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Forest Service Special Agents, Assistant Special Agents in Charge, Senior Special Agents, and Supervisory Special Agents Report: Nationwide Study



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Cover Photo: USFS file photo, weapons confiscated by law enforcement in Nevada.

Abstract

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This is the fourth in a series of studies to evaluate perceptions of U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service law enforcement personnel of the roles, responsibilities, and issues related to their jobs. An e-mail survey was administered to the 89 Forest Service special agents, assistant special agents in charge, senior special agents, and supervisory special agents (SAs) across the United States. Seventy completed and returned the questionnaire. Communication with others in the Forest Service was important to the SA respondents, as evidenced by their efforts to communicate at group meetings, and their use of e-mail and the phone. A major concern for the SA respondents was the shortage of SAs and law enforcement officers. Forest Service SA respondents ranked their highest job priorities as protecting National Forest System employees and forest users, followed by protecting forest resources and public property. Nationally, a successful program was characterized as one with sufficient resources that is understood by those engaged in or affected by the program.

Keywords: Crime and violence, law enforcement, forest visitors, successful management.

Executive Summary

This is the fourth in a series of studies evaluating the perceptions of U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS) law enforcement personnel regarding their profession. The ultimate goals of the work are threefold. First, the Law Enforcement and Investigations (LEI) studies serve as a followup to a previous qualitative study to learn more about crime and violence in national forests and grasslands and the impacts on recreation visitation and management of those national forests. Second, the LEI studies serve as a followup to a previous qualitative study testing the key characteristics of success in law enforcement, measuring opinions about recreation visitor and public safety, and evaluating impacts to natural resources. Third, the LEI studies serve to provide Credibility Through Accountability/Performance Accountability System data for LEI.

Specific research objectives were to:

- Develop, pretest, and administer a quantitative survey instrument to gather information from special agents, assistant special agents in charge, senior special agents, and supervisory special agents (SAs) about crime and violence at USFS sites nationwide.
- Confirm what crimes and acts of violence are occurring, the extent of crimes, and the impacts they have on public land management and public safety.
- Ascertain whether SAs perceive that acts of crime and violence are changing, and, if so, how?
- Determine SA perceptions of the impacts of crime and violence to recreation visitors and other forest users.
- Establish measures of law enforcement success.
- Identify successful LEI programs nationally, regionally, and locally.
- Confirm the key characteristics of law enforcement success.
- Identify additional successful strategies used by SAs to deal with crime in forest settings.

To obtain this information, an e-mail survey along with an endorsement letter from the Deputy Director of LEI was sent to SAs in the USFS. Of the 89 questionnaires sent via e-mail, 70 were completed and returned.

Most of the SA respondents were male, the SAs were predominantly White, and most were several years away from retirement. There was some diversity evidenced by race or gender. About half of the SA respondents held an academic degree related to their work in law enforcement. They had been in law enforcement an average of 18 years, and had worked as SAs for the USFS for an average of 6 years.

The SA respondents were responsible for providing investigative services in an area that totals a median 3 million acres each, although the law enforcement officers (LEOs) in their area usually patrolled considerably less than that. The most common activities while carrying out the investigative function were interviewing (subjects, suspects, and witnesses), driving, report writing, surveillance, and research (including electronic research).

Issues of importance to SAs included communication with others in the USFS, which was evidenced by their efforts to attend meetings and other functions, or making themselves available to communicate. They used the phone, e-mail, and weekly reports to get their messages out.

Another issue for the SA respondents was the shortage of SAs and LEOs. Many SA respondents reported having cooperative law enforcement agreements with county sheriff offices, and, for many, their perceptions of these services were mixed. An almost equal percentage reported that cooperative law enforcement agreements were adequate as reported them not adequate in responding to or preventing crime. Opinions from respondents about administrative law enforcement agreements with state police or city/town/community were mostly negative.

Opinions were mixed about whether their authority and jurisdiction was adequate for what they believed was expected or demanded of the SAs.

The USFS SA respondents ranked their highest job priority as protecting National Forest System (NFS) employees and forest users, followed by protecting forest resources, and protecting public property. They believed that the NFS line officers with whom they most commonly interacted had a similar set of priorities. Most SA respondents felt they had good relations and rapport with the line officers with whom they most commonly interacted. Most also believed that LEI's relationship with the rest of the USFS should be one of collaboration and teamwork, but many reported they perceived themselves to be outsiders to the USFS organization. Most SA respondents felt supported by LEI line officers, NFS line officers, or local NFS employees. Most of the SA respondents reported they were "very" successful in getting their cases accepted for prosecution in federal and state jurisdictions. The vast majority of their time was spent investigating criminal cases as opposed to civil cases.

Several types of crime were on the increase according to SA respondents. Resource damage, marijuana cultivation, methamphetamine labs, methamphetamine chemical dumps, property trespass, and criminal damage topped the list. Wildlife hazards, weather hazards, and mining issues were thought to remain unchanged from fiscal year (FY) 2003 to FY2004. More than half of the SA

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They believed that forest users wanted to be assured of a safe and enjoyable experience while on the forest.

respondents reported they were threatened or attacked because of their job. Most reported this was related to drug activity or was a common occurrence.

Lack of adequate funding, occupational ideals (e.g., retaining employees), safety for themselves and others, and management issues (e.g., support from line officers) topped the list of priorities facing law enforcement professionals, according to the SA respondents. Most SAs believed that the NFS line officer with whom they most commonly interacted was in general agreement with their list of priorities.

The SA respondents described their primary customers as forest users, Forest Service employees, and local agencies. They believed that forest users wanted to be assured of a safe and enjoyable experience while on the forest. They also thought customers wanted them to take action, to conserve the lands, to allow use/access, and for law enforcement to be seen. More than half of the SA respondents felt that recreation visitors were mostly safe from other visitors and mostly physically safe from site features.

For their area of responsibility, most SA respondents reported that, during the time they worked there, the quality of the natural resources had declined, as had the maintenance of Forest Service facilities and developed areas. More than half of the SA respondents believed that the media portrayal of crimes against resources, as well as the media portrayal of fire crimes, was mostly positive for law enforcement.

Nationally, a successful LEI program was characterized as one with sufficient resources that is understood by those engaged in or affected by the program, is staffed by highly qualified individuals, and has support and trust. Similarly, a successful regional program was characterized as one with sufficient resources that is understood by those engaged in or affected by the program, has support and trust, and is staffed by highly qualified individuals. Locally, success depended on understanding and good working relationships by those engaged in or affected by the program, staff of highly qualified individuals, support and trust, and the resources needed to do the job.

Common concerns for USFS SAs included relationships both within and outside the agency, adequate resources in terms of equipment needs, personnel, and funding, natural resource protection, and safety of forest users, customers, and Forest Service employees.

The results of this study can be used in various ways. The identification of issues, particularly issues that are consistent across regions, could be used to prioritize law enforcement efforts. The case studies of success indicated that focus on problem areas was important to overcoming the problems. In addition, some of the successes that have occurred, in combination with a focus on the characteristics identified as integral to a successful LEI program could be identified as a priority

focus area for officers and leaders. This has some serious implications for budgeting and staffing. Some consideration might be made of the current allocation of resources and whether it is congruent with the issues identified by the SAs.

Although it may appear that a successful LEI program considers only the SAs and their needs, further examination of the many comments indicates a great desire to work for the public good, keep visitors safe, and protect the land base.

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Introduction

Crime and acts of violence are a part of the national forest setting making the work of national forest and grassland managers more hazardous and jeopardizing the safety of forest users. To understand and respond appropriately to current and future Forest Service law enforcement needs, it is important to hear from the professionals most closely associated with those—special agents, assistant special agents in charge, senior special agents, and supervisory special agents (SAs) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS).

Another incentive for conducting this study was to respond to the federal initiative for performance-based measures. As a consequence of budget cuts and competing demands for federal dollars, the USFS must demonstrate its accountability to Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, the Government Accountability Office, and the general public for its level of performance. Under the aegis of the Credibility through Accountability/Performance Accountability System (CTA/PAS), USFS Law Enforcement and Investigations (LEI) was tasked with developing and implementing performance outcome measures. In addition, LEI also wanted recognition of the benefits that accrue to visitors, employees, and cooperators beyond what is addressed in the performance measures. They wanted an opportunity to “tell their story.” They believe that “locking up bad guys and writing tickets” does not adequately describe the benefits they provide. This report includes CTA/PAS performance measures for USFS law enforcement as well as many of the stories, opinions, and institutional memories of dedicated USFS SAs.

This is the fourth in a series of studies addressing the CTA/PAS component. Previously, we reported on the results of studies conducted with law enforcement officers (LEOs), special agents in charge (SACs), and patrol commanders and patrol captains. The final study includes forest supervisors and district rangers. Results from those studies appear in separate reports.

Background

Research on national forest crime is limited. Historically, research efforts focused on vandalism (Christensen and Clark 1978), especially graffiti and target shooting. More recently, Munson (1995) noted problems such as the dumping of garbage and toxic chemicals, vandalism, marijuana cultivation, and timber thefts. Marosi (1999) found that national forests were being used as a dumping ground for murders committed elsewhere, especially in urban-proximate forests (those within an hour’s drive of a million or more people). Pendleton (1996) found a 100-percent increase in national forest crime from 1989 to 1992. More recently, Chavez and Tynon (2000) found that clandestine methamphetamine manufacture and methamphetamine

“Locking up bad guys and writing tickets” does not adequately describe the benefits they provide.

lab chemical dumps, once thought to be the bane of urban environments, indiscriminately endanger both those who visit and those who work in national forests. Methamphetamine has become a dangerous and environmentally damaging drug problem.

