



DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

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Tennessee.gov/safety

Fred Phillips, Commissioner

The department has come a long way since the first State Police Force was created in 1929, patterned after the historic Texas Rangers. The department itself was established by the General Assembly in 1939, a decade after Governor Henry Horton signed a law creating the Tennessee Highway Patrol, an offshoot of the State Police Force. Today, the department and its highly trained state troopers are responsible for safety on more than 87,000 miles of state and federal highways. Numerous other department responsibilities include:

- Issuing driver licenses
- Issuing vehicle titles
- Investigating crashes
- Conducting school bus and day care van inspections
- Administering forfeitures in DUI and drug cases
- Investigating auto theft, and
- Enforcing commercial vehicle laws and regulations

In 1937, Tennessee became the 32nd state to enact a driver license law. During the first year, 521,571 licenses were issued. Today, the number of licensed drivers in Tennessee is 4.3 million. There are more than six million registered vehicles in the state.

Services

Tennessee Highway Patrol (THP) — The Tennessee Highway Patrol began serving the state more than 75 years ago. Today's trooper is highly trained and skilled in all aspects of law enforcement, including traffic crash investigation, criminal interdiction, dignitary protection and enforcement of state and federal traffic laws and regulations. THP has gained certification from the Commission on the Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). This is a prestigious, international certification.

The Tennessee Highway Patrol's primary responsibility is traffic enforcement in Tennessee. Besides issuing citations for traffic violations, state troopers are alert for motorists who need help. In calendar year 2004, troopers assisted thousands of motorists and wrote more than 443,600 citations in an effort to keep the highways safe. Another advantage is the *THP (*847) system, which enables cell phone users to contact Highway Patrol dispatchers in emergency situations. Additionally, the THP investigates traffic crashes and vehicular homicides and assists other law enforcement agencies. There are more than 830 commissioned members of the Tennessee Highway Patrol.

Special Operations — Special Operations consists of five specialized units: Aviation Section, Tactical Squad, Explosives Ordnance Disposal (EOD), Canine Unit and the Governor's Task Force on Marijuana Eradication.

Aviation — The Aviation Section is responsible for all air support and related responsibilities for the Tennessee Highway Patrol and other agencies. It utilizes four Jet Ranger helicopters and one Huey UH-1H helicopter in searches, rescues, speed enforcement, location of stolen vehicles and marijuana searches.

Tactical Squad — This is a team of highly motivated and specially equipped troopers whose duties include providing security for dignitaries, handling bombs and destroying unstable explosives. SCUBA divers search for stolen vehicles and victims of crimes and drownings. The squad also responds to prison riots, high-risk arrests, hostage situations and other incidents requiring the use of tear gas and high-powered and automatic weapons.

Canine Unit — This unit consists of one patrol dog, one cadaver dog, five explosives detector dogs, one bloodhound-tracking dog and 30 drug detector dogs. The drug detector canines work within the eight Tennessee Highway Patrol districts.

Governor's Task Force on Marijuana Eradication — As part of this task force, Special Operations works in conjunction with the Alcoholic Beverage Commission, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, Tennessee National Guard and Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency on marijuana eradication in the state of Tennessee. During the 2004 calendar year, nearly a half-million marijuana plants were destroyed.

Capitol Security — These troopers are responsible for the security of the State Capitol, Legislative Plaza, War Memorial Building and Department of Safety Headquarters. Services also are provided for other state-owned or leased property within the Capitol Hill complex and other areas throughout Davidson County. These troopers also enforce state parking regulations on Capitol Hill and at other state properties.

Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) — This unit's primary responsibility is to assist other members of the department in the investigation and/or reconstruction of motor vehicle traffic crashes. Unit members also assist local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, as well as investigate all criminal homicides worked by the Highway Patrol. All members are trained reconstructionists, equipped with the most advanced tools and equipment available to assist them in their investigations.

Criminal Investigation Division (CID) — The department's CID unit investigates crimes such as vehicle theft, odometer tampering, driver license fraud and vehicular homicide. The CID also conducts background investigations on departmental applicants, assists the Internal Affairs Division and conducts investigations as requested by local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors. In 1999, driver license fraud was added to the responsibilities of the Criminal Investigations Division. As a result, there has been a significant increase in the number of prosecutions.

Commercial Vehicle Enforcement — This division is charged with ensuring the safe and legal operation of commercial vehicles and school buses over the streets and highways of Tennessee. It is comprised of two sections: Enforcement and School Bus Driver Transportation and Safety Inspection. In 2004, CVE officers were merged into the Tennessee Highway Patrol. All troopers are now trained in traditional law enforcement duties, as well as laws pertaining to commercial vehicles. They perform safety and weight inspections of commercial vehicles and are involved in educating the public and the trucking industry through specialized programs.

The Tennessee Highway Patrol has established a New Entrant Program for trucking firms. Under this program, state troopers conduct safety audits on companies entering the transportation industry, to ensure their compliance with Federal Motor Carrier Safety rules and regulations.

The Alternative Commercial Enforcement Strategies program was formed to educate safety directors, maintenance professionals and drivers in the necessary compliance with laws and regulations. And the “NO-ZONE” and “Share the Road” programs are designed to educate the motoring public about how to drive safely on the highways with big trucks. These programs are presented for civic groups and school systems to help drivers understand truckers’ blind spots, stopping distances and maneuverability.

