



"Guardians of the Cowboy State"

COLONEL KEBIN HALLER
Administrator

MARK GORDON
Governor
K. LUKE REINER
Director, WYDOT

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To the people of Wyoming, from your Highway Patrol.

By now, most have seen the video footage of the death of Minneapolis, Minnesota resident George Floyd, on May 25, 2020. This was a horrific tragedy and my thoughts and prayers go out to the Floyd family.

Mr. Floyd had been contacted by Minneapolis Police Department officers on suspicion of using a counterfeit bill and was placed under arrest. For almost nine minutes, Mr. Floyd laid face down with his hands handcuffed behind his back, with now former Officer Chauvin's knee on his neck. There were also three other police officers on scene witnessing Chauvin's actions. They did nothing to intervene. Chauvin and the now three former officers were fired the day after Floyd's death.

Since then, two autopsies have been conducted on Mr. Floyd and have ruled his death a homicide, citing "complicating law enforcement subdual, restraint and neck compression", "a cardiopulmonary arrest while being restrained by law enforcement officer(s)", as well as "homicide caused by asphyxia due to neck and back compression that led to a lack of blood flow to the brain". As a result, Chauvin has been charged with second-degree murder, third-degree murder, and second-degree manslaughter. The other three officers have been charged with aiding and abetting second-degree murder.

As Wyoming residents, I would expect you to be looking to your highway patrol with confirmation that what happened in Minneapolis would not happen in our state. Let me say, that what happened in Minneapolis is not at all a representation of your Wyoming Highway Patrol (WHP). Your troopers recognize that our behavior and actions define us and we are accountable to you. No one at the WHP takes your trust and respect for granted. This agency will continue to hold troopers to a high standard and expects them to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times.

To give you a better understanding why I have a high level of confidence in our troopers I would like to provide an overview of what it takes to become a WHP Trooper. After submitting an application you may be invited to participate in our testing process, dependent on your qualifications. The testing process consists of a written test, interview, physical fitness, deception test and psychological evaluation. Candidates who successfully pass all of these assessments and evaluations must then undergo an in-depth background investigation. This includes interviews of co-workers, supervisors, subordinates, neighbors and family members. Review of personnel records that includes prior employment, recognition and discipline. Review of credit history and social media, as well as a final interview with the candidate prior to offering full-time employment. Of note, racial and ethnic bias is specifically investigated for all candidates, throughout this process.

Individuals hired to become troopers undergo extensive training. The first 14 weeks of training is at the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy in Douglas, Wyoming. This consists of 605 hours of certified instruction that includes Constitutional Law, Search and Seizure, Laws of Arrest, Firearms, Custody & Control, Emergency Vehicle Operations, Building Searches, Traffic Stops, Investigations and physical fitness. Individuals who successfully complete this training receive Wyoming Peace Officer Certification that includes Human Diversity, Interaction with the Mentally Ill, Ethical Issues in Policing, Introduction to Community Policing, Professional Development, and Interpersonal Communications.

Troopers then undergo an additional 14 weeks of training at the WHP Basic Trooper Training Academy at Laramie County Community College in Cheyenne, Wyoming. This training consists of 551 hours of certified classroom, practical exercises and scenario training surrounding Constitutional Law, Search and Seizure, Traffic Law, Arrests, Firearms, Custody & Control, Emergency Vehicle Operations, Traffic Stops, Investigations, Ethics, Verbal De-escalation, Mental Health First Aid, and physical fitness. Individuals who successfully complete this additional training then proceed on to field training.

All Troopers then undergo a minimum of 50 shifts worked, while being trained and evaluated by Field Training Troopers; veteran selected troopers. After successfully completing field training with adequate performance, Troopers are then released to work alone and independently. Less than three percent of those who apply to become WHP Trooper actually earn this title.

Throughout training and included in daily performance, all Troopers must adhere to the agency's Eight Core Values:

Conviction; Approach day-to-day activities with confidence, passion, and sincerity.

Humility; Have compassion, good listening skills, and be a servant leader. Recognize weaknesses in myself and strengths in others.

Integrity; Be truthful, ethical, accountable, consistent, fair, and predictable.

Loyalty; Have allegiance and trust to: ourselves, each other, and to the public; submit to authority; and use difficult times to demonstrate my commitment to those I serve. Submission equates to "being under authority grants authority."

Diligence; Pursue excellence through hard work, dedication, and perseverance. Stay the course. Be committed. Invest the time and energy to complete each task assigned to me.

Courage; Overcome fear, have administrative fortitude, remember principle over expediency, do what is right, and demonstrate self-initiative.

Optimism; Focus on the future with a clear understanding of responsibilities to achieve agency goals, maintain a positive outlook, demonstrate patience and understanding, and recognize others.

Discipline; Display self-control, be respectful, and maintain objectivity.

The WHP also has several policies in place to maintain the trust and respect of those we serve.

Persons having contact with Wyoming Highway Patrol Troopers and other personnel shall be treated in a fair, impartial, equitable, and objective manner, in accordance with law, and without consideration of their individual demographics. Irrespective of race or other distinctions, all persons shall be treated in the same basic manner under the same or similar circumstances. Any WHP Member who witness or who are aware of instances of biased policing shall immediately report the incident to a supervisor. All employees shall intervene at the time the biased policing incident occurs.

The WHP recognizes and respects the value of all human life and dignity without prejudice to anyone. With this responsibility is also accountability. Any Trooper present and observing another officer using force that is beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances shall intercede to prevent the use of unreasonable force. A Trooper who observes another officer use force that exceeds the degree of force permitted by law will promptly report these observations to a supervisor.

Troopers will use only the amount of force which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances to effectively bring an incident or person under control or to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose while protecting the lives of the Trooper and others. Troopers should use advisements, warnings, and verbal persuasion, when feasible, before resorting to using force. A verbal warning is not required in circumstances where the Trooper has to make a split-second decision. Troopers should allow individuals an opportunity to comply with the Trooper's verbal commands or with an arrest before physical force is used, whenever possible. Force will be de-escalated as resistance decreases. Immediately following a use of force, Troopers will follow up on necessary medical care in the event injury occurs. Troopers will also inform their lieutenant of the use of force as soon as possible.

Troopers who use excessive or unjustified force degrade the confidence of the community that they serve, undermine the legitimacy of a police officer's authority, and hinder the agency's ability to provide effective law enforcement services to the community. Therefore, Troopers who use excessive or unauthorized force could be subject to discipline, possible criminal prosecution, and/or civil liability. Troopers must understand and truly appreciate their authority and its limitations. This is especially true with respect to overcoming resistance while engaged in the performance of law enforcement duties.

In 2017, the agency stood up a Professional Standards and Conduct unit to provide neutral investigative assistance when complaints, including anonymous complaints are made. This unit is prepared to perform administrative/internal investigations on employees for allegations including, but not limited to biased policing, improper or excessive use of force, inappropriate language, criminal activity, abuse of authority and deadly force. Should criminal violations be identified, the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation is contacted to perform a criminal investigation.

The WHP is committed to providing law enforcement services that are fair, effective, and impartially applied. Toward that end, your troopers are held to the highest standards of official conduct and are expected to respect the rights of all individuals. Your troopers are expected to conduct themselves, whether on-or off-duty, in such a manner as to reflect favorably upon themselves and the agency.

Respectfully,

Colonel Kebin Haller
Wyoming Highway Patrol