Chavez and Tynon (2000) reported on crime in a study conducted at eight USFS sites in four USFS regions. The kinds of crime taking place at these sites were sorted into the following categories: urban-associated crime (e.g., arson, body dumping, domestic violence, drive-by shooting, gang activity, murder, rape and sexual assault, suicide); assault (e.g., personal assault, criminal property damage, threats against property); drug activity (e.g., marijuana cultivation, methamphetamine labs, methamphetamine chemical dumps, armed defense of crops); and takeover or violence perpetrated by members of extremist and nontraditional groups (e.g., satanic cults, EarthFirst!, survivalists, and militia/supremacy groups). Subsequent research at other USFS sites lent support to those findings (Chavez et al. 2004, Tynon and Chavez 2006).

These crime categories are familiar to readers of the “USDA Forest Service Law Enforcement and Investigations Weekly Report” (LEI Summary), where systematically selected topics are reported each week. An analysis of 5 years of data (from October 1997 through the end of September 2002) revealed that the percentages in the LEI Summary report mimic estimates from managers’ perceptions of time spent in city law enforcement (such as domestic violence or murder) vs. natural resources law enforcement (such as timber theft¹) (Tynon et al. 2001). The analysis of the LEI Summary reports indicated that about 17 percent of USFS LEO time was spent conducting natural resources law enforcement, and 48 percent investigating urban crime (the remainder of topics and time were for assault, drug activities, and extremist groups). These groupings are based on research conducted by Chavez and Tynon (2000).

Crime mitigation efforts—

In addition to knowing what kinds of crime are occurring, it is important to understand how to mitigate crime. Case-study research conducted at two USFS sites uncovered strategies that resulted in safer areas for visitors, natural resource managers, and staff. Chavez et al. (2004) conducted face-to-face interviews with LEOs, district rangers, recreation officers, public affairs officers, resource specialists, and recreation planners, as well as interviews with those outside the agency (e.g., county sheriff’s deputies, a resort owner, public relations employees, and community representatives). The benefit of conducting indepth interviews is in its

¹ Tynon, J.F.; Chavez, D.J. 2002. Crimes and violence on public lands post-9/11. Keynote address presented at the leisure research symposium, National Recreation and Park Association, October 16-19, Tampa, FL.

flexibility. Respondents can “elaborate, question, go off on (informative) tangents, and often provide answers to questions that the interviewer did not foresee being asked” (Lersch 2004: 25).

The interviews revealed problems common at both sites. These included assaults, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and problems created by gang activity or members of extremist groups. Isolation or distance from assistance was also a familiar theme. There were watershed events that led to action (e.g., a riot at one site and a murder at the other). Some of the specific actions taken to manage crime and violent acts and events were (1) development of sites, (2) addition of physical barriers (categorized as prohibition and harm-reduction actions), (3) control of parking and motor vehicles, (4) increased law enforcement presence, (5) temporary and permanent closures, and (6) traffic checkpoints.

Evaluation of the case studies resulted in the identification of key characteristics for successful law enforcement. The key characteristics were force of personalities (i.e., attention to an area depended upon individuals, not on policies), resources (i.e., money and people), persistence (i.e., planning, consistency, and visibility), collaboration (i.e., within the Forest Service, with other law enforcement agencies, with community and volunteer groups, and with recreation visitors and recreation clubs), and communication (e.g., follow a communication plan, get the word out to the public, be reliable and be consistent).

The replication of site-specific actions might prove useful in other areas. But the take-home message was that successful crime mitigation characteristics (e.g., force of personalities, resources, persistence, collaboration, and communication) are not “business as usual” for law enforcement—they go beyond the cooperative agreements that already exist.

Data collection issues on national forests—

Obtaining statistical data to substantiate how much crime is occurring in USFS settings has been difficult because of the way crime is reported and recorded. Agreements between the USFS and other law enforcement entities can result in several agencies tracking crime. Local sheriffs track incidents by using categories based on the Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) guide. Part I of the UCR includes categories such as criminal homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson. Part II includes other assaults, drug violations, stolen property (receiving, buying, possessing), vandalism, weapons-related offenses, driving under the influence, liquor law violations, drunkenness, and disorderly conduct (Lersch 2004). Part III of the UCR is about assists to USFS LEOs and assists to the public, where state or local law enforcement personnel contribute to USFS enforcement efforts. Although

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this information can be made available, local LEOs/sheriffs, in general, do not specifically tie data to incidents on USFS lands—it is all combined.

The USFS has its own database to track crime incidents, also using categories from the UCR guide. In addition, it has categories specific to forest or land management (e.g., campfire where prohibited, camping where prohibited, violating curfew). The USFS tracks observations of problems, verbal warnings, and written warnings (together these are the total violations), and tickets given. Total violations and tickets written equal the total incidents or occurrences.

A significant problem is getting the data into the database. Originally, LEI entered crime data into a USFS system database called Law Enforcement Management Attainment Reporting System (LEMARS). Then, the USFS transferred all their data into a new database program called Law Enforcement and Investigations Management Attainment Reporting System (LEIMARS). Unlike LEMARS, LEIMARS contains not only investigative information but also the latitude and longitude coordinates of crime incidents, allowing it to serve as a geographic information system database. Unfortunately, data at some sites were permanently lost during the transfer process. These problems in the new system (i.e., some data were either not recorded or disappeared after being entered into LEIMARS) are being corrected.

We surveyed law enforcement personnel to get their perceptions rather than analyzing incomplete records.

Study Objectives

The best, and only, available source of crime statistics for the entire 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands in the USFS is LEIMARS, but it has inadequately captured crime because crime data collected by non-USFS law enforcement are not specifically earmarked to USFS lands, are not included in the USFS crime database, and are not available for analysis. Therefore, we decided to survey law enforcement personnel directly to obtain their perceptions rather than analyzing incomplete records of actual crime/incidents. Previous research suggested that SAs with several years of experience might best know crime and how crime incidents have changed over time.

Specific research objectives were to:

- Develop, pretest, and administer a quantitative survey instrument to gather information from SAs about crime and violence at USFS sites nationwide.
- Confirm which crimes and acts of violence are occurring, the extent of crimes, and the impacts they have on public land management and public safety.
- Ascertain whether SAs perceive that acts of crime and violence are changing, and, if so, how.

- Determine SAs perceptions of the impacts of crime and violence to recreation visitors and other forest users.
- Establish measures of law enforcement success.
- Identify successful LEI programs nationally, regionally, and locally.
- Confirm the key characteristics of law enforcement success.
- Identify additional successful strategies used by SAs to deal with crime in forest settings.

Methods

Several individuals reviewed the first draft of the survey instrument, including staff at LEI in the Washington office, leaders in the Alaska Region working on the CTA program, and fellow social scientists. We enlisted the cooperation and participation of all SAs across the United States by including an endorsement letter from the LEI Director. We administered the questionnaire via e-mail between October and November 2005.

There were 48 questions, both closed- and open-ended, on the questionnaire eliciting information about crime and violence that had occurred within the past year on each respective administrative unit. Questions measured experience levels of respondents, number of acres for which they are responsible for providing investigative services, the setting (e.g., urban, semirural, remote), and the number of cases opened and assigned. We also asked them to characterize their most common activity while carrying out the investigative function in their area.

We asked a series of questions related to enforcement level and cooperation, perceptions about authority and jurisdiction, and resources necessary to do the job.

Questions that focused on their roles in the USFS asked how their job fits into the USFS, what they perceived as their highest work priority, what they believe the relationship of LEI with the rest of the USFS should be, understanding by line officers of what SAs do, and if they feel supported.

To get at the types of crime SAs deal with, we asked them if 33 different types of crime, law enforcement violations, and other patrol activities had increased, decreased, or remained about the same from fiscal year (FY) 2003 to FY2004. We also asked SAs if they had ever been threatened or attacked because of their job.

We asked open-ended questions about SA job priorities and priorities of the line officer with whom they most commonly interact.

Several questions focused on USFS customers including customer wants, recreation visitor safety, and media portrayal of crimes against forest users.

We asked SAs if the quality of the natural resources had degraded, improved, or remained about the same. We asked if maintenance of facilities and developed

areas had changed. We also asked about media portrayals of fire crimes and crimes against resources.

We used several open-ended questions to identify measures of law enforcement success, including what SAs believed worked well and what they tried that did not work. We asked SAs to characterize a successful LEI program nationally, regionally, and locally.

The survey closed with a number of sociodemographic questions. There was also an opportunity for SAs to add final thoughts. A copy of the questionnaire used is included in the appendix.

The e-mail survey was administered according to Dillman's Total Design Method (Dillman 2000). To begin, the SAs received an e-mail message from the Deputy Director of LEI. Next, they received the first mailing from us. This consisted of a questionnaire and a personalized letter. The next e-mail was a "postcard" reminder sent a week later. In subsequent e-mail contacts, the respondent received another copy of the questionnaire. Completed questionnaires were returned in several ways: via e-mail, FAX, FedEx, or through the U.S. postal system.

