



## **CONSERVATION OFFICER APPLICANT**

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## Program Options

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Division of Enforcement has a hiring process that offers two separate employment opportunities. Please read the brief description of the two employment opportunities to see which one you qualify for. You may only apply for one of these options.

### **Conservation Officer Pre-Employment Education Program (CO PREP)**

The first opportunity is the CO PREP Program. This is a program designed for applicants who have, at minimum, an associate's degree from a regionally accredited college/university in any discipline and want to become a Conservation Officer. To qualify and be eligible to apply the applicant must earn a degree prior to a date established for each process from a college or university listed as regionally accredited by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education. To verify accreditation go to [Database of Accredited Institutions](#) or contact the registrar's office at your school. Your school must be accredited by at least one of the following organizations:

- **MSCHE** – Middle States Commission on Higher Education
- **NEASC** – New England Association of Schools and Colleges
  - **(NEASC-CIHE)** – Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
  - **(NEASC-CTCI)** – Commission on Technical and Career Institutions
- **NWCCU** – Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
- **HLC** – Higher Learning Commission (Formerly NCA-North Central Association of Colleges and Schools)
- **SACS** – Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges
- **WASC-ACCJC** – Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
  - **(WASC-ACSCU)** – Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities

The Division of Enforcement will provide Program applicants with the education requirements necessary to take the MN Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) exam, which is required to become a licensed peace officer in MN. The POST certification training will take place at the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Education Center (LECJEC) in Brooklyn Park, MN and is followed by the Conservation Officer Training Academy. Applicants must pass the POST exam to be eligible for employment.

The number of cadets hired in this process will be determined by legislative funding and budgetary constraints.

### **Conservation Officer (CO) Traditional Opportunity**

The second option is the traditional hiring process for those applicants who are currently MN POST licensed, eligible to be licensed, or will be eligible (documentation will need to be provided) to be licensed by the date specified in the posting.

## CO PREP Program Information

### **Who is eligible for the CO PREP Program?**

The CO PREP Program (CO Trainee) is for individuals who currently have, at minimum, an associate's degree in any discipline from a regionally accredited college/university or will have earned the degree in any discipline from a regionally accredited college/university by the date specified in the posting. Verify college/university accreditation by using the following link: [Database of Accredited Institutions](#)

### **What paperwork will I need to submit if I am still working toward my degree and will have completed it by the date established for this process?**

When completing the application process the applicant will need to note when they expect to have secured the degree. If the applicant moves forward into the background investigation process, they will then need to submit the required documentation regarding degree verification.

### **How do I get selected to participate in the CO PREP Program?**

The competitive selection process for the CO PREP Program includes the following components: completion of the online application, written exam, oral interview, comprehensive background investigation, medical and psychological evaluation, and functional capacity exam. Applicants who successfully pass the testing components are reviewed by the MN DNR Division of Enforcement Hiring Authority for final selections. Those offered employment are hired and sent to the training program for the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certification process.

### **Can I obtain training through your agency that will make me POST eligible?**

Yes, you will receive training through CO PREP to make you POST eligible in the State of Minnesota.

### **Where is the POST portion of the training conducted?**

It will be held at the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Education Center in Brooklyn Park, MN. Information on LECJEC can be found by using the following link: [Hennepin Technical College](#).

### **What is the training schedule?**

The hours will typically be from 8:00 am until 5:00 pm, Monday – Friday. Training may also be scheduled on Saturdays or holidays depending on curriculum needs.

### **How long does the CO PREP Program last?**

Applicants accepted into the CO PREP Program will participate in approximately 22 weeks of training before continuing on to the Minnesota DNR Enforcement Conservation Officer Academy.

### **When am I considered an employee of the DNR Division of Enforcement?**

Your effective hire date with the Division of Enforcement will be the date the LECJEC training begins. You will be considered a Conservation Officer Trainee at that point.

**Will I be paid during the CO PREP Program?**

Yes, you will receive 70% of base Conservation Officer salary, which at this time equates to approximately \$23.67 per hour. The hourly rate could increase depending on contractual agreements that are in progress.

**Will I receive benefits during the CO PREP Program?**

You will be eligible to participate in the State of Minnesota's comprehensive employee benefits program that includes health, dental and life insurance, short and long term disability, and pre-tax programs for medical, dental and dependent care.

You will not be eligible for paid holiday, sick or vacation leave, or retirement benefits prior to the start of the Conservation Officer Academy.

**Will the DNR Division of Enforcement provide room and board during the CO PREP Program?**

No.

**What happens after I successfully complete the CO PREP Program?**

CO Trainees who successfully complete the CO PREP Program will be required to report to the DNR Enforcement Conservation Officer Academy at Camp Ripley. The Conservation Officer Academy will be comprised of fifteen weeks of additional training specific to DNR Division of Enforcement. This portion of the training will be held at Camp Ripley in Little Falls, MN. Refer to other FAQ's for additional information about the Conservation Officer Academy.

