Several vehicles became stuck in the flooding that were required to be extricated.
- A tree fell at the US Route 50/BW Parkway split. A US Fish and Wildlife Officer was dispatched to assist because all USPP units were tied up.
- During this time, two separate 3-car crashes occurred along with a 1-car crash into the wall on the BW parkway.
- Another car was found off the roadway abandoned. Another private crane company had to be called due to no response from AnA Towing. This delay caused repeated emergency calls into dispatch - further straining officer response times and an already short-staffed dispatch center.
- ***The US Fish and Wildlife officer was rear-ended while assisting US Park Police checking on an accident. The US Fish and Wildlife officer was subsequently transported to the hospital.***
- AnA Towing failed to respond to any of the above incidents and all tow services were provided by other towing companies. ***At approximately 0700 hours later that morning, another USPP officer was struck in his patrol car while waiting on a tow service for a disabled vehicle. That officer was transported to the hospital due to a serious head injury.***
- Officers were only able to conduct quick safety checks on occupants of disabled vehicles on the roadway; however, due to the massive call volume, they were unable to provide any further assistance.

District 5 (SE DC Parks, Southern Maryland Parks, Suitland Parkway)

- District 5 had to move all available units to District 4 to assist with heavy flooding on the roadway. ***Subsequently, District 5 was left with ZERO officers available to handle any calls that may have come up.***

The continued reckless neglect by the Department of Interior and the National Park Service has reached crisis levels. Residents and visitors to the Washington Metropolitan Area are at a serious safety risk while on Park Service property. The fact that management from all levels has stood by idly without making any changes to their leadership tactics baffles me. On the evening of July 3rd, the vast majority of USPP management were comfortable in their homes and completely oblivious to yet another night where our officers had no support. NPS continues to demand service on our days off, continuously extend our shifts, they continuously disregard our concerns, and they continue to put us and the public in danger with their lack of support. Pure neglect has resulted in two more injured officers and put the public in extreme danger. The USPPFOP is disgusted with our management partners from DOI and NPS. Our officers have been completely abandoned with no support. Chief, we need your leadership to fix this situation so events like this do not continue to happen. We urge you to hold NPS accountable and back the officers who work tirelessly for you every day. We request you take sweeping measures with NPS to make sure the officers and the public are safe. The Union should not be alone in efforts to make USPP the best Federal Law Enforcement agency it once was. Give us the tools and the staffing we need to effectively carry out our mission. Thank you for your time and I am looking forward to hearing your thoughts.

Respectfully,

DocuSigned by:

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Ken Spencer, Chairman
US Park Police
Fraternal Order of Police

cc: The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
The Honorable Muriel Bowser