

National recognition achieved by Lee police department

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LEE — Mission accomplished.

When 2008 began, Police Chief Chet Murch was dead set on getting the town's eight-officer department nationally recognized by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.

Following a formal review earlier in December in Tulsa, Okla., the department received its national recognition, making it one of the smallest agencies in the state to achieve the feat. Londonderry and Dunbarton are also recognized by CALEA.

"Basically, accreditation or recognition means we're policing the way the rest of the nation is policing, not just the way that New Hampshire is," Murch said. "For an agency our size, this is a big feat."

National recognition is slightly different from national accreditation achieved by neighboring agencies in Dover and Durham. To be nationally accredited, a department must meet more than 400 standards set forth by CALEA; to be nationally recognized, it must meet more than 100.

Once the department signed up with CALEA to take part in the recognition process, it had two years to complete it. Murch said the department ended up completing the process in eight months.

"We took an aggressive approach," he said. "You can always find excuses to put something off, but we just said we're going to do this, no matter what it takes, we're going to get this done."

The national recognition process includes multiple mock reviews, which includes representatives from other recognized agencies coming to the department and reviewing the department's files, policies, procedures and facilities, to give the department an idea of how it would do if it were an actual review.

In September, the department had an official on-site assessment, which went toward the December review and final decision to recognize the department.

Murch said achieving national recognition has been one of his goals for several years and noted that it shows the department has come along since 2002, when it received a poor review from independent reviewer, Municipal Resources Inc.

"I always thought this was one of the best things we could do to make sure we were on top of all our policies and procedures," he said.