Data Analysis

The data were entered into an SPSS v. 12 software program.² We ran frequencies on all variables to confirm data integrity. SPSS was used to analyze all variables. Either percentages or averages (and standard deviations) are provided, as appropriate.

Results

Of the 89 questionnaires sent via e-mail, 70 were completed and returned, for a response rate of 78.7 percent. Results are reported for all respondents unless noted otherwise.

Demographics

Most of the SA respondents were male (70 percent). Twenty-six percent were female; four percent did not respond. They averaged 45.2 years of age ($n = 65$; $SD = 7.55$).

The majority of SA respondents were White (76 percent). Four percent were Black, 4 percent were Hispanic, 3 percent were Native American, and 1 percent were multiracial (12 percent marked the "other" response or did not respond). Years of school completed averaged 15.8 years ($n = 66$; $SD = 1.80$), with 24 percent holding an academic degree related to their work in law enforcement.

The SA respondents had been in law enforcement an average 17.8 years and with the USFS an average 17.8 years.

² The use of trade or firm names in this publication is for reader information and does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture of any product or service.

Four questions measured experience. The SA respondents had been in law enforcement an average 17.8 years (n = 69; SD = 6.37) and with the USFS an average 17.8 years (n = 69; SD = 10.4). Number of years as an SA for the Forest Service ranged from 1 to 25 years with an average 9.6 years (n = 69; SD = 6.93), and respondents had been at their duty station an average of 6 years (n = 68; SD = 4.90).

Area of Responsibility

The SA respondents were responsible for providing investigative services for a median 3 million acres in their own primary area of responsibility (n = 58), and further noted that the LEOs in their area of responsibility normally accessed a median 1 million acres for patrol purposes (n = 38). We also asked about their primary area of responsibility. The responses were mixed with some noting the location where they worked and some reporting what they do, including criminal investigation, drug enforcement, supervising investigations, investigating resource crimes, and felony investigations.

The setting of the patrol area of responsibility differed. The SA respondents estimated a median 15 percent of their area was urban or urban-interface (n = 48), a median 25 percent was semirural (n = 48; SD = 19.7), a median 28 percent was rural (n = 48; SD = 21.9), and a median 20 percent was extremely remote (n = 47).

A median 35 (n = 43) cases were opened and assigned in FY2004 in their area. We also asked if there was a system in place to capture and report other national-forest-related investigations occurring in their area of responsibility that were not reported in LEIMARS (such as cases investigated by other agencies). A few SA respondents reported these systems included county dispatch reports, local sheriff's dispatch reports, or word of mouth (someone tells them about it).

The SA respondents were asked to rate 1 to 5 (where 1 is most common and 5 is least common) their most common activity while carrying out the investigative function in their area. Interviewing (subjects, suspects, and witnesses) was rated "1" by 43 percent, driving was rated "1" by 41 percent, and report writing was rated "1" by 27 percent. Eleven percent rated surveillance "1," while research (including electronic) was rated "1" by 10 percent.

The SA respondents communicated with others in the Forest Service through various means. More than one-third reported they talked face to face (37 percent). Other communications methods included:

- 20 percent reported they communicated at group functions.
- 20 percent reported they sent e-mail messages.
- 16 percent reported they talked by phone.
- 7 percent reported they provided weekly reports.

Seventy-one percent of SAs reported there were too few SAs in their area of responsibility, and 84 percent reported too few LEOs in their area of responsibility.

- 6 percent made themselves available to communicate.
- 6 percent went to National Forest System (NFS) jobsites
- 47 percent had other comments:
 - Share information with immediate supervisor who then shares it with upper and lateral management.
 - I only deal with those who need to know, giving minimal information.
 - I communicate with other USFS employees about my investigations if there is a need for the other employee to know due to safety concerns. Other than that, my investigations are not discussed.
 - There is little or no communication between enforcement and investigations.

Enforcement Level and Cooperation

On an average day, there was a median of 1 SA responsible for conducting complex (i.e., assigned investigations lasting more than 3 days involving numerous subjects, witnesses, etc.) criminal investigations in the area of responsibility (range 1 to 22; n = 64).

Seventy-one percent of SAs reported there were too few SAs in their area of responsibility, and 84 percent reported too few LEOs in their area of responsibility. There were 23 percent reporting the number of SAs in their area of responsibility was about right, and 3 percent reporting the number of LEOs in their area of responsibility was about right. Based on their organizational chart (previously approved by their line officers) the SA respondents reported there was a need to add a median of 1 SA (range 0 to 11; n = 63) in their area of responsibility.

Forty-four percent of the SA respondents reported having cooperative law agreements specific to the investigative function with other law enforcement agencies in the area of responsibility. Many reported agreements with county sheriffs' offices (44 percent). Some had similar agreements with state police (13 percent), city/town/community law enforcement (13 percent), or others (20 percent).

We asked whether the respondents thought the enforcement work by cooperating LEOs adequately contributed toward the opening of complex criminal investigations. Those who had county sheriff agreements (n = 23) were nearly split on adequacy with 44 percent who reported them to be inadequate and 39 percent who felt they were adequate. Those who had state police agreements (n = 14) were mostly negative with 64 percent who felt they were inadequate and 21 percent who reported them to be adequate. Those who had city/town/community agreements (n = 6) were also negative with 67 percent who felt they were inadequate and 33 percent who reported them to be adequate.

We asked how many sworn personnel from other law enforcement agencies provided investigative service on an average day on or affecting the NFS that were **not reimbursed** by the USFS in the primary area of responsibility. City/town/community law enforcement sworn personnel ranged from none to 5 (n = 20), with a median zero. County sheriff's office law enforcement sworn personnel ranged from none to 10 (n = 28) with a median of 1. State police law enforcement sworn personnel ranged from none to 10 (n = 24), with a median of 1. "Other" law enforcement sworn personnel ranged from none to 20 (n = 18), with a median of 1.

We also asked respondents whether these **nonreimbursed** services were adequate or inadequate in responding to or preventing crime. Perceptions about services from county sheriff law enforcement for those who had them (n = 20) were mostly negative with 55 percent saying they were inadequate, and 35 percent saying they were adequate. Perceptions about services from state police law enforcement for those who had them (n = 12) were mostly negative with 67 percent saying they were inadequate, and 33 percent saying they were adequate. Perceptions about services from city/town/community law enforcement for those who had them (n = 7) were split with 43 percent who reported they were adequate and 43 percent who reported they were not adequate.

The SA respondents were asked whether USFS LEI authority and jurisdiction was adequate for what they felt was expected or demanded of them internally and externally. Most respondents reported "no" (54 percent). Thirty-nine percent felt it was adequate. A total of 65 comments addressed concerns. These were grouped into three categories of responses: having out-of-date regulations to deal with, having to depend on others, and "other." Some examples follow:

- 38 percent reported LEI had out-of-date regulations to deal with:
 - Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFRs) is woefully inadequate and out-dated for today's USFS law enforcement environment.
- 31 percent reported they had to depend on others:
 - If no state authority exists, we must rely on another law enforcement agency to respond and deal with the incident.
- 31 percent had other comments:
 - The federal judicial system is not designed to handle daily types of crimes, like the county or state is.

Almost two-thirds of the responding SAs (64 percent) reported not having adequate resources to do their job. We asked what additional resources they might need. We received 112 responses that we grouped into six categories: equipment, personnel issues, fiscal constraints, deputizing LEOs, up-to-date regulations, and other.

The SA respondents reported their highest priorities as protecting NFS employees followed by protecting forest users.

- 29 percent reported they needed additional equipment.
- 27 percent reported they needed additional personnel:
 - Need investigative assistants or analysts to help with the research and background of suspects and witnesses.
- 18 percent reported they needed fiscal increases:
 - LEI needs to be properly budgeted so that we are not dependent upon internal USFS departments.
- 1 percent reported there was a need to deputize LEOs.
- 5 percent reported they needed up-to-date regulations.
- 21 percent had other comments:
 - We constantly have to seek assistance from outside LEI to get the job done.
 - We need access to more sensitive databases.

Roles

The SA respondents reported their highest priorities as protecting NFS employees followed by protecting forest users (table 1). They were also asked to rank 1 to 4 what they believed the NFS line officer with whom they most commonly interacted thought was the highest priority: protecting forest users; protecting resources; protecting NFS employees; or protecting public property. The SA respondents reported their perception that the NFS line officers’ highest priority was protecting NFS employees.

The SAs were asked what they believed LEI’s relationship with the rest of the Forest Service should be. We grouped their responses into four categories:

- 73 percent reported the relationship should be one of collaboration and teamwork:
 - LEI’s relationship should be that of another equal staff partner sitting at the table offering their expertise on the management direction of NFS lands.

Table 1—Priorities of special agents, assistant special agents in charge, senior special agents, and supervisory special agents (SAs) and perceptions of National Forest System (NFS) line officers’ priorities

Priority	Average (n) SAs’ view	Average (n) perception of NFS line officers’ view
Protecting NFS employees	1.6 (56)	1.8 (45)
Protecting forest users	1.8 (56)	2.4 (45)
Protecting resources	2.8 (56)	2.4 (45)
Protecting public property	3.7 (56)	3.4 (45)

Ranked 1 to 4, with 1 being highest priority

- We need to work together and be partners to solve issues; we are both part of the solution to most issues we face.
- 20 percent reported they should remain a separate entity:
 - LEI needs to continue to be a separate entity within the USFS as the law enforcement mission has elements to it that those in the resource program areas do not understand and are not trained to deal with.
- 13 percent reported LEI served a protection role:
 - LEI should be a tool utilized by USFS management to protect employees, the public, and the resources.
- 21 percent had other comments:
 - I see a continued distancing of LEI from traditional USFS resource protection and enforcement activities.

