FBI to Allow Agents to Be Short

Washington

The FBI has decided to admit short and medium-sized people to the ranks of special agents.

Director Clarence M. Kelley's decision to abandon the agency's decades-old height requirement might make it easier for many more women to qualify as FBI agents.

Kelley and other top FBI officials decided last week to drop the rule that all agents must be at least 5 feet, 7 inches tall, an FBI spokesman said Monday. "They felt it was only a matter of time, that it was one of those things that had to go," the spokesman said in response to questions.

Applicants must meet several standards of education, experience, eyesight and general physical ability.

Even though a specific height requirement now has been ruled out, an applicant's height still may figure in the judgment of general physical ability, the spokesman said.

Field agents who interview applicants must "keep in mind whether a person can adequately handle himself or herself in any situation," he said.

The spokesman said the 5-foot-7-inch height rule has been in effect since the FBI was formed more than a half-century ago.