

## Introduction

**Instructor:** You have an opportunity right now that you've been blessed with that not everyone has an opportunity to have—an opportunity to be a part of the greatest law enforcement agency in the country. Do you want it?

**Cadets:** Sir, yes, sir!

**Instructor:** Are you ready?

**Cadets:** Sir, yes, sir!

[Pause]

[Music]

**Kirsten:** You're listening to the NCDPS Safety Scoop, a podcast that dives into the stories of the people, programs and resources within the North Carolina Department of Public Safety. Each episode, we'll give you the scoop from department personnel on how NCDPS enhances the safety of the people of North Carolina.

[Music]

## Season 2 Episode 8

**Kirsten:** Even if you don't live in North Carolina, there is something immediately recognizable about the State Highway Patrol. Troopers clad in crisp, long-sleeved button-ups tucked into pressed gray slacks patrol miles of roadway from the mountains to the coast. The black campaign hat troopers wear each day, adorned with a diamond-shaped hat pin and golden cord, is just as recognizable as the black-and-silver cruisers they work from. Before anyone can claim the title of Trooper, each member of the North Carolina State Highway Patrol must undergo the rigorous Basic Patrol School.

Since the first Basic Patrol School in 1929, hundreds of cadets have undergone physical and psychological testing to ensure they are prepared for any situation while on duty. Whether it's defense tactics, driving simulations, equipment checks, legal reviews and even exposure to pepper spray, Basic Patrol School pushes cadets to their limits. In this episode of Safety Scoop, we go behind the scenes to learn the process of selecting, training and supporting aspiring members of the Highway Patrol. Guests include Basic Patrol School staff, recruitment and two cadets in 158th Basic Patrol School. If you've ever considered applying for the Highway Patrol, have family or friends currently enrolled in a Basic Patrol School class or are interested in learning more about the stories behind the intense cadet action shots on social media, this podcast is for you. We'll start the episode with First Sergeant Craig Harris who has been the Basic Patrol School commandant since 2019.

**F/Sgt. Craig Harris:** My name is Craig Harris. I'm a First Sergeant, and I'm stationed near the Training Academy and assigned as the Basic School Commandant, and I have been on the patrol for 22 years of service.

**Kirsten:** And since you mentioned that you're the commandant, what does that role entail?

**F/Sgt. Harris:** So, my role is to oversee the Basic School's staff, operations for the school, the cadets, pretty much anything and everything that concerns the Basic School and its operation while they're here and even preparing up until the point they arrive and all the way up until graduation and even after graduation until they arrive in the field. So, typically a lot of my role is spent doing a lot of the administrative stuff, logistical stuff, ensuring cadets get what they need, equipment, delegating things to my sergeant, the staff, budgeting, managing the budget for Basic School. All those things play a role in making sure the day-to-day operations continue to go on without any hitch, so to speak, or bumps in the road, and that we're able to get them ready to be—get them the uniforms they need for training, setting up and developing the curriculum as well as any of the applicable specialized training where we work with the advance sections here at the Academy from firearms to driving, defensive tactics and officer survival, collision and crash investigation. All those are specialized sections that we have to coordinate with—with as well because they have other responsibilities from in-service for our entire Highway Patrol staff yearly as well as providing services to outside agencies at the driving track and those things, so it really does take a village, so to speak, to coordinate the Basic School.

**Kirsten:** Well, thank you for joining me on the Safety Scoop. Glad to have you here. We're going to start off talking about the Basic Patrol School. Can you tell us about the campus where the cadets will be staying and what they can expect for lodging, food, programming, all of the above.

**F/Sgt. Harris:** So, our Basic School Campus is a pretty large campus. Cadets... We have two dormitories. So, if we have two classes in session which is—which is our fast-track school or our long school, they're generally separated, so they won't stay together in the same school. Each class is divided based on that Basic School class number. So, like right now, we have the 158th Basic School and the 159th Basic School. The 158th is a smaller, fast track school here for 14 weeks. The 159th Basic School is a long school, and they're here for 27 weeks, and those folks will get the Basic Law Enforcement Training while they're here.

While they're here, they'll stay in a dormitory-style setting with suites, bathrooms, shared living spaces. And we have Cadet Dorm 5 and a Cadet Dorm 3. 3 will hold up to 46 cadets, and 5 will hold up to 74 or so, so we can also have a much larger class in there if need be. While on campus, there's a full staffed cafeteria, so meals are provided—breakfast, lunch, dinner—while on campus as well, and they'll be training full time, depending upon which course of study they're in, which class they're in.