**What is my commitment to the DNR Division of Enforcement for participating in the CO PREP Program?**

Applicants who become Conservation Officers through the CO PREP Program will be required to sign a two-year agreement with the agency. Applicants who fail to honor the agreement may be required to reimburse the Division of Enforcement for the cost of the training at LECJEC.

**What will I need to purchase to participate in the CO PREP Program?**

You will need to purchase supplies such as notebooks, pens, pencils, etc. More information will be provided, if you are selected to participate.

**Will I receive an additional degree upon successful completion of the CO PREP Program?**

No, this is considered a certificate program and you will not receive an additional degree.

**If I participate in the CO PREP Program, when will I take the POST Licensing Examination?**

The POST Examination will be arranged during the last week of the CO Prep Program at LECJEC.

## Traditional Program Information

### **Who is eligible to apply for the Traditional Program?**

The Traditional Program (Conservation Officer) is for individuals who are MN POST licensed, eligible to be licensed, or will be eligible for licensure by the designated date in the posting.

### **Can I obtain training through your agency that will make me POST eligible?**

No, you must have taken and passed the POST licensing examination by the date specified in the posting to move forward in the hiring process and attend the Conservation Officer Academy.

### **Do you offer lateral pay?**

The DNR Division of Enforcement Hiring Authority determines if lateral pay is offered. You may be eligible to receive credit for previous employment as a peace officer, as defined by M.S. 626.05, sub 2, or similar law of another state. Such credit shall be used to determine only the new employee's initial placement on the salary grid.

## Peace Officer Standards and Training Board (POST)

### **What is POST?**

Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) is the licensing board for peace officers that are similar to boards for medical, dental, legal, and other professions. The website is [MN POST Board](#). The phone number for the POST Board is (651) 643-3060.

One of the functions of the POST Board is to set the minimum requirement for individuals interested in being hired as a peace officer. Minimally, a two-year post-secondary degree is required. The degree must be from a university, college, or technical college that is accredited by the POST Board. If you have met the academic requirements, you are eligible to take the POST Board licensing examination. Once you have passed the licensing exam, you are eligible to be hired by any law enforcement agency in MN as a peace officer. If you have experience as a full-time police officer in another state or with a federal law enforcement agency and have completed a basic police academy/course, you may be eligible to take the POST reciprocity exam. If you have military experience, contact the POST Board for more information about reciprocity testing.

Individuals who have received a law enforcement degree from a college that is not accredited or have a four-year degree in another vocation may only need a minimum number of courses through an accredited institution to meet the POST academic requirements. Some institutions can integrate degrees in less time than others. Individuals interested should send their transcripts to an accredited institution for review. They will advise you what will be needed to meet the POST requirement.

### **What is a POST license?**

US Citizenship or “eligibility to work in the US under Federal requirements” is required to obtain a POST license. Students who have successfully completed the required academic course work and have passed the Peace Officer Licensing Examination are termed “eligible to be licensed.” However, completing the education requirements and passing the licensing examination does not result in licensure. Individuals who are “eligible to be licensed” are not licensed until they are hired by a law enforcement agency and can satisfy the minimum selection standards listed in the application. A law enforcement agency may apply its own additional standards in their hiring process. The hiring agency also determines the physical standards its own personnel must meet.

### **How do I get a POST license?**

You obtain your POST license after passing the licensing examination and are hired by a law enforcement agency in MN.

## Selection Process

### **What is the timeline for the selection process?**

The selection process takes approximately 9 months from the close of the posting window until employment start date.

### **When do you usually announce a hiring process and begin accepting applications online?**

The timeline often varies. The best way to stay up to date on when applications will be accepted is to sign up for an email notification at the following link:

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/enforcement/careers/index.html>

### **Why does it take so long to get hired?**

The selection process consists of the application, written examination, oral board interview, background investigation, medical evaluation, psychological evaluation, and functional capacity exam.

### **Do I have to start my application process over if I submitted an application last time?**

Yes, each applicant must submit an application online for the current selection process.

### **Am I able to choose which Conservation Officer station I would like to work in?**

As part of the hiring process you will be able to express interest in an open Conservation Officer station. Station selection is dependent upon availability, division priority, and is at the discretion of the Colonel of DNR Division of Enforcement. When an applicant is stationed upon completion of the field training process they are required to remain in the station for one year before they are eligible to transfer to a different station.

## Written Examination and Oral Board Interviews

### **How does the testing process work?**

Applicants who submit the online application and meet the minimum qualifications will be invited to take the written test.