We asked the SAs where LEI fits within the Forest Service organization and programs. The responses received were quite varied. We grouped responses into several categories: we're outsiders, we're forgotten/misunderstood, we serve a protection role, we're equal partners, we're well-integrated, we're educators of the public and the NFS, and other. Examples included these:

- 39 percent reported LEI we're outsiders:
 - LEI doesn't seem to always fit in with the USFS organization.
 - We seem to be outcasts that are a necessary evil.
- 14 percent reported LEI was forgotten/misunderstood:
 - It seems that we are to hide in the shadows until needed.
- 13 percent reported LEI served a protection role:
 - We are used to protect employees, the public, and the resources.
- 11 percent reported they were equal partners in the USFS.
- 10 percent reported LEI was well-integrated.
- 1 percent reported LEI were educators of the public and the NFS.
- 56 percent had other comments:
 - Where it fits under the current organizational structure is still firmly in the grasp of those who do not understand the mission of law enforcement or do not fully support law enforcement potential.
 - It varies from place to place, and is often personality driven (on both sides).

The SAs were asked about their relationship with NFS line officers. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents reported that they had good relations and rapport with the NFS line officer:

- 69 percent reported good relations/rapport:

Sixty-nine percent of the respondents reported that they had good relations and rapport with the NFS line officer.

- I mostly work with district rangers and they understand most of the work I do.
- I am now working with one of the better district rangers I have ever worked with.
- 3 percent reported LEOs provided information to enhance understanding.
- 3 percent reported LEOs made frequent contacts.
- Other relations were not as good:
 - 36 percent reported NFS line officers did not understand the complexity/hazards of the LEO job:
 - They do not always understand the legal perspective and implications of certain decisions.
 - 13 percent reported the NFS line officer did not want information or details.
 - 16 percent had other comments:
 - I find that far too many line officers are oblivious to the impacts and impediments their actions cause LEI in the cases we are faced with.

The majority of SA respondents (67 percent) felt supported by LEI line officers. Those who did not feel supported by LEI line provided 25 responses:

- 28 percent reported there was resentment toward law enforcement:
 - Line officers want control of LEI so they can control their own private police force—re stovepipe organization.
 - Most line officers have no experience in fieldwork and cannot relate to what’s happening in the field.
- 20 percent reported there was a lack of resources:
 - We lack help on human resources issues.
 - They delay and ignore requests from the field in regards to requests for resources and progressive law enforcement programs.
- 12 percent reported there was a lack of trust/understanding:
 - LEI line officers are often far removed from the field and have no idea what it takes to do the job of a field agent. They tend to listen to folks that have their own personal agenda, which is in direct conflict with the mission of the agency.
- 8 percent reported the mission was unclear.
- 4 percent reported there was a lack of contact/relationships.
- 28 percent had other comments:
 - LEI line doesn’t appear to care about the field personnel. We have no representation.
 - I have concerns that LEI line officers are so involved in the politics of the USFS that they forget they are supervising police officers.

The majority of SA respondents felt supported by NFS line officers.

The majority of SA respondents (66 percent) felt supported by NFS line officers. Those who did not feel supported by NFS line officers provided 27 responses:

- 33 percent reported there was resentment toward law enforcement:
 - There is still a division because NFS line has no authority over LEI. National Forest System line must put this behind them.
 - Supervisors these days are so hung up on their own agendas they do not want to confront problems on the ground.
 - I believe that most line officers resent the fact that they are not supervising LEI employees.
- 22 percent reported there was a lack of trust/understanding:
 - No, I do not think they know or understand what we do.
 - There are many line officers out there that I describe as “green dinosaurs.” They do not realize the dangers faced by every law enforcement employee in the country. They believe that you must put being a “good host” before “officer safety.”
- 11 percent reported there was a lack of resources:
 - Line is constantly complaining that we don’t pay our bills and that they cannot afford to have us, so the message is clear—they would rather have their jobs funded than have a law enforcement presence.
- 4 percent reported there was a lack of contact/relationship.
- 4 percent reported the mission was unclear.
- 26 percent had other comments:
 - NFS line only calls us as a last resort and then becomes defensive when they perceive our investigative actions as embarrassing.
 - I think too often we are called in after the fact—let’s bring in law enforcement and let them take care of our problems; too much reactive stuff and not proactive.

The majority of SA respondents (73 percent) felt supported by local NFS employees. The SA respondents who did not feel supported by local employees provided 19 responses:

- 37 percent reported there was resentment toward law enforcement:
 - It’s not the norm, but some employees are unwilling to support the LEI mission, believing “it’s no big deal” for instance if someone steals a tree for firewood.
 - Many do not understand what we do, and think we’re prima donnas. Or they may feel threatened because of the nature of our business—we may be investigating them or their employees.

- Most are supportive, but the few that aren't drag down the overall mood. Jealousy over our pay seems to be the big factor, and the line officer's complaints over budgets feeds this.
- 11 percent reported there was a lack of resources:
 - Everyone is strapped for funding, but without this type of support we cannot complete, or in some cases, even initiate an investigation.
- 5 percent reported there was a lack of trust/understanding.
- 5 percent reported there was a lack of contact/relationship.
- 42 percent had other comments:
 - I have seen NFS employees that still make administrative decisions based on possible public scrutiny (good old boy) rather than laws and regulations.
 - On occasion the Unions have attempted to create a hostile working environment toward law enforcement employees. This comes in various forms, such as a lack of local support, discourteous behavior, ugly stares, and the forming of cliques and groups.

On average, SA respondents spend 33 percent of their time on tasks other than investigative duties. The noninvestigative tasks include these:

- Recertification for various activities, time and attendance reports, meetings.
- Program management and supervision.
- Report writing, U.S. attorney and court coordination.
- Vehicle maintenance, computer maintenance, equipment maintenance.
- Administrative issues, meetings.
- USFS reinventing itself takes time.
- Mandatory training.
- Meetings with other agencies.
- Cases generate a lot of paperwork and since I have no administrative help I spend time copying and collating and filing.
- Assisting LEOs.

Half (50 percent) of the SA respondents reported they were “very” successful in getting their cases accepted for prosecution at the federal level (37 percent reported they were somewhat successful). For state jurisdictions, 54 percent reported they were “very” successful (14 percent said somewhat successful) and for local jurisdictions 24 percent reported they were very successful (most said that level was not applicable to their job).

Responding SAs spent an average 85 percent (n = 68; SD = 12.9) of their investigative duties on criminal cases and an average 16 percent (n = 65; SD = 13.3) on civil cases.

Existing Issues

The SAs were asked about 33 types of crime, law enforcement violations, and other patrol activities in their patrol area of responsibility. First they were asked if these had increased, decreased, or remained about the same in the last fiscal year (FY2004) as compared to FY2003, and then were asked to specify which ones were more common during the week, during daytime hours, or when the area was more crowded. We also asked if the LEOs have ever been threatened or attacked because of their job.

At least 50 percent of the SA respondents reported the following activities had **increased** from FY2003 to FY2004 (see table 2); in rank order:

- Resource damage
- Marijuana cultivation
- Methamphetamine labs
- Methamphetamine chemical dump
- Property trespass
- Criminal damage

At least 50 percent of the SA respondents reported the following activities had **remained the same** from FY2003 to FY2004; in rank order:

- Wildlife hazards
- Weather hazards
- Mining issues

More than half (56 percent) of the SA respondents reported that they had been threatened or attacked because of their job. We asked about incidents in the past 3 years. The SA respondents provided 36 comments that we grouped into these categories: it was related to drug activity, it is a common occurrence, there were shots fired, or it was related to natural resources, large groups, or other. Some examples follow:

- 22 percent reported incidents were related to drug activity:
 - Intelligence reports indicated a Mexican drug cartel placed a bounty on any U.S. LEO or agent working the border.
 - My vehicle was shadowed by a local methamphetamine maker.
- 14 percent reported incidents were a common occurrence:
 - Every day persons make threats.
- 8 percent reported there were shots fired.
- 3 percent reported it was related to the natural resources.
- 3 percent reported incidents were related to large groups.
- 47 percent had other comments:

More than half of the SA respondents reported that they had been threatened or attacked because of their job.

- Myself and a fellow agent were confronted by an armed individual who was wearing a ballistic vest. The situation was defused through verbal commands, and a stolen all-terrain vehicle (ATV) was recovered.

