

Public Safety

More than 85 million people visit California State Parks each year. The Department employs over 800 peace officers to safeguard both visitors and the resources themselves. Rangers and lifeguards provide not only law enforcement and aquatic rescue services, they also provide public education through interpretation.

Current Status

■ Ratio of Visitor Accidents and Ratio of Crimes to Visitors

The Department has ten years of data on accident rates and six years of crime rate data. Accident and crime rates are calculated based on the number of crimes and accidents compared to total visitation in state parks.

■ Visitor Perception of Safety and Security

The Department's Visitor Satisfaction Survey measures visitor perception of safety and security during visits to California State Parks. The survey asks visitors to rate services and facilities in terms of satisfaction as well as importance. The visitor perception of safety and security has consistently rated among the top three issues in importance since the survey began in 1994.

Personal perception of safety and security are paramount to a restful and enjoyable recreational experience. Understanding this perception enables the Department to plan improvements and adjust staffing to maximize the benefit to visitors.



Canine officer at Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area

Measurement Rationale

The measures established for this outcome assess the degree of safety and security provided to visitors to the State Park System. The components of public safety measurement include:

- Ratio of visitor accidents
- Ratio of crimes to visitors
- Visitor perception of safety and security



Ranger at Richardson Grove State Park



Lifeguard and tower at Bolsa Chica State Beach



Safety signage at Mount Tamalpais State Park

Measures

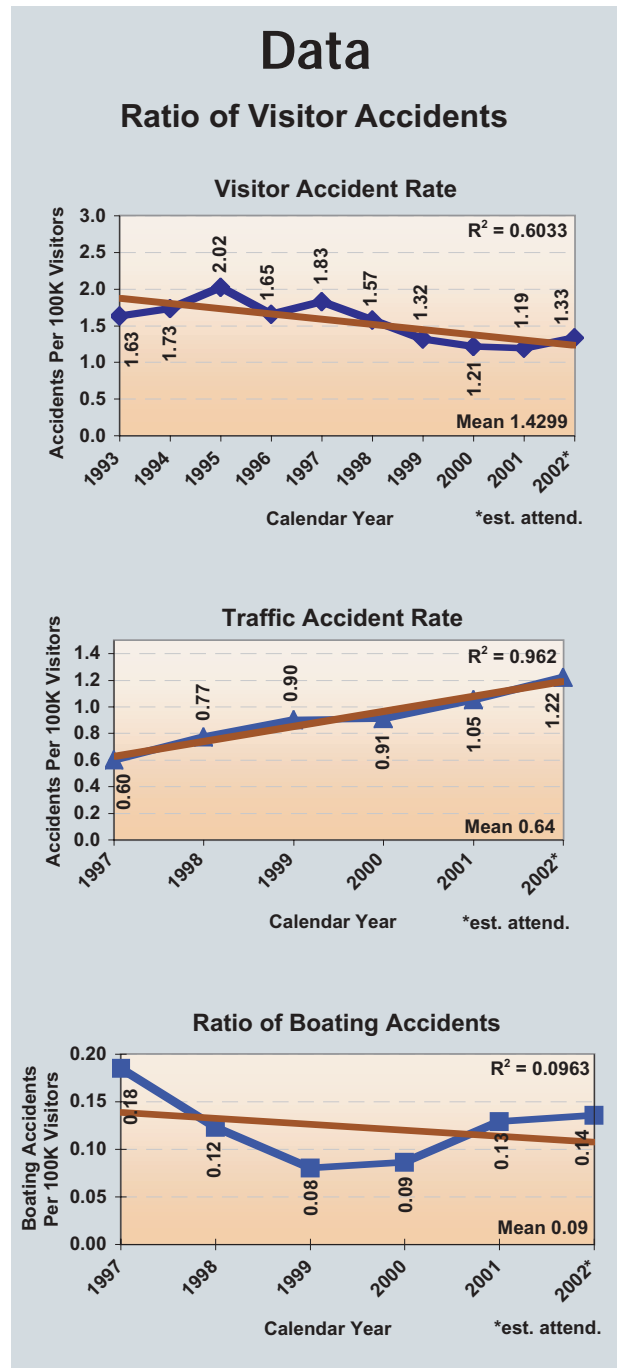
Ratio of Visitor Accidents and Ratio of Crimes to Visitors

The Department uses many techniques designed to keep visitors safe. Park regulations and signage help deter potential accidents, trained staff provide first responder emergency services, and prevention programs help educate the public on public safety issues.

