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VPSOs To Attend 15-week Alaska Law Enforcement Training For First Time

(SITKA, Alaska) – For the first time in the almost 40-year history of the Village Public Safety Officer Program, 10 VPSOs will start the 15-week Alaska Law Enforcement Training (ALET) in Sitka on Sunday alongside state and municipal officers. With few exceptions, municipal law enforcement agencies send their police recruits through ALET at the [Public Safety Training Academy](#), considered the premier law enforcement training academy in the state. Now that will include 10 VPSOs who along with eight Alaska State Troopers, three Alaska Wildlife Troopers, three State Park Rangers, one Fairbanks International Airport Police and Fire Officer and 20 municipal law enforcement will receive more than 900 hours of training on topics that are necessary to receive certification by the Alaska Police Standards Council. This training meets and exceeds the [minimum standards](#) to be a VPSO.

VPSOs graduating ALET on June 5 will not be immediately certified to carry firearms in the course of their duties. Instead, they will have the opportunity to be armed once they fulfill the VPSO certification requirements of being employed as a VPSO for one year and meet the minimum arming standards of passing a physical fitness test, psychological evaluation and background requirements. A separate VPSO Arming Pilot program, set to begin at the academy in March, is designed to provide firearms training for those VPSOs who meet the requirements and have opted to be armed.

The 10 VPSOs attending ALET had to pass a physical fitness test and have the full support of their employers, the [nine regional non-profits and Northwest Arctic Borough](#), in order to go through the training to become certified peace officers. The group is a mixture of new and already working VPSOs from throughout the state. During the ALET session, the VPSO Program will provide mentoring troopers and VPSOs in addition to the normal temporarily assigned Training Assistance and Counseling (TAC) officers that give ALET students an opportunity to seek guidance and receive mentorship about what the job is like in the field.

The [VPSO Program](#) was started in the late 1970s to train and employ individuals residing in the village as first responders to public safety emergencies such as search and rescue, fire protection, emergency medical assistance, crime prevention and basic law enforcement. In the past, VPSOs went through job specific instruction either during a single 10-week block of training or attending two five-week and one two-week training phases held in Sitka or Bethel. Integrating VPSOs into the ALET, which is offered twice a year, consolidates training at the academy as well as provides advanced instruction for these first responders in the villages. The academy staff provides comprehensive and rigorous training involving academics, physical fitness, decision making and stress inoculation. Each student is challenged academically, mentally and physically to help prepare them for a law enforcement career in Alaska.

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