Table 2—Perceptions about different types of crime, law enforcement violations, and other patrol activities in the patrol area of responsibility for fiscal year (FY) FY2004 compared to FY2003

	Increased	Decreased	Remained the same	Don't know
	<i>Percent</i>			
a. Property trespass	51	0	34	11
b. Resource damage	61	0	24	10
c. Livestock violations	7	7	44	33
d. Mining issues	14	3	51	26
e. Special use issues	49	0	29	17
f. Wildland fire	39	16	34	7
g. Arson	30	16	34	14
h. Domestic violence	34	1	20	40
i. Thefts of visitor personal property	37	0	27	33
j. Thefts of public property	47	0	37	11
k. Gang activity	36	1	19	39
l. Body dumping	21	1	34	39
m. Shooting (indiscriminate)	30	1	36	27
n. Suicides	24	3	39	29
o. Murder	26	3	39	29
p. Rape / sexual assault	14	3	40	37
q. Drive-by shooting	6	3	30	54
r. Criminal damage	50	0	29	16
s. Personnel threats	36	0	37	20
t. Threats against property	36	0	36	20
u. Marijuana cultivation	53	9	34	3
v. Meth labs	51	10	24	11
w. Meth chemical dump	51	13	23	10
x. Armed defense of crops	36	1	30	27
y. Dumping of household waste	41	3	36	17
z. Dumping of landscape waste	31	1	41	23
aa. Trespass of undocumented immigrants	44	0	19	30
bb. Armed defense of forest products	11	0	29	54
cc. Natural fire hazards	34	4	34	23
dd. Accidental fire activity	27	4	44	17
ee. Weather hazards	17	1	53	21
ff. Wildlife hazards	16	0	60	17
gg. Road hazards	24	1	49	19

Row totals do not add to 100 percent owing to missing data. All percentages based on n = 70.

Priorities

The SA respondents provided comments on priority issues. The responses were quite varied and were grouped into these categories: fiscal, occupational ideals, safety, management, natural resource protection, cooperation, update rules and regulations, and other. Sixty-seven percent had comments related to budgets.

Examples of priority issues facing the law enforcement profession in the Forest Service were:

- 67 percent reported the priority was fiscal:
 - Large-scale incidents cost a lot, not just fires but homeland security and border control.
 - There is inadequate funding to properly staff positions.
 - We lack funding for equipment and supplies.
- 36 percent reported the priority was occupational ideals:
 - We need to retain employees who are resource-minded.
- 27 percent reported the priority was safety:
 - We need to do a good job of protecting employees, public, and resources.
- 26 percent reported the priority was management:
 - I feel that the LEI program gets no support from the higher chain of command, therefore making several of the agents feel that what we are doing is not appreciated and it really affects morale.
- 24 percent reported the priority was natural resource protection:
 - The agency needs to develop long-term plans to address issues that are dramatically increasing and impacting the NFS lands, such as off-highway vehicle (OHV) use.
- 21 percent reported the priority was cooperation:
 - Better coordination is needed between NFS and LEI. LEI deals with so many different crimes...not just recreation fees, fire, timber.
- 3 percent reported the priority was to update rules and regulations.
- 31 percent had other comments:
 - People are getting worn out—trying to do too much with less all the time.
 - LEI has a lot of employees who are older and facing retirement.

We asked how priorities of the NFS line officer who most commonly interacted with the SA respondents compared with LEI priorities. Most of the comments were that there was general agreement between the NFS line officer and LEI priorities. Other categories of responses were conflicting priorities, apathy, want increased enforcement, and other. Some examples follow:

Sixty-seven percent of respondents listed budgets as priorities.

- 56 percent reported there is general agreement in priorities:
 - Along the same lines, as they believe in visitor protection, employees, and then property and resources.
 - The line officers want pretty much the same end result—we differ on the process to get there.
- 34 percent reported there are conflicting priorities:
 - There have been occasional differences in opinion, but it varies by location.
- 10 percent reported the NFS line officer is apathetic:
 - The line officers don't have much to do with my investigative priorities.
- 3 percent reported the NFS line officers want increased enforcement.
- 11 percent had other comments:
 - They are more resource and employee oriented.

Customers

Most of the SA respondents described their customers as forest users and Forest Service employees:

- 83 percent reported forest users.
- 64 percent reported Forest Service employees.
- 19 percent reported local agencies.
- 16 percent reported law-abiding users.
- 9 percent reported the natural and cultural resources.
- 9 percent reported violators of rules and regulations.
- 4 percent reported adjacent landowners.
- 17 percent had other comments:
 - Attorneys and prosecutors.

We also asked what the SAs think these customers want from LEI on NFS lands. Most comments were related to safety/protection. Other comments were grouped into action, conservation, use/access, prevention, unregulated activity, crime opportunities, regulations that are clear and concise, and other. Some examples of what SA respondents reported customers want follows:

- 63 percent reported customers want safety/protection:
 - They want to feel safe while on USFS land.
 - They don't want their vehicle to be broken into and they don't want to be assaulted.
- 41 percent reported customers want action:
 - They want full-time public safety responses and visibility.

We also asked what the SAs think these customers want from LEI on NFS lands. Most comments were related to safety/protection.

- 34 percent reported customers want conservation:
 - It varies depending on the customer but, generally, I think our customers want to feel that we are doing them a service and protecting our resources, property, and human life.
- 26 percent reported customers want use/access:
 - They want to be able to come to NFS lands with a sound peace of mind.
- 26 percent reported customers want prevention:
 - They want to see the LEOs and marked vehicle patrolling.
- 3 percent reported customers want unregulated activity.
- 3 percent reported customers want crime opportunities.
- 1 percent reported customers want regulations that are clear and concise.
- 40 percent had other comments:
 - They want prompt, effective service.
 - I believe they want to know that we have the capabilities of enforcing the rules, regulations, and the laws that apply and to be fair and honest.

Recreation visitors—

Most SA respondents reported that recreation visitors are mostly safe (54 percent) from other visitors or that it varies within the patrol area (24 percent). Seven percent reported recreation visitors are not safe, 6 percent reported that recreation visitors were very safe from other visitors, and 1 percent reported it is very dangerous for visitors.

Most SA respondents reported that recreation visitors are mostly physically safe (57 percent) from site features or that it varies within the patrol area (19 percent). Nine percent reported that recreation visitors were very safe from site features, 3 percent reported recreation visitors are not safe, and 1 percent reported it was very dangerous.

The SA respondents reported that, when compared to the average recreation visitors' neighborhood, recreation visitors are very or mostly safe (81 percent) onsite from other visitors and are very or mostly safe (83 percent) from site features.

The SAs were asked what types of investigations are most commonly found in their area of responsibility that affect recreation visitors. Their comments differed widely. We grouped responses into these categories: drug activity, urban-associated crime, fire issues, natural resource issues, special-use violations, personal threats, and other.

- 76 percent reported drug activity:
 - Many cases involve the manufacturing and distribution of narcotics in and around the national forest.

Half of the SA respondents reported the quality of the natural resources in their patrol area of responsibility had declined during the time they worked there.

- Marijuana cultivation cases, clandestine methamphetamine labs and dumpsites, narcotics trafficking and transactions occurring at developed and dispersed recreation areas.
- 41 percent reported urban-associated crime:
 - Theft of personal property.
 - Vehicle thefts and vehicle break-ins.
- 33 percent reported fire issues:
 - Arson investigations.
 - Fire affects closures.
- 29 percent reported natural resource issues:
 - Damage to the natural resources.
- 19 percent reported special-use violations:
 - Outfitter/guide offenses, wildlife and trespass offenses.
- 3 percent reported personal threats.
- 29 percent had other comments:
 - Felony possession of firearms.

The media portrayal of crimes against forest users in the patrol area of responsibility was described as either mostly positive for law enforcement (49 percent), or nonexistent (21 percent).

Natural Resources

Half of the SA respondents reported the quality of the natural resources in their patrol area of responsibility had declined (50 percent) during the time they worked there. Others reported it has remained the same (36 percent). Some reported it had improved (4 percent). More than half (57 percent) of the SA respondents reported the maintenance of Forest Service facilities and developed areas in their patrol area of responsibility had declined during the time they worked there. Others reported the maintenance had remained the same (20 percent). Some reported it had improved (11 percent).

The media portrayal of crimes against resources in the patrol area of responsibility was mostly positive for law enforcement (60 percent) or nonexistent (19 percent). The media portrayal of fire crimes in the patrol area of responsibility was mostly positive for law enforcement (70 percent) or nonexistent (13 percent).

Success Stories

A few SA respondents had success stories to share (39 percent). They provided 42 comments about successes. The comments the SAs provided were grouped into

these categories: solving crimes/getting convictions, good cooperation, proactive programs, positive feedback/gratitude, operations work, and other.

- 36 percent reported solving crimes/getting convictions:
 - A timber theft case resulted in the successful prosecution of four individuals.
 - We have successfully convicted violent serial arsonists.
 - I conducted the investigation that resulted in the conviction in federal court for robbery of two forest recreation visitors.
- 21 percent reported good cooperation:
 - I have many of these. All involve interagency and intra-agency cooperation. When we all work together, magic happens and we can all be very successful.
 - An investigation succeeded because SAs, LEOs, county, supervisor's office, and forest staff worked together from start to finish.
- 19 percent reported proactive programs:
 - One example is how we have selected investigators in the past. We worked hard to anticipate retirements and openings and selected the best LEOs who wanted to become SAs.
- 14 percent reported positive feedback/gratitude:
 - I have had people whom I have helped convict, who meet me on the street or at an event, and they will shake my hand and greet me kindly with respect.
- 2 percent reported operations work.
- 7 percent had other comments:
 - I have probably saved numerous lives by arresting drunks.

We asked how SAs measure the success of their investigative effort. More than half of the responses were related to successes but did not specifically mention prosecutions, while another one-third mentioned prosecutions.