Despite a significant increase in attendance, accident rates have remained somewhat static. Traffic accidents show an increasing trend, while boating accidents reflect more normal peaks and valleys.



Grounded yacht at Pescadero State Beach



Lifeguard at Huntington State Beach



Boat patrol at Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area

Rangers and lifeguards provide a law enforcement presence and respond to public disturbances and crimes against people, property, and resources within state parks.

While crime rates were static from 1997 through 2000, there was a significant rise in 2001 and 2002. This could be due in part to the increase in attendance. Multiple visitor comments on surveys confirm this concern.

■ Visitor Perception of Safety and Security

The Department uses its visitor survey to measure visitor perception of safety, and to plan for improvements in its safety programs. The survey asks respondents how satisfied they are with the feeling of safety and security during their visit. Additionally, many visitors are asked to rate their satisfaction with the enforcement of rules and regulations, and with the availability of rangers and lifeguards.

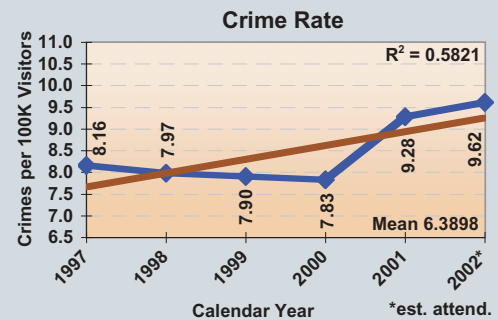


Lifeguards at San Clemente State Beach

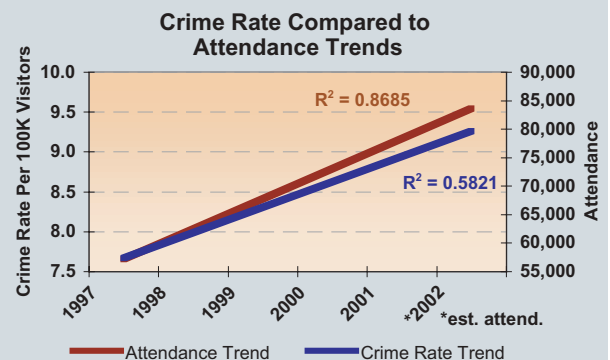


Ranger reading weatherstation at Mount Diablo State Park

Ratio of Crimes per 100,000 Visitors



Crime rates show a significant increase, especially from 2001 to 2002. The chart below shows an interesting correlation between attendance increases and crime rates.

