

ST. GEORGE POLICE TO HEAD UTAH PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT

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St. George Police Chief Robert Flowers took a big jump up the career ladder Wednesday night when Gov. Mike Leavitt appointed the 25- year law enforcement veteran his new commissioner of the Utah Department of Public Safety.

Flowers fills a vacancy left by the departure of Craig Dearden, who steps down Dec. 31 after four years as commissioner. Flowers, who supervises 70 or so sworn officers in St. George, will head a statewide department that employs about 1,100 full-time staff, including 494 sworn police personnel.

But Flowers does not seem intimidated by his new job, in which he will oversee the Utah Highway Patrol, the Division of Comprehensive Emergency Management (CEM), the state fire marshal's office and the Utah Olympic Public Safety Command, among other state divisions.

"My first priority is to sit down and talk with [division leaders] to find out where they are at and what needs to happen," Flowers said.

"A big issue is getting up to speed on Olympic safety issues. . . . I will be assembling the best and brightest in law enforcement to assist me in leading the department."

Flowers announced two appointments to *The Salt Lake Tribune* on Wednesday night. He said he plans to name Earl Morris, the current director of CEM, as the deputy commissioner in charge of law enforcement. And Scott Duncan, now the director of motor vehicle enforcement for the state Tax Commission, will become Flowers' superintendent over UHP, he said.

"I look forward to working closely with local law enforcement agencies statewide," said Duncan, a 22-year veteran of UHP, who promised to "take a look at the culture within the Highway Patrol . . . and make sure that we are accountable."

The UHP came under fire last summer when an Arkansas motorist of Indian descent filed a federal lawsuit that accused the patrol of racial profiling, or pulling motorists over for no reason other than skin color.

Within days, DPS released statistics showing that troopers ticketed whites more frequently than other drivers.

"I am concerned with things like profiling," Flowers said. "We want to make sure we do the right thing on all fronts."

As police chief in St. George, Flowers focused on strengthening ties between law enforcement and members of the community, he said. Three programs in which he takes special pride are the city's bike patrol unit, the St. George Gang Task Force and the Washington County Drug Task Force.

"I have loved my work in St. George, and now I feel like I am returning home," Flowers said.

He is scheduled to assume the position effective Jan. 5.