So, it's a—it's a pretty full day. They're usually up at 5:00 a.m. and PT on the PT field by 5:15. Stretch and ready to go. After that it's mealtime, breakfast. After breakfast, it's—it's getting things ready in the dormitory, getting themselves ready for the day, whether it's putting on a certain uniform or a training attire for that day, and then it's off to the classroom whether it's instruction in-person or actual application hands-on training. That will go on for pretty much the rest of the day with a break for lunch and then again, a break for dinner, and then if they are in the Basic Law Enforcement Training long school, until they've completed the Basic Law Enforcement Training section part portion, they will have two hours of study time every night. And then lights out are at 9:00 for both schools. If they're not in the BLET long school session and in the short session, they're usually doing nighttime training in our advanced training.

**Kirsten:** The school is meant to prepare cadets for different scenarios while they're out on the road. Can you share details of some of the components of this rigorous curriculum?

**F/Sgt. Harris:** A lot of that is, again, where our specialized training comes in. You can... In law, we have a Basic Law Enforcement Training. They experience some of that in a much more basic setting, kind of like how the name states: basic. It's the basic law enforcement training an officer will get. And in—in Patrol School versus going to the community college or another agency, you know, we go beyond that in our schools that have the advanced side of training, and that's where this comes in with the specialized training instructors and the advanced defensive tactics and officer survival courses, like the first three seconds to prepare the troopers on the road, those—those going out to the road to—to possibly have to be in a violent encounter or something which typically last anywhere no more than three seconds, you know, before something bad happens whether good or bad for the officer or suspect. It's—it's intense training. It's to prepare them for when that time comes and, you know, we pray it never comes, but when it does, that they're ready to face that encounter and know that in the first three seconds can make the difference between life or death.

So, that type of events training, high-speed driving involving the PIT maneuver, off road recovery, our advanced crash investigation (way more in depth than what you're going to get in the Basic Law Enforcement Training curriculum), as well as firearm taser training, all those types of things. So, it really is a just non-stop training environment once we get into advanced, specialized. Like again, it's from 5:00 a.m., still getting up and doing their physical fitness training down on the PT field, and could go as late during those times as much as to 10:00 to 1:00 a.m., typically to 1:00 a.m. It just depend on the size of the school, and so whether or not there everybody really gets through all the training in the allotted amount of time, but we'll go as late as we need to—to make sure everybody gets it.

**Kirsten:** Classes within the Basic Patrol School typically start with about 45 to 55 cadets on average. Due to the rigorous paramilitary nature of the program or circumstances of life, there are cadets who decide to leave Basic Patrol School

before graduation. I wanted to get First Sergeant Harris's take on why this happens and what Basic Patrol School staff are doing to limit the number of early exits.

**F/Sgt. Harris:**

I wouldn't necessarily say we just have a weed-out process. What we do is we try to really incorporate kind of what's expected in the first few days when they arrive, when they come to us as a staff, as the Basic School staff, and kind of what we try to do is we just try to say, "Here's the expectation," right from the start, you know. This is the expectation. This is kind of where it's going to be and, you know, if you do what's asked, you give 110%, whether it's on the PT field, your academics, your training, and you do really well at just embodying the team concept, understanding that as a class you become a family when you work together. And when those classes get that early on, they really start to click. And when that happens, you start to see less and less of the staff because they're really... The expectation's been set, and they start to meet that expectation, and then they're doing it themselves, and we're just there to eventually be a support role, mentor, coach, advise. Establish their own leadership within their class, and they're able to carry themselves on through the rest of the school with—with really the staff being a support system rather than someone who's trying to instill disciplines and things like that because from the start, we've done that the first few weeks. And once they get it, they really do a great job of really managing themselves through the rest of the school. They do—do buy in really well once that happens.