School Bus Driver Transportation and Safety Inspection Section — This section performs more than 18,600 safety inspections on school buses and child care vans annually. This section also conducts mandatory training and testing for more than 11,500 school bus drivers and 1,200 child care van drivers each year.

Title and Registration — The Title and Registration Division is responsible for all aspects of the coordination and issuance of motor vehicle registrations, renewals, titles and related activities for all motor vehicles. This includes issuing more than 320 types of license plates, disabled parking placards, drive-out tags and salvage and nonrepairable certificates, as well as lending guidance and assistance to Tennessee’s 95 county clerks. The county clerks act as agents for the division and support other related businesses and government agencies such as auto dealers, wrecker services, financial institutions and local law enforcement. The Title and Registration Division issues more than six million registrations and approximately two million titles each year. The division also includes the Anti-Theft Unit, which handles all salvage, nonrepairable and rebuilt vehicle titles.

Motor Carrier Section — Within the Title and Registration Division, the Motor Carrier Section is responsible for the registration, permitting, and insurance filings of all interstate motor carriers through the International Fuel Tax Agreement, International Registration Plan, and Single State Registration.

IFTA/IRP Audit Section — This section also is part of the Title and Registration Division. It is responsible for performing audits on carriers to ensure they have paid the proper amount of registration fees and fuel taxes.

Driver License Issuance — The Driver License Division offers a number of services to the citizens of Tennessee. Its primary focus is to issue driver licenses and identification cards to qualified applicants, but services have broadened to include additional customer conveniences such as voter registration applications, issuance of driving records, processing of Handgun Carry Permit applications and license reinstatement services. The division also issues Commercial Driver Licenses (CDL) as part of a federal program requiring a standardized test for commercial drivers.

The division maintains and staffs a total of 44 driver license offices across the state, and has contracts with 31 county clerk locations that provide express duplicate and renewal services via the clerk’s staff at these sites. The division has expanded the “self-service” options available to the public by providing duplicate and renewal services via the state’s Internet system and, more recently, the placement of self-service kiosks in many high-volume driver license offices. Through these combined service outlets, the division has an average annual issuance activity of 1.4 million transactions.

The newest law to impact the division created Tennessee's Certificate for Driving (CFD) documents, which are issued to non-U.S. citizens for driving purposes only. During the first year of the CFD program, 28,000 of these documents were issued.

Financial Responsibility Section — This section administers the Financial Responsibility Law by coordinating all driver license cancellations, revocations, and suspensions of driving privileges arising from crashes, moving traffic convictions, truancy, the drug-free youth act, alcohol violations, weapons, child support, uninsured violations, and failure to appear in court. The division maintains information on out-of-state traffic violations by Tennessee licensed drivers, as well as offenses committed in this state, and is responsible for reinstatements of cancelled, suspended, and revoked driver licenses.

Tennessee Law Enforcement Training Academy — The academy trains recruits for all state and local law enforcement agencies except in major metropolitan areas. Specialized training areas include criminal investigation, drugs, traffic, hate crimes, gangs, firearms, arson, domestic violence, officer survival, radar, fingerprint, and instructor training. The academy also staffs the Tennessee Peace Officers Standards and Training Commission.

Highway Patrol District Offices

District 1—Knoxville
7601 Kingston Pike
(865) 594-5793

District 2—Chattanooga
4120 Cummings Highway
(423) 634-6898

District 3—Nashville
1603 Murfreesboro Road
(615) 741-3181

District 4—Memphis
6348 Summer Avenue
(901) 543-6256

District 5—Fall Branch
I-81 and Exit 50
(423) 348-6144

District 6—Cookeville
1291 Bunker Hill Road
(931) 528-8496

District 7—Lawrenceburg
1209 North Locust Avenue
(931) 766-1425

District 8—Jackson
20 Vann Drive
(731) 423-6635

Commissioner Fred Phillips

Tennessee Department of Safety

Fred Phillips is no stranger to the Department of Safety. In 1991, he served as the director of the department's Tennessee Law Enforcement Training Academy, which is responsible for coordinating training for law enforcement officers statewide. He then served as deputy commissioner of the department and commander of the Tennessee Highway Patrol from January 1993 until he was elected sheriff of Washington County in September of 1994. As sheriff, he launched a number of initiatives, including the start of 29 community watch programs and the creation of a reserve officer training program in which citizens provide vital public safety support to deputies. He had just begun his third term as sheriff when Governor Phil Bredesen asked him to come back to the Department of Safety, this time as commissioner. He brought with him nearly 40 years of law enforcement experience, beginning as a patrolman for the Johnson City Police Department. He spent most of the 1980s as police chief. Along the



way, he served three years as a special agent for the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. The Jonesborough native serves on the boards of the National Sheriffs' Association and is a past president of the Tennessee Sheriffs' Association, which elected him "Sheriff of the Year" by unanimous vote in 1999. Commissioner Phillips holds an associate's degree in criminal justice from Walters State Community College in Morristown. He and his wife, Verla, have two children and four grandchildren.