- 56 percent reported successful investigations, not necessarily prosecutions:
 - I measure success by whether I can determine who actually committed the crime, whether it be marijuana growing or an accidental fire.
 - It is a success if a criminal is brought to court—whether or not that results in them going to prison for a long period of time.
 - A case that flows effortlessly through the system.
- 39 percent reported successful prosecutions:
 - Solving cases to conviction and/or to closure, even if the conviction was in state or local courts.
 - Persons sent to prison or jail.

- 21 percent reported decrease in criminal activity/prevention:
 - Reduced crime as a result of criminal prosecutions.
- 13 percent reported restitution collected:
 - The number of successful prosecutions and the amount of money collected from claims investigations.
- 10 percent reported customer satisfaction:
 - Measured by the respect of my peers in and outside the agency.
- 6 percent reported cooperation with others.
- 3 percent reported rehabilitation work.
- 10 percent had other comments:
 - Criminals go to prison and there are no agency or public injuries.

Eighty-one percent of respondents reported that they had successful collaboration.

The SA respondents were asked about any special alliances, associations, or strategies with other agencies that have worked well. Eighty-one percent reported that they had successful collaboration.

- 39 percent reported cooperation outside agency—sharing resources/training:
 - What works for me is having joint investigations with other agencies and networking as much as I can with other agents/investigators.
 - My job requires me to network more heavily and widely with other agencies at local, state, federal, and international levels.
 - I spend a lot of time attending state and local department trainings and educating them on the USFS mission relating to investigations.
- 21 percent reported they had a special alliance with an agency:
 - I have developed alliances with other agencies, like the Drug Enforcement Agency, that have proven beneficial.
 - I have worked with others on border issues.
- 16 percent reported task force membership:
 - Memberships on federal and county crime task forces offer ideas and manpower support for addressing long-term criminal activity.
- 13 percent reported they build relationships and have interpersonal contacts:
 - Working on relationships with U.S. attorney's office.
- 5 percent reported they use open communication.
- 1 percent reported cooperation inside the agency.
- 1 percent reported state arrest authority.
- 1 percent reported seasonal meetings (such as for fire season).

Alliances, associations, or strategies that were not as successful were thought to be due to relationship derailers (such as budget woes and ethical issues), poor external support, poor internal support, or miscommunications.

Successful LEI Program

We asked SA respondents to describe a successful **national** program. Responses differed widely and were grouped into these categories: resources, understanding/interaction, personnel, support/trust, consistent policies/regulations, occupational ideals, leadership, good communication, and other. Some examples of SA comments follow:

- 39 percent reported resources:
 - Place efforts on building better budgets for field-going personnel.
 - We need more money for people and equipment. We need to look at alternatives in funding and court our representatives and congressmen.
 - Obtain and lobby for proper funding and support from USFS administration and Congress.
- 36 percent reported understanding/interaction:
 - Those in power need to know who we are, what we do, and challenges we are facing.
 - We need a Washington office staff that prepares reports and briefs the NFS leadership team.
 - We need to have better interaction with NFS line. We are not an insular function; we are a tool of management, and people need to understand that.
- 26 percent reported personnel:
 - I would have personnel in place in the Washington office who came from the field and have USFS LEI experience.
 - Handle new hires at the national level.
- 26 percent reported support/trust:
 - Place an emphasis on support to the field with budget, appropriate policy, and a direction that is driven by knowledge of the agency and field conditions.
 - An LEI Washington office supported by the Washington office NFS leadership team through actions and funding.
- 26 percent reported consistent policies/regulations:
 - There needs to be more uniform upper level management guidelines across the Nation. Each region seems to be at a different operational level.

A successful regional program depends on resources, understanding/interaction, support/trust, personnel, good communication, leadership, occupational ideals, and consistent policies/regulations.

- I would concentrate on uniformity across regions, whether it is regarding personnel, equipment, or money. As it is now, one region may do things one way and another region a different way.
- 20 percent reported occupational ideals:
 - The SA distribution should be based on caseloads.
 - Provide professional training; give access to the same databases, intelligence, and consortiums that the primary law enforcement agencies have.
- 19 percent reported leadership:
 - Our leaders would understand the USFS well enough to know how to get budgets, new CFR, and work towards some consistency with how each region is dealing with issues like ATV/OHV, resource damage, and forest users.
 - A leadership team with strong leadership skills and tenured field background in resource-related law enforcement work.
- 17 percent reported good communication:
 - Develop a better way of telling the public what we do.
 - A team who regularly communicates to the field what the director's vision and mission statement are for the program nationally and makes every effort to remain in touch with the field.
- 29 percent had other comments:
 - Decentralize LEI priorities to reflect local conditions.
 - More field evaluations by Washington office-level managers of regional programs and issues. Further, I believe these evaluations should be done through interviews and ride-alongs with field-level LEOs and SAs.

The SAs were asked to describe a successful **regional** program. Responses differed widely and were grouped into these categories: resources, understanding/interaction, support/trust, personnel, good communication, leadership, occupational ideals, consistent policies/regulations, and other. Some examples of SA comments follow:

- 31 percent reported resources:
 - Adequate funding for the mission that the region hails as priority. Adequate staffing and tools for completing the same mission priority.
 - Streamline LEI upper management and put more resources into funding, training, equipping those in the field.
 - Fix the budget.
- 30 percent reported understanding/interaction:

- The line officers need to support LEI more. The special agent in charge is trying, but I don't believe the line officers are helping by complaining about our pay for the overtime.
- Mutual respect and understanding between LEI personnel and NFS line and staff at all levels throughout the region, with open and regular communications.
- We work well together, the regional program functions well, and we are all well received by line officers.
- 24 percent reported support/trust:
 - We have had people in the regional office that have allowed us to work aggressively and encouraged us to expand our case work. I could not have asked for any more.
 - Support the troops in the field.
- 21 percent reported personnel:
 - Adequate field personnel to get the job done and done safely.
 - I believe that we need to keep trying to fill those SA and LEO vacancies and get our personnel numbers back to where we can provide adequate law enforcement support to our customers.
- 19 percent reported good communication:
 - I think each region should have an LEI dedicated public affairs position that coordinates with the forest public affairs officer to exploit the good things our LEI program is doing.
 - The organization has to communicate with the regional office staff about what the law enforcement program is all about.
- 13 percent reported leadership:
 - This program needs to provide sound direction related to enforcement issues.
- 13 percent reported occupational ideals:
 - Have a vision for the future of the region and the law enforcement program. When supervisors leave or retire, the program should be better than when they assumed responsibility. Develop future leaders.
- 10 percent reported consistent policies/regulations:
 - Every LEO and SA has the same authority, jurisdiction, and support from LEI, the USFS, and the U.S. Attorney's office to do their job.
- 29 percent had other comments:
 - Regional programs should become advocates for legislation, policy, and regulation changes/additions that update, and make efficient law enforcement tools available for their officers in the field.

- Maintain and use chain of command, get rid of “good old boys” network, and give patrol captains the room to maneuver and run their forests.

The SAs were asked to describe a successful **local** program. Responses differed widely and were grouped into these categories: understanding/interaction, personnel, support/trust, resources, occupational ideals, good communication, leadership, consistent policies/regulations, and other. Some examples of SA comments follow:

- 31 percent reported understanding/interaction:
 - SAs working together with local LEOs and patrol captains on the forest.
 - SAs and LEOs have a good rapport with forest protection officers, line officers, USFS employees, and local law enforcement agencies.
 - Work more with the rest of the USFS employees on solving issues.
- 23 percent reported personnel:
 - Vacancies should be filled at the earliest opportunity with competent and experienced officers. We should concern ourselves with quality and not be consumed with quotas.
 - Adequate number of officers and SAs to accomplish the job.
- 20 percent reported support/trust:
 - A mutual understanding and respect between patrol and investigation and line and staff to work together to get the job done.
 - I have always received support from my line officers.
- 19 percent reported resources:
 - We need better evidence collection facilities. I have to share a small evidence room with the patrol captain, and this can compromise the chain of custody.
- 14 percent reported occupational ideals:
 - We need to be the kind of agency that people outside the agency would want to work for.
- 9 percent reported good communications.
- 6 percent reported leadership.
- 3 percent reported consistent policies/regulations.
- 20 percent had other comments:
 - We have a very good program on the forest and on the adjoining forest. We are very aggressive and successful in our investigations.
 - The patrol captain needs to make better use of the LEOs and support the SA more by making the LEOs available to assist investigations.

Other Comments

We asked the SAs if there was anything else they would like to tell us. Some comments were positive, some were negative, and others were about the survey itself.

Positive comments (19 percent) included these:

- Despite my negative responses, I am very fortunate to have the position I have. I have no regrets for taking this job and can think of no other place to be—except maybe retired. I have nothing but respect for those I work with and for those I work under.
- It's good work, a good career, and no regrets
- I love working for the USFS, and I think LEI has come a long way since I began working for the agency in the late 1980s.
- I believe the LEI program is progressing forward and I look forward to positive change.