And so, I think for those who choose to end their time very early on, just don't give it a chance. It's been my experience, and I tell every Basic School class that comes in, if you're going to do anything in life that's hard, to make a decision in 24 hours or even 48 Hours, even a week, on a school that's 14 weeks long or 27 weeks long, you really have to give it a chance to see if the law for profession is for you and take the time to make a good, informed decision. I can tell you that the number one reason that most cadets say they leave is because they just weren't physically or mentally prepared for it, and—and you know the physical component is something that really, if you just, if it's what you want, you'll put the time in before you get here to make sure you're in shape. And we do a good job of putting together a pre-program that's sent out for them to be doing physically prepare themselves for Basic School. And if they do that, when they come, it makes it that much easier for you to adapt because the hardest part of your day starts at PT in the morning. If that's easy for you, your day is pretty much over. You just have to be able to deal with some of the mental aspects of the structure and the discipline and things like that. And if you can, you're going to be very successful as a cadet.

And then I'll—I'll also, just to—to say that the number one reason cadets say they stay in the end, when I have sort of that—that meeting with them the last week before graduation, is because they—they get and feel that sense of family in the end, and they understand the career that they just entered into and the agency they entered that career with and what they're about and the overall family feeling they get. And in the end, the instructors are some of their best friends.

And they keep in touch because they—they now realize what the process was about and why they were hard on them in the beginning, and then they see how well they support them. And it really brings home that family sort of concept of what we're about here at the Highway Patrol.

**Kirsten:** So, it sounds like, from what you were saying, that teamwork is a very important aspect of Basic Patrol School.

**F/Sgt. Harris:** Absolutely. Teamwork is essential. There's really no room for an individual in Basic School because you're going to have to rely on other people, and other people are going to rely on you. You kind of equate it to that—that sports team. You know, you're only good as your—your—your weakest players, and if the other team doesn't surround them and help build them up and make them better, that team is—is going to struggle. And sure, there are certain people who can overcompensate for others who maybe aren't pulling their weight or who—who are having a little bit harder time adjusting or adapting. You see that happen in sports or you see that happen in any type of team where some people feed off the—the other players that—that just have it down and it's really good or they—they grasp concepts really quick or just are able to perform really well but by the end they all really support each other when you buy in to that, and everyone is really on the same page, everybody's moving the same direction. And ultimately you build lifelong, I will say friendships, but lifelong family members, brothers and sisters that you will rely on and count on and be able to call on any time of the day.

**Kirsten:** So, as you stated before the, uh, due to the structure of the Basic Patrol School, what efforts are taken to ensure the mental and physical health of cadets as they complete the program?

**F/Sgt. Harris:** So, we understand it's rigorous. I mean, we've been through it, so we know. And then also, we are the instructors as well as responsible for overseeing their wellness and their benefit not just from a training standpoint but from an overall health and mental and human being perspective or understanding. So, things we've implemented is—is making sure they get enough sleep. You know, in the past, cadets' lights out have been at 10:00, now it's 9:00. So, we give them an extra hour to sort of decompress, get to bed, get a good night's rest. We've seen great improvement in that. Less cadets fall asleep in class the next morning, much more energetic on the PT field. Just that extra hour of rest has helped extremely.

We allow them at least once a night, sometimes they'll earn additional phone privileges to call home, talk to family, and that's typically every Wednesday night. So, they have that middle of the week. And then, they can also prepare for their homecoming. If there's anything going on they need to be aware of, a significant other, family, kids, whatever, they can express that to them, so they know, hey, not Friday when I get out of here, pick up the phone, there's 20 messages and they feel bombarded or stressed. They can kind of deal with some things on the phone prior to coming home, and then it's not so much of a

stressful impact on them then turning around having to expect to come back here on Sunday evening. So, we've also started to bring them back a little bit later on Sunday evening to give them more time at home, more travel time. So, their time off doesn't seem so short. On Wednesday evenings as well, we give them time to do sort of any type of relaxation or, I would say, type of sort of like a Bible study if they want to get together as a group and do Bible study, but for those who may not participate in a Bible study or be religious, it will just have time for them to just kind of do their own thing in the room or with another group of cadets to just really reflect, de-stress, or just give them time to their selves that midweek as well along with the phone call which has seemed to help really well.

Additional things have just been to structure a lot of our physical fitness training to make it more kind of applicable to the training they're going to get or real-world type training, so instead of just doing the monotonous everyday set of exercises on the PT field Monday through Friday, two days a week we break that up. We take them. We do what we call DTPT which is incorporating defensive tactics training into it, and they learn certain skills and things that they're going to have to apply later in the school. When we get to that part of the specialized training, they are much more advanced in it. It doesn't take as much time for them to pick it up. They feel more comfortable doing it. They're more engaged. They're not as stressed in trying to perform in a group setting because they're used to doing it leading up to that.