### **What are the interviews and where are they held?**

The interview is conducted by a panel, typically consisting of three members. You will only interview with one panel. The interview questions are not specific to law enforcement, rather they are designed to gauge your suitability with our agency's mission and core values. It is anticipated that the length of the interview will be less than sixty minutes. The interviews are generally held at DNR Central Office, 500 Lafayette Rd, St. Paul, MN or Camp Ripley, 15011 Hwy. 115, Little Falls, MN.

### **How are the applicants scheduled for interviews?**

After completing the written exam, you will be notified if you were selected to continue on to the oral interview. Applicants continuing on to the interview will be contacted via email regarding scheduling.



## **Background Investigation**

### **What is a comprehensive background investigation?**

As required by Minnesota Rule 6700.0700 you must submit to a thorough background investigation to evaluate your suitability for employment as a peace officer with this agency. This background investigation will include an analysis of public and private information, including criminal and civil court records, driver's license and credit information, educational and employment history and interviews with references, neighbors, family members and others.

### **How long does the background investigation take to complete?**

Background investigations can take up to eight weeks to complete.

### **Where can I get my background investigation materials?**

The background investigation materials will be made available to you at some point during the hiring process and you will be given directions and timelines for completion.

### **When should I submit my background investigation materials?**

Eligible candidates will be provided direction regarding the submission of their background packets after successfully passing the oral board interview. DO NOT submit background packets BEFORE interviews; they will not be kept on file.

### **Does each hiring process require a background investigation, even if I have been through it before?**

Yes.

## **Conservation Officer Academy**

### **How long is the Conservation Officer Academy?**

The Academy will consist of 15 full weeks of rigorous instruction conducted in the classroom as well as in the field. Candidates who successfully complete the Academy training will transition into the Conservation Officer Field Training Program.

### **Do I have to stay at Camp Ripley during the fifteen week period?**

Yes, cadets shall arrive at Camp Ripley by 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. on Sunday evening and are released Friday evening after the weeks training concludes.

### **If I have already completed the skills training and am eligible to be licensed, do I still have to complete the entire Academy?**

Yes, you will need to complete the fifteen weeks of the Academy including all of the educational and skills classes required to graduate.

### **Can I receive special shortened training because I am an incumbent officer?**

No.

### **What do I need to bring to the Academy if I am offered a position?**

Selected candidates will be provided with more information.

### **Is it a college setting or military setting?**

It is a college setting with some modified stress utilizing adult learning concepts.

### **How many applicants will you hire?**

The number of positions available is dependent upon legislative funding, budgetary constraints, and Division priorities.

## Field Training Program

### **What is field training?**

All cadets who successfully complete the Conservation Officer Academy will transition to the Field Training Program. Field training involves teaming cadets with current Conservation Officers who are trained to be field training officers. Cadets will work with their assigned field training officers and complete actual law enforcement and educational contacts as well as required training tasks. Field training officers will evaluate the cadets as they progress through the steps of the program and work towards solo patrol. Cadets will be required to show proficiency in all aspects of the work conducted by Conservation Officers prior to the completion of the field training program.

### **How long is field training?**

The field training program is approximately 16 weeks in length. There will also be additional training requirements to be completed within the first year of probation.

### **How long is probation?**

One year, which begins after being sworn-in on the first day of the Conservation Officer Academy.

### **What equipment is provided by the department and what equipment will I need to purchase?**

Uniforms, equipment, and duty weapons are issued/supplied at the academy. A patrol truck will be issued at the academy. Watercraft, ATVs, snowmobiles, and other equipment will be issued when cadets are stationed after successful completion of the field training program. If you are selected to attend the academy, more information will be provided.

## Compensation and Benefits

### **What is the pay?**

The salary range for current Conservation Officers is \$33.81 - \$45.42/hourly, \$70,595 - \$94,837/annually. During the Conservation Officer Academy, cadets will be compensated at step 1 of the Conservation Officer Salary grid, unless eligible for lateral pay.

<https://mn.gov/mmb-stat/000/az/labor-relations/mlea/contract/MLEA%20Contract%202019-2021%20Accessible.pdf>

The DNR Division of Enforcement Hiring Authority determines if lateral pay is offered. You may be eligible to receive credit for previous employment as a peace officer, as defined by M.S. 626.05, sub 2, or similar law of another state. Such credit shall be used to determine only the new employee's initial placement on the salary grid.

### **What are the benefits?**

#### **Health and Dental**

There are a variety of health and dental plans. Each health plan provides comprehensive coverage for most illnesses and injuries. All dental plans provide comprehensive coverage for most conditions requiring dental diagnosis and treatment, including orthodontic treatment for children, as well as a broad range of preventative services.

[State Employee Group Insurance Program](#)

#### **Life and Disability Insurance**

The state offers both basic and optional life insurance coverage for you, your spouse, and your children.

