

# **NPS Reference Manual 50B Occupational Safety and Health Program**

Chapter 1 Addendum: Annual Safety, Health, and Wellness  
Stand Downs

**Approval for inclusion in Reference Manual 50B**

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# Annual Safety, Health, and Wellness Standdowns

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## **A.1 Introduction**

In industry, safety stand downs are a voluntary event for employers to engage directly with employees about their safety and health. In the National Park Service (NPS), safety and health operational stand downs have historically occurred following catastrophic loss events, mainly employee deaths. In more recent years as the NPS has strived to create a more effective safety, health, and wellness culture, there has been a desire to use stand downs more proactively rather than reactively as in the past.

The purpose of this addendum is to outline a standardized safety, health, and wellness schedule and protocol that the entire service will observe, throughout the year. Observances listed in the addendum may be altered based on priority and shifts in focus either within the NPS or nationally. Parks, Regions, and Programs may also add their own observances to this schedule; however, not at the expense of the required three annual observances listed in this addendum, without an approved waiver.

## **A.2 Scope**

This addendum applies to all NPS Regions, Parks, Centers, Programs, and WASO Directorates.

## **A.3 Definition**

A Safety, Health, and Wellness Stand Down is an opportunity for all National Park Service employees to pause and engage in focused, group discussions and trainings on specific topics.

## **A.4 Responsibilities**

### **A.4.1 Director**

Responsible for:

1. Hosting an all-employee session on the specified date of the two Servicewide scheduled stand downs listed below as a demonstration of unity related to the observance.
2. If the Director is not available, a Deputy Director will serve as the lead.
3. All-employee sessions will be recorded to afford employees who are not able to attend the live session, the opportunity to view at a later time or date.

### **A.4.2 Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection (AD-VRP)**

Responsible for:

1. The overall execution of the scheduled safety, health, and wellness stand downs.
2. Ensuring Parks, Regions, Programs, Centers, and Directorates have the necessary non-monetary resources, as described in paragraphs A.5.3.2 and A.5.4.3 below, needed to undertake effective safety, health, and wellness stand downs.

### **A.4.3 Director, Office of Equal Opportunity Programs (OEOP)**

Responsible for:

1. The overall execution of the Psychological Safety, Health, and Wellness annual stand down.
2. Ensuring Parks, Regions, Programs, Centers, and Directorates have the necessary non-monetary resources, as described in paragraph A.5.2.3 below, needed to undertake the national observance under OEOP responsibility.

### **A.4.4 Regional Directors, Associate Directors, and Superintendents**

Responsible for:

1. Ensuring insofar as possible, all employees are afforded the opportunity to actively participate in the scheduled stand down. Employees working remotely are not expected to travel to their home unit to participate but should attend virtually where possible.
2. The likelihood of 100 percent employee participation during a stand down is highly improbable and is understood; however, those employees who are not able to participate, should be given the opportunity to view recorded sessions and receive materials disseminated to employees who were able to participate directly.
3. If, due to operational concerns or conflicts, a NPS unit is not able to conduct the stand down on the nationally recognized date, the unit will conduct the stand down within one week after the recognized date. Extensions beyond one week will be approved by the next higher authority.
4. The length each stand down is required to last is left to the determination of the Regional, Associate, Assistant, or Center Director or Superintendent. The length will be long enough to ensure the stand down's purpose is effectively addressed and as many employees as possible have the opportunity to participate.

## **A.5 Scheduled Observances**

### **A.5.1. There will be two scheduled national stand downs and one local stand down observances per year:**

1. February: Psychological Safety, Health, and Wellness
2. September: Mental Health, Suicide Awareness, and Wellness
3. Local Determination: Field Season Safety, Health, and Wellness Preparation

February was selected as the observance month for the Psychological Safety, Health, and Wellness stand down as a means to refocus in the new year and to promote a Respectful, Inclusive, Safe, and Engaged, *RISE*, workforce. A specific date for the NPS observance will be announced with enough notice for effective planning.

The September Mental Health, Suicide Awareness, and Wellness stand down is scheduled to occur within National Suicide Prevention Month. A specific date for the NPS observance will be announced with enough notice for effective planning. Due to annual fiscal year closeout, the date for the September stand down should be scheduled no later than the second week of September.

Each National Park Service unit will determine the optimal time to conduct its Field Season Safety, Health, and Wellness preparation stand down to coincide with the commencement of its high visitation season. WASO Directorates, Regional Offices, and Centers that do not have a field season, will conduct stand downs focused on topics such as personal, office, summer safety, health, and wellness.

#### **A.5.2. Psychological Safety, Health, and Wellness (Lead: Director, Office of Equal Opportunity Programs)**

1. Purpose: Focus Servicewide efforts on creating workplaces free from harassment in any form, and workplaces that promote and celebrate diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.
2. All NPS Regions, Parks, Centers, Programs, and WASO Directorates will cease operations to the maximum extent practical on the same day to attend focused, group training and discussion sessions on topics including anti-harassment of all forms; implicit bias; diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; and actions needed to create workplaces that are Respectful, Inclusive, Safe, and Engaged.
3. The NPS Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, with support from the Workforce and Inclusion Directorate as needed, will make non-monetary resources, such as training materials and statistical data available to aid in the execution of park, region, and office efforts to create a meaningful observance.
4. The Director and/or Deputy Director(s) will address all employees in a virtual, live “All-employee” forum during a specified period on the day of the observance that allows for the maximum possible participation.

#### **A.5.3. Mental Health, Suicide Prevention, and Wellness (Lead: Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection)**

1. Purpose: Focus Servicewide on efforts to promote mental health and wellness and resilience building; reducing the stigma of mental illness; the creation of workplaces where employees can openly express their challenges to lessen the likelihood of suicide; dispel common myths and rumors on mental illness; and attend suicide awareness training.
2. The Wellness and Resilience Branch will provide non-monetary resources through the dissemination and/or posting of information and training opportunities to assist in discussions and learning about mental health and resilience building and information on the resources available through the Employee Assistance Program.

3. The Director and/or Deputy Director(s) will address all employees in a virtual, live “All-employee” forum during a specified period on the day of the observance that allows for the maximum possible participation.

#### **A.5.4. Field Season Safety, Health, and Wellness (Lead: Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection)**

1. Purpose: Refocus on safety, health, and wellness prior to entering the local field season.
2. Since field season commences at varying times across the service, the date of this observance will be determined locally, so regions and parks can determine when best to observe this stand down during a specified period between December through July.
3. The Office of Risk Management and Regional Safety and Health Managers are responsible for developing, disseminating, or posting a suite of tools and resources for parks to use as briefing and training materials and example agenda topics and activities. Parks with safety and health professionals or collateral duty safety contacts are also a resource for the development of local accident trending data and other information to aid in the execution of the stand down. Other resources could include Operational Leadership refresher materials; Hantavirus awareness materials for reopening closed facilities; manual material handling information; tickborne disease; heat stress illness awareness; and wellness-related information.

#### **A.5.5. After Action Reporting**

Reports on participation totals and local activities conducted are not required to be submitted nationally; however, regions and directorates may require the submission of such reports at their discretion.