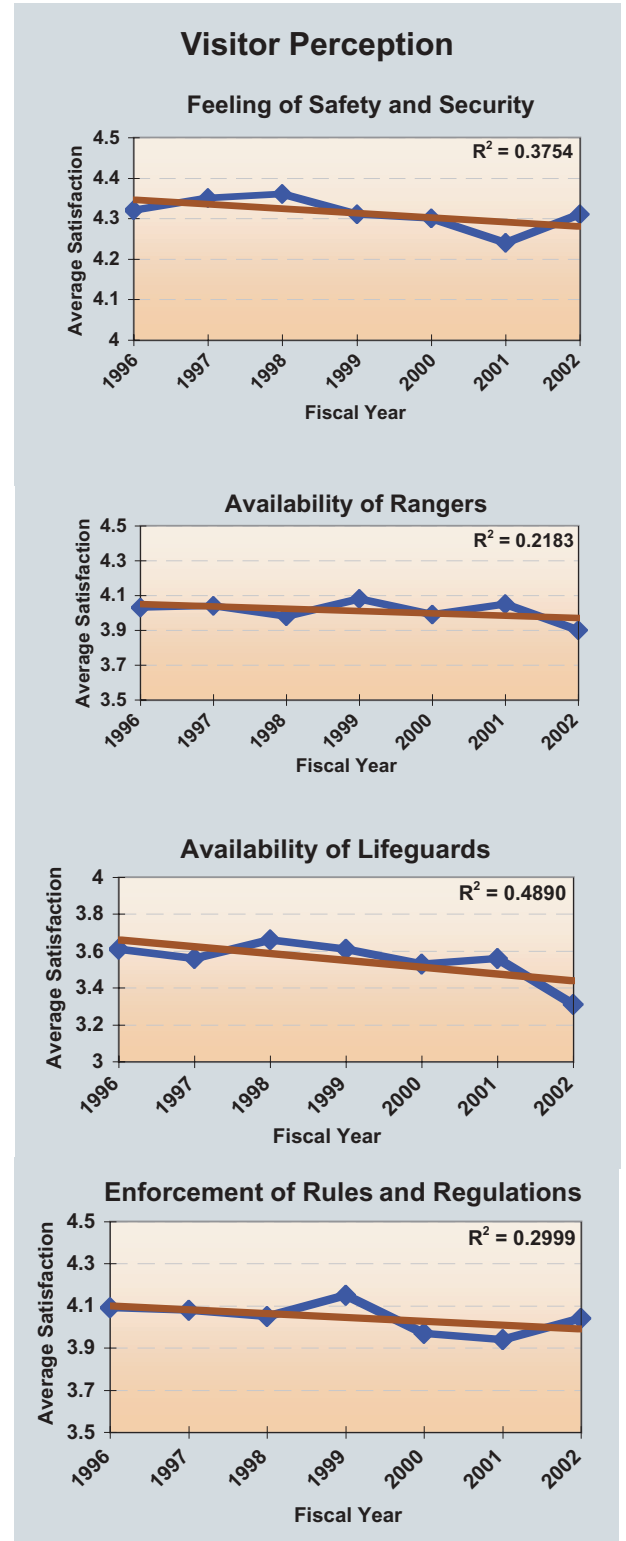




Rangers at Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park

Seven years of data suggests that although scores were consistently in the high range, there is a slight downward trend in satisfaction with the perception of safety and security.

Likewise, visitors are showing slightly less satisfaction with the enforcement of rules and regulations, corresponding with their perceptions about the availability of rangers and particularly lifeguards.



Lifeguard rescue at Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area

Visitor Comments on Public Safety

From the California State Parks Visitor Survey 2000-2002

"Impressive how fast the rangers, et al, responded to an emergency..."

Butano State Park, Fall 2001

"Coming to the ranger program and seeing the rangers walking around checking things out made us feel safe and that everything is under control."

Caswell Memorial State Park, Summer 2001

"The gentleman was very careful to advise us of uneven walkways and low doors."

Monterey State Historic Park, Summer 2002

"Need for more park rangers and police to patrol late night and early morning hours."

San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area, Fall 2000

"I liked the safety talk before the tours."

San Juan Bautista State Historic Park, Winter 2001

"We appreciated seeing the park rangers do evening patrol on the lake as well as a nightly drive through the camp grounds."

Millerton Lake State Recreation Area, Summer 2000

"Just the right amount of 'enforcement show' to make the point but not be intimidating to 'normal' people."

Morro Bay State Park, Spring 2000

"My son cut his head. Staff and rangers were very helpful giving us a Band-Aid, and info on hospitals."

Big Basin Redwoods State Park, Spring 2001

"Always feel safe here."

Angel Island State Park, Fall 2001

"I was quite impressed on how quickly the fire was handled on Tuesday. The entire crew here were/are awesome. Thanks to you all!"

San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area, Summer 2001

"Lifeguard in tower and another driving on beach in truck. My children were safe."

Manresa State Beach, Summer 2001

"Safety was addressed and options for disabled or less ambulatory visitors; i.e., video for 3rd and 4th floors."

Bidwell Mansion State Historic Park, Winter 2001

"Our daughter had a fall and your staff was completely overwhelming in being totally prepared. Thank you. Camp hosts were exceptional!"

Refugio State Beach, Fall 2000

"Because of rangers teaching my children about the rip tides it actually saved my son's life...he would have drowned had he not learned what to do. Everything was great!"

San Buenaventura State Beach, Fall 2000

"Would like at least one person here all night! I feel this is very important."

D. L. Bliss State Park, Summer 2001

"While on a trail, my brother-in-law, brother, nephew, and son ran out of water. How grateful I was to hear that the rangers gave them water and filled their water bottles."

Palomar Mountain State Park, Summer 2000

"The park rangers have too many people to police and no lifeguards on the beach at most towers. RAISE the FEES! HIRE rangers, lifeguards! Bring back nature programs to teach the kids!"

South Carlsbad State Beach, Summer 2002

"Very glad to see the rangers checking through out the park camping area!! Thank you."

MacKerricher State Park, Summer 2001