So, we've tried to do a lot of things that's kind of reduced that type of stress that individuals may place on themselves or—or just they have a certain fear of—of being able to express themselves or kind of demonstrate in a group setting when everybody's watching. And so that helps translate to the field and on the road when you have to perform your duties and you may have a group of individuals or—or—or people or fellow co-workers or the community watching that you're able to perform and conduct yourself in a professional manner.

**Kirsten:**

In your opinion, what are the most important lessons individuals can take with them after graduating from the school?

**F/Sgt. Harris:**

So, I think one of the most important lessons is—and I'll just go back to it at the sense of family—is this understanding that your part now of a much larger family, people who have been through the same thing you've been through. They understand what you went through to earn what you earned which is that—that title of State Trooper with an understanding as well that our core values are rooted in that family of integrity, professionalism, loyalty. And not loyalty just to the agency or each other, but loyalty to the citizens that you're going to serve in North Carolina. A duty that you're going to be loyal to their needs and—and—and really protect and serve, so to speak. It goes beyond just a loyalty to each other and to the agency, but it's to the—to the state, to the oath you—you take, and you're sworn to uphold. And I think if they take those core values, they apply it, and you're just professional, respectful with people out there, that's what we try to get you to do here, to understand that out there,

that's the way you conduct yourself. I think you have a very successful career and—and not just as an individual, but you—you really do justice in showing what the agency is about to other people. And that's the family and the professionalism and the integrity and the loyalty and the humility and being able to admit when you're wrong and know that you're human and that you can make mistakes, and—and people are better able to understand and trust an individual or an agency like that that can admit they made a mistake. You learn from it, and we move on, and you instill that trust in those folks that you serve.

**Kirsten:**

As a member who's been through the Patrol School and in your 22 years you've been here, what advice would you give to interested parties or just any career advice that you would give to people who might be in the Patrol School right now?

**F/Sgt. Harris:**

So, I would just say that anyone, *anyone* who has an interest in law enforcement and primarily the highway patrol, understand why that is. Understand what our agency's about. Do your homework. And I wouldn't say... I would say that to anyone who's wanting to join *any* profession or any agency or any career field is know what you're getting into. Know what it's about. It's going to either be for you or not for you, but if you do your homework, and you know what that agency has to offer, what those responsibilities are of that agency, of a trooper, you're going to be much better prepared as an individual going into that profession because you have a working knowledge of—of what you're going to be doing. You have to want to do it. This isn't something I don't believe you can say, "Well, I think I *might* want to do it." You—that's okay. You can, and you might love it, but at the same time, if you've never done your homework, you've never looked into it, you just feel it's something you might want to do, you may have a hard time adjusting when you come to Basic School. My advice is really do your homework.

You know, when I was starting out 22 years ago, I was finishing college, and three months later, I was going to Patrol School. But in that last year, I was really researching, looking into where I wanted to be, what I wanted to do. And I knew I wanted to be in law enforcement. I knew I wanted to sort of give back. Something I'll always say to the cadets, you'll hear me reference a lot if you've ever had any dealings with observing me speak to the cadets, is I talk a lot about selfless service and just giving back because you have to be willing to serve selflessly in this profession. And you can't be in it for personal gain or personal reasons. It has to be because you want to give back to something bigger than yourself, and you got to be willing to do that and understand that it's not about you anymore. It's about giving back to the people you're going to serve. And I think when you—when you take that approach, not just to the Highway Patrol or to law enforcement, to anything, I think you'll love what you do, you'll be successful in what you do, and I think you'll help make a difference in the lives of others.

**Kirsten:**

When you were doing your research, what stuck out about the highway patrol?

**F/Sgt. Harris:**

Well, back when I was doing my research, we didn't have, uh, the amount of research available online that you do today. So, those applicants today have a lot more resources than I did, but for me it was—my biggest resource was the troopers in my home county and just talking—talking with them. I'd watch them, you know, working in and around the county. One of—one was actually my cousin at the time, and so I would have conversations with him. I would—I would hear of—of things he would do and had done and how much he loved his job and loved working for the Highway Patrol. And later in life my father got into law enforcement, and he was with the local police department. And so, I would see law enforcement from that perspective as well and then ended up having other friends or—or friend's parents I knew that were with the sheriff's department. So, I kind of knew people from every different law enforcement type of agency or perspective whether it was the police department, sheriff's department, Highway Patrol.

