

Initiative Arms Water Bureau Security Guards

City Officials' Proposal Would Train Guards To Use Guns, Make Arrests

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PORTLAND, Ore. -- Two city officials are pushing a proposal that would train the security guards who watch over Portland's water supply to use guns, issue citations and make arrests.

City Commissioner Randy Leonard is backing the initiative and has the support of the director of Portland's Water Bureau.

Nearly 20 security officers patrol Portland's five open-water reservoirs.

City officials said arming the officers would not only protect the city's water supply, but allow security officers to take action when needed.

Water Bureau Director David Shaff said, right now, his security guards are merely observers. If someone attacked the water system, the guards would have to wait for police to respond.

"It's not about arming them. It's about giving them authority to act," Shaff said.

Shaff and Leonard want the guards to be trained as police officers and carry weapons, issue citations and make arrests, especially at the remote Bull Run Reservoir.

"We've come across people who are belligerent when told they couldn't be in there. We've come across hunters who are armed," Shaff said.

City Commissioner Dan Saltzman used to head the Water Bureau and said he's not in favor of arming the guards.

He said it would be expensive and it's not needed.

"I'm just questioning why we all of a sudden we need to create a [mini](#) police force in the Water Bureau," Saltzman said.

[City commissioners](#) said the initiative would take a three to five majority vote to pass. And, if it does, it would take at least two years to implement.