

Morris County Police Agencies to Seek State Accreditation

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Mount Olive Police Chief
Mark Spitzer

MORRIS COUNTY — Five police departments in the county have embarked on a year-long project to prove to the state that they are in line with recognized best practices.

Everything from how evidence is secured to how department budgets are managed to how recruits are hired will be reviewed, evaluated and documented.

The departments — Mount Olive, Mountain Lakes, Morris Plains, Randolph and Hanover Township — are seeking accreditation from the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police and recognition from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, which could lead to lower liability-insurance rates.

“Best practices should certainly be the objective of any public agency because the end-user, our public, deserves top performance,” said Mark Spitzer, Mount Olive police chief, in a prepared statement. “But a positive byproduct of the program is that in those situations where litigation occurs, accreditation often helps establish that proper protocols were established and followed.”

Officers, for example, are supposed to inspect their vehicles before and after anyone are transported to ensure that no evidence is left by a prisoner. Most do, but not all departments have a written policy that explicitly mandates the procedure or have methods in place to document that the searches were completed.

Lt. Col. Frank Rodgers, former deputy superintendent of the New Jersey State Police who heads a consulting firm that helps department become accredited, said the designation “is the ultimate attainment of law enforcement professionalism.”

Rodgers said the process takes about one year to complete and the departments are measured on 112 standards.

The Morris County Joint Insurance Fund awarded grants of \$50,000 each to the five departments - about two-thirds of which will go to the Rodgers group. The rest will be used for computer software and registration fees.

“We would not have been able to do it without the grant money,” said Stephen Gallagher, police chief in Hanover Township.

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