And I just really enjoyed what the Highway Patrol was about and the sense of you have a lot of freedom. You have a lot of freedom to go out. And, you know, someone put it to me is, like, you know, where else do you have a job where your office is in your backseat, and when you leave your driveway, you can go right to go to work today. You can go left to go to work. You can go anywhere you want to go to work within that county or wherever you're assigned, and it just really allows you to get out and really touch all different types of people in different areas of the county. 'Cause any county you go to is going to be representative almost of the entire world. You're going to have diversity in every corner of the county and—and in different places and in the city and just outside the city, and—and the Highway Patrol just allows you that freedom to go work with and talk with all types of different people.

**Kirsten:**

After speaking with First Sergeant Harris, I had the opportunity to sit down with two cadets in the 158th Basic Patrol School. Each cadet brought a unique perspective when it came to sharing their experience in the school. Cadet Millsaps was formerly employed with the Patrol and had completed Basic Patrol School once before. After taking a leave of absence, he decided to step back into the role of trooper, but it required him to complete the school a second time.

Cadet Ceballos, a former Marine and law enforcement officer, was looking for a challenge. Having interacted with troopers during his time as a law enforcement professional, he was ready to make the switch. These two cadets set out on their journey in January with 44 of their peers. Throughout the 15 weeks in Basic Patrol School, they have formed professional bonds, addressed weaknesses, faced challenges and learned what it takes to be a state trooper. So, here's the honest truth about what cadets experience during their time on the Training Academy grounds from the mouths of two people who have made it through.

**Cadet Millsaps:**

Hi, my name is Jonathan Millsaps. I'm from Alexander County, North Carolina.



**Cadet Ceballos:** My name is Leomar Ceballos. I'm from Onslow County, North Carolina.

**Kirsten:** And we are here today to talk about your experience with the Basic Patrol School. Why did you apply to become a member of the NC State Highway Patrol? Cadet Millsaps, we'll start with you.

**Cadet Millsaps:** Well, I'll start by saying this is my second time with the agency. I was recently employed with the Highway Patrol before. And that's another reason, or one of the reasons, that I decided to come back. I loved the job and everything that the agency stood for: the brotherhood of the agency, the core values of the agency, the loyalty, integrity and definitely the professionalism of the agency. The first time that I applied, I had no intentions of ever applying for the Patrol. But my brother had actually went to school and got out while I was in BLET, and he tried to get me to go. I wouldn't do it. I ended up going to a local agency and worked there for a little while, and he kept bugging me about it to go. And I decided to go, so I went and got out the first time, and got out on my own with my FTO, and absolutely loved the job. There's something meaningful to wear that—the gray uniform, wear the badge and drive that black-and-silver car. So, that's why I applied and reapplied.

**Cadet Ceballos:** I joined. I just wanted a challenge. It's almost something like why, the reasons why I joined the Marine Corps. I would see them out there, and that's what I wanted to do, I wanted to wear. At my last agency, I would interact with a lot of troopers. I had a lot of friends that were troopers, and every single time, the interactions that we had, it was always something positive. And I knew that—that's what I wanted to do.

**Kirsten:** Take us through your first day or week or whatever you can remember about kind of the first period of Basic Patrol School.

**Cadet Millsaps:** Oh, the first day, it was very hectic. Lot of running around, a lot of movement, a lot of yelling.

**Trooper:** [In background] Let's go!

**Cadet Millsaps:** Constantly on the move, everywhere. Constantly being told where to go, what to do, when to do it. You're definitely not on your own time. You're on their time. Our first week was pretty rough.

[Overlapping troopers yelling in background]

We were on the PT field. It rained every day, and it was a mud hole on the PT field. We would come in in our soaking wet, muddy sweats, and I can remember showering off in the showers and mud all over the bathroom, all over the floor. So that—that pretty much sums up. It was just...it was a terrible first week for us.

**Cadet Ceballos:** I kind of had a feeling of what to expect just from stories from other troopers, but definitely day one, week one exceeded those expectations. I was definitely

shocked. It was a big culture shock. And I mean I, like I said it earlier, I knew it was going to be a challenge, and even with the shock and the chaos, I just knew I'm already here, it's time to put in the work and actually earn that title.