Negative comments (21 percent) included these:

- Unless the agency starts taking LEI seriously and providing the necessary financial and personnel support I feel like we are going to lose what I consider the best group of dedicated USFS workers. So many are now suffering from “burnout” and are probably going to retire as soon as they can.
- When we talk to other agencies and they find out how understaffed we are they are appalled. We are very much alone and we are not well liked by our own agency.
- When law enforcement was first straight-lined from the USFS in 1994, the purpose was to create a system whose integrity could not be influenced or oppressed through conflicts of interest in the supervisory chain. When it was accomplished it was done with a law enforcement budget that was at least \$8 million in the hole, and we have been handicapped since.
- The biggest threat I see to the continuing success of the LEI program is the desire of some line officers to have LEI personnel report to non-LEI personnel as it was before the straight-line reporting structure was developed.

Comments about the survey (19 percent) included these:

- Thanks for letting us vent.
- From the e-mails indicating “that our responses to the survey are being tallied and tracked” I sure did not feel like this was a “voluntary” questionnaire.
- If you want law enforcement to do what it is supposed to do, it has to have its own stand-alone budget, free from USFS control. It has to have supervisors and managers with sufficient practical experience in law enforcement,

and a true commitment to law enforcement, integrity, and service. You don't need a study to tell you that.

- These surveys may be great, but I don't think people understand what the "field agent" has to do to prosecute a case along with all the other required administrative paperwork.

"Other" comments (13 percent) included these:

- I spend too much time on administrative tasks associated with keeping track of what I do and for how long. We need an updated bi-weekly form to capture "other duties."
- We need more people.

Discussion

This study was the fourth in a series of studies evaluating perceptions of law enforcement personnel in the USFS. The ultimate goals of the work are threefold. First, the LEI studies serve as a followup to a previous qualitative study to learn more about crime and violence on national forests and grasslands, and the impacts on recreation visitation and management of those national forests (Chavez and Tynon 2000, Tynon et al. 2001). Second, the LEI studies serve as a followup to a previous qualitative study testing the key characteristics of success in law enforcement, measuring opinions about recreation visitor and public safety, and evaluating impacts to natural resources (Chavez et al. 2004, Tynon and Chavez 2006). Third, the LEI studies serve to provide CTA/PAS data for LEI.

The research met several study goals. We gathered information from SAs about crime and violence at USFS sites nationwide; confirmed what crimes and acts of violence are occurring, the extent of crimes, and the impacts they have on public land management and public safety; determined SAs' perceptions of the impacts of crime and violence to recreation visitors and other forest users; established measures of law enforcement success; identified successful LEI programs nationally, regionally, and locally; tested the key characteristics of law enforcement success; and identified additional successful strategies used by SAs to deal with crime in forest settings. Summaries of specific subject findings are found within the report. The purpose of this section is to discuss some overall findings.

The SAs bring years of experience that lend credence to their perceptions about their job and their place in the USFS. The SAs encountered a variety of crimes and acts of violence. Many of these incidents were thought to either remain at the same rate in FY2004 compared to FY2003 or were thought to be on the increase. At the same time, they reported that LEOs are patrolling large amounts of acreage with what the SAs perceived to be too few officers and sometimes inadequate external

support. One concern that was frequently raised was associated with dependence on others. The need to rely on others was related to current regulations, and many suggested those regulations were in need of change.

In examining the data for common responses across questions, we found that one concern for USFS SAs was relationships. They were especially concerned about the perceptions that others had of them, including those within and outside the agency. Good relationships, working together, and collaboration were ways they would measure success within the LEI program. Most problematic to having good relationships was the lack of understanding.

Another common concern for USFS SAs was resources. This was often expressed in terms of equipment needs, personnel, and funding. Fiscal concerns were raised often and seen as detrimental to getting the job done. In part, this relates to the shortage of personnel; there are not enough funds to hire new employees. The SAs believed resources like these were necessary for law enforcement success.

Natural resource protection was seen as important, too. Many SAs reported increasing problems with resource damage and methamphetamine labs and chemical dumping on national forest lands. They reported that the quality of the natural resources had been compromised during the time they worked there. Protection of the natural resources was seen as a component of a successful LEI program.

Safety of forest users, customers, and Forest Service employees was another concern. Drug activity, urban-associated activities, and fires were problematic and seen as on the rise. These are some of the same activities described in earlier qualitative studies (Chavez and Tynon 2000, Tynon et al. 2001).

Current successes in law enforcement were described as successes in solving crimes and getting convictions, good cooperation, and proactive programs. Several of the descriptions matched the key characteristics of success identified in earlier studies (Chavez et al. 2004, Tynon and Chavez 2006). These characteristics included resources, collaboration, and communication, which were considered integral to a successful law enforcement program including resources and understanding.

Finally, we think there are several ways to use the results of this study of SAs in the USFS. The identification of issues, particularly issues that are consistent across regions, could be used to prioritize law enforcement efforts. The case studies of success indicated that focus on problem areas was important to overcoming the problems. In addition, some of the successes that have occurred, in combination with a focus on the characteristics identified as integral to a successful LEI program, could be identified as a priority focus area for officers and leaders. This

Current successes in law enforcement were described as successes in solving crimes and getting convictions, good cooperation, and proactive programs.

has some serious implications for budgeting and staffing. Some consideration might be made of the current allocation of resources and whether it is congruent with the issues identified by the SAs.

Although it may appear that a successful LEI program is all about the SAs and their needs, further examination of the many comments indicates a great desire to work for the public good, keep visitors safe, and protect the land base.

Additional studies of LEI measure opinions of customers of LEI including district rangers and forest supervisors.

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Appendix: Special Agent Survey Questionnaire

Dear Special Agents, Supervisory Special Agents, and ASACs,

You recently received a letter from Deputy Director Ferrell about the survey being conducted by myself (Dr. Debbie Chavez, PSW) and Dr. Jo Tynon (Oregon State University). We thank you for taking time from your busy schedules to respond to this survey.

In the last few years, law enforcement in the USFS has faced some tough challenges. In order to understand and respond appropriately to current and future needs, it is important to hear from you. This study is part of a larger effort to capture law enforcement successes so that others can benefit from what already works. We are also partnering with those who seek to develop meaningful performance measures for what you do. This study is one way for you to tell your story.

Completing the questionnaire will take about 50 minutes of your time. Your answers will be coded for computer analysis, combined with others, and used for statistical summaries only. At no time will your name be released or associated with your responses. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any question. Your participation is vital to the study, and to future planning for LE&I. Responses are due November 15.

The answers you provide will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Special precautions have been established to protect the confidentiality of your responses. The identification number associated with your questionnaire will be removed once your questionnaire has been returned. We use the number to contact those who have not returned their questionnaire, so we do not burden those who have responded. Your completed questionnaire will be destroyed once your responses have been tallied. There are no foreseeable risks to you as a participant in this project, nor are there any direct benefits. However, your participation is extremely valued.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Debbie Chavez at (951) 680-1558 (email dchavez@fs.fed.us) or Jo Tynon at (541) 737-1499 (email Jo.Tynon@oregonstate.edu). If we are not available when you call, please leave a message and one of us will call you back. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research project, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator at (541) 737-3437 (email IRB@oregonstate.edu).

Responses can be sent in several ways: You can send the completed survey via e-mail to chavez_lei_questionnaire@fs.fed.us, you can fax it to Debbie Chavez at (951) 680-1501, or you can mail it to Debbie Chavez at PSW, 4955 Canyon Crest Drive, Riverside, CA 92507.

Thank you for your help. We appreciate your cooperation

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Special Agent Survey Questionnaire

1. Approximately how many National Forest System acres are you responsible for providing investigative services in your primary area of responsibility?

_____ acres
_____ don't know

1a. Of that total, what is the approximate acreage of the area that LEOs normally access for patrol purposes? _____ acres or _____ Don't know

What is your primary area of responsibility?

2. Is your area of responsibility primarily on an urban or urban-interface, in a semi-rural setting, or in an extremely remote setting? Provide approximate percentages based upon investigative workload.

_____ urban or urban-interface
_____ semi-rural
_____ rural
_____ extremely remote

3. How many total cases were opened and assigned in FY04 in your area of responsibility?

_____ total opened/assigned
_____ don't know

Is there a system in place to capture and report other National Forest related investigations occurring in your area of responsibility not reported in LEIMARS? i.e., cases investigated by cooperating agencies. If so, what is it?

4. Rate 1 – 5 the most common activity while carrying out the investigative function in your area (1 is most common):

_____ interviewing (subjects, suspects, witnesses)
_____ research (including electronic)
_____ serving warrants (arrest and search including prep of affidavits, etc.)
_____ physical arrests
_____ surveillance
_____ report writing
_____ driving
_____ other (i.e., Protection details, Security Reviews – please specify):

5. On an average day, how many USFS people are responsible for conducting “complex” criminal investigations in your area of responsibility? Complex meaning “assigned” investigations lasting more than 3 days involving numerous subjects, witnesses, etc.)

- _____ Agent(s)
- _____ LEO(s)
- _____ FPO(s)
- _____ others (please explain: _____)
- _____ don't know

6. Do you think there are too few, too many, or about the right amount of USFS Special Agents in your area of responsibility?

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Agents (select 1): | LEOs (select 1): |
| _____ too few | _____ too few |
| _____ too many | _____ too many |
| _____ about right | _____ about right |
| _____ don't know | _____ don't know |

Based on your organizational chart, approved by line officers in your area of responsibility, how many Agents do you need to add in your area of responsibility?

_____ Agents to add

7. Do you have cooperative law enforcement agreements specific to the investigative function with other law enforcement agencies in your area or responsibility?

