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### **Police Department Working to Be Among the Elite of Law Enforcement Agencies**

The Oak Park Police Department is working to become one of the elite law enforcement agencies in Illinois by earning certification through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), an independent association dedicated to setting professional standards for law enforcement.

"In addition to helping lower liability insurance costs and workers' compensation claims, accreditation offers a greater sense of well-being and safety to residents by providing objective evidence of their police department's commitment to excellence in leadership, resource allocation and service delivery," said Oak Park Police Chief Rick C. Tanksley.

Accreditation is a lot more than just a certificate, according to Tanksley. It requires a police department to closely examine every aspect of its operations, a form of objective, critical self-analysis that provides the information necessary to create and implement effective law enforcement policies and procedures.

To become accredited, a law enforcement agency must meet CALEA's 446 standards, all of which are based upon established professional policing practices. Standards include roles, responsibilities and relationships with other agencies; organization management and administration; personnel administration; law enforcement operations, traffic and support; auxiliary and technical services; and prisoner and court-related services.

The process to receive accreditation begins with an application and six-month sign-up period. The application period is followed by 18 to 36 months of self assessment, a mock review and a final on-site review by assessors from CALEA. During the on-site review, the assessors determine compliance with each of the standards, point out deficiencies and make a decision about granting a certificate of accredited status.

Only 49 of Illinois' approximately 1,250 law enforcement agencies are accredited. Oak Park police are working to complete the accreditation process by March 2006.

"Accreditation will be a major accomplishment," Tanksley said. "Only those police agencies that can achieve the highest standards of professional law enforcement are accredited. We intend to soon count Oak Park among them."

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