[Yelling trooper voices fade out]

And I'm glad I stuck it through 'cause it was pretty rough.

**Kirsten:** I wanted to hear from the cadets what becoming a trooper, putting on that uniform and driving that black-and-silver car, means to them. Cadet Cabellos kicked off the answers.

**Cadet Cabellos:** It means a lot just because not only did I achieve that—that goal I had my mind on, I applied and went through the whole application process which is a pretty lengthy process, made it here, made it through. It means a lot but also reminded me that I wasn't only doing this for myself. I was doing it for my wife and my son, and they're my biggest supporters.

**Cadet Millsaps:** Me, it means joining an organization that's got a lot of history and tradition. Just the respect from, like I said before, the respect and the professionalism that comes with being a trooper is, uh, exceeds—and I don't mean this in a bad way towards—but it, to me, it exceeds other agencies around here. I feel like there's a lot more respect there for the level of training that we go through to be a trooper.

**Kirsten:** I hear that a lot. So, now that you're right here on the cusp of graduation, what are the top things that you learned during the weeks you've been at Basic Patrol School?

**Cadet Cabellos:** I learned that everything has a purpose. I know myself and a lot of other guys in the barracks, we just questioned why were things being done, but it proved to show why they were doing it. A lot of things that the instructions will say is "there's a method to the madness" or something along those lines. And it's true. I mean, when we—when it came down to our advanced training, for example, officer survival, always having a swivel on our heads and, you know, having good situational awareness. And that was all started from, you know, day one. Trooper on the hall! Yelling "trooper on the hall" when we'd see a trooper. But it all—it all makes sense why they did what they did.

**Cadet Millsaps:** And I'll just piggyback off a little what he said: attention to detail, like the trooper on the hall. Having your swivel on the head all the time and really coming together, everybody working together as a team to accomplish one goal. Moving fast, getting stuff done and like he said before, everything here has a purpose to—to better you in the field or get you ready for the field whenever you graduate.

**Kirsten:** And so, if you were in a room in front of a ton of people contemplating joining the patrol, how would you describe this process and this program to future cadets?

**Cadet Cabellos:** I mean, I would describe it as, you know, it's—it's going to be a lengthy process. It's, I mean, starting with the application process, it's going to be challenging and demanding, but it's going to be worth it in the end. People look at state troopers a lot differently than other law enforcement officers. Not in a bad way, just in the way they appear, their professionalism, their uniforms, their cars and all that stuff—that all starts here from week one. And the way they build this up to the—to the point that we graduate, I mean, that's what makes us stand out.

**Cadet Millsaps:** He pretty much touched on everything, but yeah, I would say it—it is mentally and physically challenging, and like he said, it's a lengthy process. And it's stressful on the family, being away, especially this time. Like this time around, I have a—I have a 11-month-old daughter, so it was definitely harder on me in that aspect this time go around. And I would say, too, if you come here with a mindset that you don't know if this is for you or not, you'll not make it. You have to be 100% here, dedicated and willing to go as far as you can and do whatever you need to do to get through it.

**Kirsten:** And now to rephrase that—that question: knowing now what you do about everything that the program entails, if you could go back to the start of the program, would you tell yourself or would you encourage yourself to do anything differently or what advice of encouragement would you give to yourself?

**Cadet Millsaps:** I'd tell myself, "Don't get so discouraged." It is a little bit easier for me this time because it's the second time, but the first time, I would say don't this—don't get so discouraged with it. It's definitely worth it in the end, as he mentioned before. It's—it's not fun in the beginning, but in the end it's—it's way better, and it's just a short period of time for a long career and for the rest of your life that you have to do this.

**Cadet Cabellos:** I would tell myself the two things that I told myself about this academy, and one of them was what our lead instructor, Trooper Arrada, would always tell us before PT is "get your mind right." Just mentally prepare yourself for what's gonna suck. And then, one thing that a lot of my buddies that were troopers told me: time doesn't stop. Time is going to keep on going. So, it's going to suck for a little, but it's going to be worth it in the end.