- _____ no
- _____ yes
- _____ City/town/community law enforcement
- _____ County Sheriff's office
- _____ State Police
- _____ other (please explain: _____)

8. Do you think the enforcement work by cooperating law enforcement officers in your area adequately contributes toward the opening of complex criminal investigations?

- | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| City/town/community: | County Sheriff's: | State Police: |
| _____ adequate | _____ adequate | _____ adequate |
| _____ inadequate | _____ inadequate | _____ inadequate |
| _____ don't know | _____ don't know | _____ don't know |

9. On an average day, roughly how many sworn personnel from other law enforcement agencies provide investigative service on or affecting the NFS that are NOT reimbursed by the FS in your primary area of responsibility?

- _____ # City/town/community law enforcement
- _____ # County Sheriff's office
- _____ # State Police
- _____ # other (please explain: _____)
- _____ don't know

10. Do you think the level of investigative support from non-reimbursed services by non-FS LE agencies in your area of responsibility is adequate or inadequate in preventing or responding to crime?

- | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| City/town/community: | County Sheriff's: | State Police: |
| _____ adequate | _____ adequate | _____ adequate |
| _____ inadequate | _____ inadequate | _____ inadequate |
| _____ don't know | _____ don't know | _____ don't know |

11. When you think about recreation visitor safety in your area of responsibility, do you think it is very safe, mostly safe, not safe, very dangerous, or it varies in your area of responsibility? Please respond for personal safety from other visitors and for physical safety from site features (e.g., hazard trees, wild animals, road hazards, etc).

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Personal safety from other visitors: | Physical safety from site features: |
| _____ recreation visitors are very safe here | _____ recreation visitors are very safe here |
| _____ recreation visitors are mostly safe here | _____ recreation visitors are mostly safe here |
| _____ recreation visitors are not safe here | _____ recreation visitors are not safe here |
| _____ it is very dangerous for visitors here | _____ it is very dangerous for visitors here |
| _____ it varies within the patrol area | _____ it varies within the patrol area |
| _____ don't know | _____ don't know |

12. When you think about recreation visitor safety in your area of responsibility, do you think it is very safe, mostly safe, not safe, or very dangerous in your area of responsibility compared to places in the average recreation visitors' neighborhood?

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Personal safety from other visitors: | Physical safety from site features: |
| _____ recreation visitors are very safe here | _____ recreation visitors are very safe here |
| _____ recreation visitors are mostly safe here | _____ recreation visitors are mostly safe here |
| _____ recreation visitors are not safe here | _____ recreation visitors are not safe here |
| _____ it is very dangerous for visitors here | _____ it is very dangerous for visitors here |
| _____ don't know | _____ don't know |

13. What types of investigations are most commonly found in your area of responsibility that affect recreation visitors?

14. Do you think the following crimes in your area of responsibility have increased, decreased, or remained about the same in the last fiscal year (FY04) as compared to FY03.

	Increased	Decreased	Remained the same	Don't know
a. Property trespass	-----	-----	-----	-----
b. Resource damage	-----	-----	-----	-----
c. Livestock violations	-----	-----	-----	-----
d. Mining issues	-----	-----	-----	-----
e. Special Use issues	-----	-----	-----	-----
f. Wildland fire	-----	-----	-----	-----
g. Arson	-----	-----	-----	-----
h. Domestic violence	-----	-----	-----	-----
i. Thefts of visitor personal property	-----	-----	-----	-----
j. Thefts of public property	-----	-----	-----	-----
k. Gang activity	-----	-----	-----	-----
l. Body dumping	-----	-----	-----	-----
m. Shooting (indiscriminate)	-----	-----	-----	-----
n. Suicides	-----	-----	-----	-----
o. Murder	-----	-----	-----	-----
p. Rape / sexual assault	-----	-----	-----	-----
q. Drive-by shooting	-----	-----	-----	-----
r. Criminal damage	-----	-----	-----	-----
s. Personnel threats	-----	-----	-----	-----
t. Threats against property	-----	-----	-----	-----
u. Marijuana cultivation	-----	-----	-----	-----
v. Meth labs	-----	-----	-----	-----
w. Meth chemical dump	-----	-----	-----	-----
x. Armed defense of crops	-----	-----	-----	-----
y. Dumping of household waste	-----	-----	-----	-----
z. Dumping of landscape waste	-----	-----	-----	-----
aa. Trespass of undocumented immigrants	-----	-----	-----	-----
bb. Armed defense of forest products	-----	-----	-----	-----
cc. Natural fire hazards	-----	-----	-----	-----
dd. Accidental fire activity	-----	-----	-----	-----

Question 14 continued...

	Increased	Decreased	Remained the same	Don't know
ee. Weather hazards	_____	_____	_____	_____
ff. Wildlife hazards	_____	_____	_____	_____
gg. Road hazards	_____	_____	_____	_____
hh. Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

15. What percentage of your time do you spend on tasks other than investigative duties related to assigned cases?

_____ % of time

List or explain what these non-investigative tasks are:

16. How successful are you at getting your cases accepted for prosecution in federal, state, or local jurisdictions?

Federal:	State:	Local:
_____ very	_____ very	_____ very
_____ somewhat	_____ somewhat	_____ somewhat
_____ seldom	_____ seldom	_____ seldom
_____ N/A	_____ N/A	_____ N/A

17. What percentage of your investigative duties involves criminal cases versus civil cases?

_____ criminal
 _____ civil

18. During the time you have worked activities in your area of responsibility have you seen the quality of the natural resources in your area of responsibility degrade, improve, or remain the same? How about the maintenance of FS facilities and developed areas?

Quality of the natural resources:	Maintenance of FS facilities and developed areas:
_____ degraded	_____ degraded
_____ improved	_____ improved
_____ remained the same	_____ remained the same
_____ don't know	_____ don't know

19. Rank 1 to 4 your highest priority (1 is highest priority). Is it protecting forest users, protecting resources, protecting NFS employees, or protecting public property? Rank 1 to 4 what you believe the NFS line officer you most commonly interact with thinks is your highest priority: protecting forest users; protecting resources; protecting NFS employees; or protecting public property? (1 is NFS line officers' view of your highest priority)

Your view:	NFS line officers' view:
_____ protecting forest users	_____ protecting forest users
_____ protecting resources	_____ protecting resources
_____ protecting NFS employees	_____ protecting NFS employees
_____ protecting public property	_____ protecting public property
_____ don't know	_____ don't know

20. Is FS LEI authority and jurisdiction adequate for what you feel is expected or demanded of you internally and externally?

_____ yes
 _____ no

If no, please explain:

21. What has been the media portrayal of crimes against forest users, crimes against resources, and fire crime activities in your area of responsibility?

Crimes against forest users:	Crimes against resources:	Fire crimes:
_____ mostly positive	_____ mostly positive	_____ mostly positive
_____ mostly negative	_____ mostly negative	_____ mostly negative
_____ no coverage	_____ no coverage	_____ no coverage
_____ don't know	_____ don't know	_____ don't know

22. Do you have adequate resources to do your job?

_____ no
 _____ yes

If not, what additional resources do you need?

23. What do you believe LEI's relationship with the rest of the FS should be?

24. Where does LEI fit within the FS organization and programs?

25. Do you have any special alliances, associations, or strategies with other agencies that have worked well?

- _____ no
- _____ yes. What are they?

26. What alliances, associations, or strategies have you tried (if any) that were not successful? Briefly explain why they were not successful.

27. How do you measure the success of your investigative effort?

28. What do you believe are the priority issues facing the law enforcement profession in the FS today?

29. How do the priorities of the NFS line officer you most commonly interact with compare with LEI investigative priorities?

30. Does the NFS line officer you most commonly interact with in your area know what you do? Further, do they understand what you do?

31. Who do you believe your “customers” are?

32. What do you believe your customers want from LEI on NFS lands?

33. Do you feel supported by LEI line officers, NFS line officers, or local NFS employees?

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| LEI line officers: | NFS line officers: | Local NFS employees: |
| _____ yes | _____ yes | _____ yes |
| _____ no, please explain | _____ no, please explain | _____ no, please explain |

34. How well do you communicate with others in the Forest Service about investigative activities in your area of responsibility? Please explain and add how you go about communicating.

35. How would you describe a successful LEI program nationally, regionally, and locally?

- Nationally:
- Regionally:
- Locally:

36. Do you have an LE success story you'd like to share?

_____ no
_____ yes, please describe:

37. Have you ever been threatened or attacked because of your job?

_____ no
_____ yes. Please briefly describe incidents in the past 3 years.

Please tell us about yourself.

38. What is the Region where you work? _____

38. I am

_____ male
_____ female

39. I am _____ years old

40. I consider myself:

_____ Black _____ White _____ Hispanic
_____ Asian _____ Multiracial
_____ Other: _____

41. I have been in law enforcement a total of _____ years.

42. I have been with the FS a total of _____ years

43. I have been an Agent for the FS a total of _____ years

45. I have been an Agent at this duty station _____ years.

46. I have completed:

9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22+
High School College through Graduate School

47. The highest academic degree I hold is:

48. My academic degree is in law enforcement

_____ yes
_____ no

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Thank you!!!

We do appreciate the time and effort it took to complete this questionnaire. The results will be summarized into a report for LE&I in the Washington Office and will later be included in published manuscripts. Your individual data will not be disclosed to anyone.

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