- Basic insurance automatically entitles you to a term life insurance policy in an amount equal to your annual salary.
- Additional term life insurance is available to purchase for you, your spouse and children.
- Optional disability insurance is offered that will help replace lost income should you become disabled.
  - Short-term disability insurance provides income for up to 180 days if you become totally disabled due to illness, injury or pregnancy.
  - Long-term disability insurance provides income beyond 180 days of total disability.

**Paid Parental Leave**

Eligible state employees are entitled to up to six (6) consecutive weeks of paid parental leave following: the birth of a child; placement of a child in the employee's home for adoption; or placement of a child in the employee's home to adjudicate parentage in cases of surrogacy when the employee is the intended parent. This leave is available to both parents if they are both eligible state employee.

<https://mn.gov/mmb-stat/policies/1435-PaidParentalLeave.pdf>

**Retirement Benefits**

For more information on the Minnesota State Retirement System.

[MN State Retirement System](#)

**Vacation and Sick Leave**

Conservation Officers accrue four hours of vacation and four hours of sick leave every two weeks. Vacation accrual rates increase with service time to a maximum of nine hours every two weeks. Vacation balances can accumulate to any amount, however the balance must be reduced to 275 hours once per fiscal year.

Former public sector or United States Armed Services employees who were in a vacation eligible position prior to hire, may be granted vacation accrual at a rate based on their years of service (subject to the discretion of the appointing authority).

## Miscellaneous

### **What are the hours of work for a Conservation Officer?**

Conservation Officers are required to work a variety of hours and times. The job requires significant weekend and evening work.

### **Are there any inherent risks or hazards in a Conservation Officer's job that I need to be aware of?**

Conservation Officers are licensed peace officers with full arrest authority. In most cases, the citizens we encounter are receptive to encountering an officer. However, there is a very real possibility of being assaulted or seriously injured by a citizen who chooses to violate Minnesota's natural resource laws. Twenty three (23) Conservation Officers have given their lives in the line of duty protecting Minnesota's Natural Resources.

### **What are the firearm requirements?**

Conservation Officers are required to carry firearms while on duty for their personal protection as well as that of the public. Officers are required to be proficient in the firing of handguns, shotguns and rifles in accordance with Minnesota Peace Officer licensing standards which require officers to train and be certified annually in their use. Applicants who are selected for the CO PREP Program will receive firearms training during the law enforcement skill portion of the academic training, as well as at the Conservation Officer Academy.

### **Does a Conservation Officer need to know how to swim?**

Conservation Officers are required to know how to swim as they spend a significant amount of work time on or around water.

### **Does the Division of Enforcement have a physical fitness standard?**

Applicants that move through the hiring process must complete a functional analysis test that measures officer readiness for field duty, as well as a medical exam that is conducted by a physician. Applicants need to successfully complete these exams to be considered for employment. While at the academy, cadets participate in an aggressive physical training program that prepares them for essential officer fitness so they can safely function as a Conservation Officer.

### **Do I have the option of "opting out" of any required training or requesting an accommodation for any activity or duty that I may not want to perform?**

Conservation Officers are licensed peace officers by the MN POST Board. The board has developed stringent standards that are required to be followed to earn and maintain a peace officer license. Officers who are unable to fulfill these obligations will not be able to receive a peace officer license. Some of the basic requirements include use of force standards, the justifiable taking of life, emergency vehicle operation, and many other subject areas.

**How soon can I transfer to a different station after I am hired?**

You are eligible to transfer after you have been in your initial station for one year. Transfers are based on seniority and the vacancies that exist.

**Where are the Conservation Officer stations?**

Refer to this map: [Conservation Officer Patrol Areas](#)

**Do I have to live in my assigned station?**

Yes, Conservation Officers will be expected to establish a residence within their station, or within 15 miles of their station's designated city, pursuant to DNR Enforcement Directive A-20-06.

**Can I choose where I work?**

Placement of cadets is based on both the needs of the organization and the interest of the applicant.

**Are there promotional opportunities within DNR Division of Enforcement?**

The Division of Enforcement provides for numerous promotional opportunities, as well as specialty assignments. You are eligible to apply for these opportunities once you successfully complete probation and meet the other minimum qualifications for the position. In the event an officer is selected for promotion, the State of Minnesota will allow for relocation expenses. Promotional opportunities include supervisor and manager positions, as well as training officer, water resource officer, special investigator and pilot, among others.

**Do you have a maximum hiring age?**

There is not a maximum hiring age. Mandatory retirement is age 60.

**What is the DNR Division of Enforcement employee turnover rate?**

The average Conservation Officer retires with over 20 years of service, so most people who enter this profession make it a lifelong career.

**If I don't get an offer this year can I remain on an eligibility list for next year?**

No. We do not maintain an eligibility list. Applicants must re-apply with each process

**Do you administer a polygraph examination?**

No.