**Cadet Millsaps:** One of the things that we learned in this school... It wasn't so much in this one, or in the last school I went through as it was this one—it was really instilled in this school— is stay in the fight. Just our lead instructor really done a good job of driving that home to us. That stay in the fight no matter what the circumstance is, how tired you are, fight to your last breath and don't ever give up. So, that was one of the big things out of this school that—that I got, too.

**Kirsten:** Any other memorable bits that really stuck out to either of you about the school?

**Cadet Cabellos:** I don't know this necessarily answers that question, but I just had in the back of my head is just, like, a lot of the training that we do here is just top tier, and like, it doesn't really compare to what I did at my last agency. And in my opinion, I think it trained me a lot better than what my job was in the Marine Corps which was military police. Like, the training here definitely exceeded that.

**Kirsten:** Finally, we get to hear from Lieutenant Robert Maynard, the State Recruiting Coordinator for the Patrol, about the recruitment process from the time of application to the first day of Basic Patrol School. He oversees about a dozen members of the recruitment team across the state.

**Lt. Brian Maynard:** My name is Brian Maynard. I'm a lieutenant with the Highway Patrol stationed at the Training Academy, and I've been on for 20 years.

**Kirsten:** So, what are the requirements for individuals applying to join the State Highway Patrol?

**Lt. Maynard:** So, the basic requirements are you have to be 21 to 39 years old, excellent physical condition, a high school education or GED equivalent, a US citizen. You have to live in North Carolina by the time Basic School starts. While you can apply while living out of state, once Patrol School starts you must live in North Carolina and have a North Carolina driver's license. You can't have pled guilty to any type of felony. That's an automatic disqualifier. Or any other crime that would equate to a Class B misdemeanor within the previous five years. Can't be convicted of a traffic offense that would suspend your driver's license, nor can you have a driver's license within the previous three years of applying that's been suspended.

**Kirsten:** Can you walk us through the recruitment process from the time a candidate contacts a recruiter through the time they start their first day?

**Lt. Maynard:** Yeah. So, initially, you apply online, and once you do that, you'll be contacted by a recruiter. They'll give you a packet to fill out. The packet's rather extensive, so it's best you get started on it as quickly as possible. Then the packet's given back to that recruiter to review. The packet's then submitted to the sergeant that's over that recruiter. It's reviewed again to make sure everything's filled out properly. At that point, you're scheduled a polygraph. If you pass the polygraph, then you'll move on to the background investigation portion. The background goes out to whatever district in which you may live. So, if you live in Wake County, for example, it'll be given to a Wake County supervisor. They conduct the background which includes contacting relatives and people that may know you, checking in your bank history and things like that, your criminal history.

If you pass that part, then you're scheduled for your applicant review board. So, the applicant review board is a group of five members from the Patrol that ask a

series of questions and you give a series of answers. Once you've passed that part, you will be given the day for your physical examination and your physical test. If you pass both of those, then you have a—an appointment with our psychologist and complete your psychology portion. And if you finish *that* portion, then you're given an offer by the colonel of the Highway Patrol.

**Kirsten:** I understand now why you say let's start it early.

[Laughs]

**Lt. Maynard:** It's rather extensive.

**Kirsten:** So, there are two Basic Patrol Schools, so named long and short schools. What do candidates need to know about these schools and their differences?

**Lt. Maynard:** What we call a long school are for those individuals who are not currently BLET certified. It's traditionally about 27 weeks' worth of time. And the short school which we call it is for individuals that are already law enforcement certified in a convenient way from 12 to 14 weeks in length. That's the major difference in the two. It's just the amount of time that you spend on campus. The long school is longer because you're getting the BLET portion and then the Highway Patrol portion. So, it's just longer for that reason.

**Kirsten:** Hm. Can someone apply and then receive their—their BLET certification before they start the school?

**Lt. Maynard:** Yes, and—and that happens routinely. So, while someone may not currently be BLET certified, they can apply as long as they will get that certification prior to the first day of Patrol School starting.

**Kirsten:** That makes sense.

**Lt. Maynard:** Yeah.

**Kirsten:** Are cadets paid while in Basic Patrol School?

**Lt. Maynard:** Yes. So, that's a big question we have with people who are wanting to apply is, "Am I going to get paid?" And the answer is, "yes." You'll receive a salary as a cadet, and once you graduate, your salary will then be bumped up to starting trooper pay.

