

Office of the Sheriff
Somerset County, Maryland

General Order: 01-15-01

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Revised Date: N/A

Chapter 33

Section 1

Report Writing

1. Purpose

This policy is intended to provide officers with guidance on the drafting and completion of any duties related to investigative or report requirements.

2. Policy

The Office of the Sheriff recognizes the benefit of practices that effect promptness and accuracy in its reporting. Documents drafted by the Office of the Sheriff shall be completed in an efficient and thorough manner so as to satisfy the given specific demands of the circumstance at hand. Reports shall provide sufficient information so as to be able to adequately refresh the memory of the report's audience and provide sufficient detail to support follow-up investigation and effective prosecution.

3. Procedures

A. Prompt Reporting

Reports shall be completed in a timely manner so as to allow for ample supervision and for the necessary procedural steps regarding reports to be followed sufficiently. Reports shall be processed according to established priorities. Under special circumstances reports shall be drafted according to the priorities established for that extraordinary circumstance.

Officers shall complete and submit any required report relative to the officer's current shift prior to going off-duty. An officer can hold the report to a later shift if approval has been granted by a supervisor. Reports that require prompt follow-up action, such as arrest reports where the suspect remains in custody or active leads, should not be held unless for extraordinary circumstances.

B. Sufficient Detail

The officer responsible for the report shall ensure that the necessary steps are taken to ensure that the report is detailed and complete. Such detail includes the absence of any errors, including spelling and grammar, prior to submissions.

The reports should include, but not limited to:

- 1) The identity of the persons involved;
- 2) All pertinent information observed; and
- 3) Any actions taken.

Reports shall fairly and accurately portray all relevant facts. Officers shall not suppress, conceal or distort the facts of any reported incident, nor shall any officer make any false report.

C. Penmanship

Reports should be completed with a computer using block typing unless circumstances do not allow for such an approach. If a handwritten report is required, such writing shall be prepared in a legible (print) fashion.

D. Electronic Signatures

When utilizing electronic signatures, officers shall use established procedure for effective and proper application. The Office of Sheriff shall be responsible for the electronic signature system's maintenance and shall keep it current, including officer signatures.

E. Electronic Signatures

- 1) may only be used by officers for official reports or other official communications; and
- 2) officers shall be responsible for their electronic signature's safekeeping and shall notify a supervisor if the electronic signature has been hacked.

F. Forms

When applicable, officers shall use any Office of the Sheriff report form for the given task, following the prescribed reporting methods. Officers can deviate from such an approach if approved by a supervisor.

G. Required Reporting

Officers shall complete reports for the following circumstances:

1) Criminal Activity

An officer shall document any involvement with a call to respond to criminal activity. Criminal activity to be documented includes, but is not limited to:

- a) arrests;
- b) incidents involving domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, stalking, criminal or terrorist threats, and hate crimes;
- c) any use of force by an officer against any person;
- d) felony crimes; and
- e) misdemeanor crimes when the victim desires a report.

2) Non-Criminal Activity

Non-criminal activity includes, but is not limited to:

- a) found property or evidence;
- b) protective custody or welfare detentions;
- c) missing persons;
- d) incidents that arose suspicions of potential crimes against children;
- e) incidents that arose suspicions that the public or others may be at risk;
- f) any use of force by an officer against any person;
- g) firearm discharges, including firearm presentation;
- h) traffic incidents; and
- i) circumstances in which the officer feels it necessary to report the incident to supervisor.

3) Miscellaneous Injuries

Injuries that require a report include those that are:

- a) the result of drug use;
- b) the result of a suicide attempt;
- c) serious or potentially fatal; and
- d) circumstances in which the officer feels it necessary to report the incident to supervisor.

4) Deaths

Reports on fatalities shall follow the proper prescribed specific methods as dictated by the Office of the Sheriff. Mandatory reports related to fatalities include those that are:

- a) unattended by medical care;
- b) accidental/suspicious;
- c) the result of a suicide;
- d) the result of a homicide; and
- e) found, including body parts.

5) Personnel or Property

Reports shall be drafted when either (1) there is damage to property or (2) injury occurs as a result of an act of personnel from the Office of the Sheriff.

4. Review and Correction

- A. Supervisors shall review reports for accuracy and completeness. If corrections are necessary, the supervisor shall make the appropriate notations and notify the necessary personnel to effectuate the required edits. Revisions and corrections shall be done as soon as possible with cooperation and efficient practices employed by both the report drafting officer and the supervisor.
- B. Once reports are deemed complete and final they shall be submitted to records. Any desired changes to a report after being submitted to records shall be amended by a supervisor with a supplemental report indicating the desired changes.

Ronald Howard

Sheriff
Somerset County