**Kirsten:** What interested you in the State Highway Patrol?

**Lt. Maynard:** So, when I was a little boy growing up in Dalton, North Carolina, one of our neighbors was a state trooper. My father worked for the Dalton Police Department, but I always thought that the Highway Patrol car was a little bit cooler, and every time he would drive by my house I thought, "Man, I would really love to drive that black-and-silver car." And my father was friends with

many state troopers, so I got to meet them and listen to the stories that they told, and how they would arrest drunk drivers and investigate collisions. And I feel like they were doing their part of making their community a better place to live. And then I thought, well, wh—what can I do to make it safer for my mom or my dad or my kids later on, and I thought if I could just take bad people off the road, that would be doing my part.

So, between the cool car of my neighbor and the stories and me wanting to do my little part in my own community was the reason that the Highway Patrol lured me in versus another agency. Whenever I go speak to anybody is while we all have our place in this world and we all need each other as law enforcement officers, we stand out, in my opinion, because of our professionalism. We like to make sure that we treat everyone with utmost respect, and that's just something we pride ourselves on, not to say that others don't, but that's just one thing that when I was growing up, I saw the crisp uniform, the sharp pants, the creased sleeves of the—of the members; how clean their patrol cars were; how clean cut their faces were; and it just something that lured me in.

**Kirsten:** Any career advice that you could either give to people interested in joining the Patrol or advice that you received that has stuck with you?

**Lt. Maynard:** The best career advice that I normally try to give individuals that I talk to is don't always necessarily just look at the dollar amount that some agency may be offering potential employees. We try to say that we're a family. We're a brotherhood. We're a sisterhood. And going back to 1929, as many members that have come through the gates of this Highway Patrol Training Academy, we offer you the largest family that there is in the state of North Carolina. And there's no feeling better than to get that Highway Patrol badge placed upon your chest and automatically become the largest family that you can imagine that will do anything in the world for you because they know that you have gone through something that they went through, and there's no bond like it in the world.

**Kirsten:** If you're interested in joining the North Carolina State Highway Patrol and want more information about applying for Basic Patrol School, go to [ncdps.gov/careers](http://ncdps.gov/careers) and select the Highway Patrol career section. There you'll find all the information spoken on this podcast and more. To close out this episode of Safety Scoop, I'd like to share something I've observed while interacting with members of the Highway Patrol, DPS employees and members of the public over the last 5 years. When it comes to the patrol, one word keeps coming up again and again: professionalism. Even during my conversation with Cadet Millsaps and Cabellos, that word was mentioned several times. It is what draws people towards the Patrol family and what essentially keeps troopers signing on day after day.

**Trooper:** Attention!

**Trooper:** I, state your name...

**Cadets:** I, [various names] ...

**Trooper:** ...solemnly swear or affirm that you will support the Constitution of the United States; that you will be faithful and bear true allegiance to the state of North Carolina and to the Constitutional powers and authorities which are or may be established for the government thereof; that you will endeavor to support, maintain and defend the Constitution of said state, not inconsistent with the Constitution of the United States; that you will be alert and vigilant to enforce the criminal laws of this state, and that you will not be influenced in any manner or account of personal bias or prejudice, and that you will faithfully and impartially execute the duties of your office as trooper of the State Highway Patrol according to the best of your skills, abilities and judgment, so help you God. Please say "I will."

**Cadets:** I will!

**Trooper:** Troopers, congratulations. Be safe. Thank you.

## **Conclusion**

[Music]

**Kirsten:** This is the Safety Scoop, a podcast written, produced and edited by the NCDPS communications team. The mission of the North Carolina Department of Public Safety is to safeguard and preserve the lives and property of the people of North Carolina through prevention, protection and preparation. Follow the department on social media for a closer look at ongoing initiatives and resources. We're on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram at NC Public Safety. If you enjoyed today's episode, be sure to subscribe to the Safety Scoop on your favorite podcast app.

A special thanks goes out to First Sergeant Christopher Knox in the Public Information Office who assisted with ideation and organizing interviews for this episode. Thanks also to Trent Creed for providing sound bites of Basic Patrol School and graduation that were used throughout. Congratulations to the 36 graduates of the 158th Basic Patrol School who graduated on May 5th, 2023. The Highway Patrol shares its application periods throughout the year on their official social platforms. Find them on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. I'm your host, Kirsten Barber. Thanks for listening.