



RICHMOND POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER



Subject: WATCH COMMANDERS AND NOTIFICATION		Chapter 2	Number 6	# Pages 8
References: CALEA Standards: 11.3.3, 12.1.2b, 12.1.4, 41.2.4, 70.1.7a	Related Orders: 03-07, 04-07	Effective Date: 09/17/2026 Revised By: Review Prv. Rev. Date: 09/06/2023		
<i>If any provision of this General Order conflicts with any collective bargaining article, the collective bargaining agreement shall govern.</i>				
Chief of Police: 				

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this directive is to define the duties and responsibilities of the Watch Commanders and to establish the notification process of certain personnel concerning serious and unusual occurrences. This directive also outlines the duties and responsibilities of members of the Department as they relate to these assignments.

II. SUMMARY OF CHANGE

This general order is due for triennial review. The updated directive clarifies the Watch Commander's tour of duty hours. It also clarifies the procedures for notification to the Department of Emergency Communications, Preparedness and Response (DECPR). New language is denoted in bold and italicized text.

III. POLICY

It is the policy of the Richmond Police Department to maintain continuous executive command level supervision of all police operations on an around-the-clock basis. The Charter of the City of Richmond assigns responsibility for the efficiency, discipline, and good order of the Department to the Chief of Police. The Watch Commander position is designed to affect such efficiency, discipline, and good order. Individuals serving in these positions are representatives of the Chief of Police.

[CALEA 11.3.3]

It is also the policy of the Department that when aware of serious or unusual occurrences involving police personnel, City of Richmond personnel, equipment, and facilities or of a nature involving widespread public interest, that certain City personnel are informed, as deemed appropriate.

[CALEA 41.2.4]

IV. ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

All employees are expected to fully comply with the guidelines and timelines set forth in this General Order. Failure to comply will result in appropriate corrective action. Responsibility rests with the Division Commander to ensure that any violations of policy are investigated and appropriate training, counseling, and/or disciplinary action is initiated.

This directive is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violation of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this Department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

V. DEFINITION

WATCH COMMANDERS (Unit 9) – Captains shall be assigned to the Watch Commanders Office and report to *a Major of Patrol Services*, as *designated by the Deputy Chief of Patrol Services*. Watch Commanders shall be on-duty seven days a week, manage the radio, and be responsible for any unusual events, crimes and other situations deemed appropriate.

VI. PROCEDURE

[CALEA 12.1.2b]

A. Watch Commanders shall perform the following functions and have authority to:

1. Respond to serious crime scenes, disasters and any other situation deemed appropriate anywhere within the City of Richmond;
2. Communicate substantive issues and incidents to the Command Staff and Chief of Police;

[CALEA 11.3.3]

3. Act as a scene/incident commander as directed;
4. Ensure Precinct Sergeants *and Lieutenants* conduct effective Roll Calls, conduct Task Inspections, and provide executive-level decision making and support to first line (immediate) supervisors;
5. Assume command, render decisions, and intervene, if necessary, in appropriate matters;
6. Recall off-duty personnel, such as the SWAT Team, Hostage Negotiations Unit, Detectives, Forensics personnel, Crash Investigators, and any other Department member deemed necessary for the efficient operation of the Department.

NOTE: Field Supervisors, Detective Supervisors or Detectives on the scene have the authority to recall additional Detectives, Forensic personnel or the Medical Examiner);

7. Notify the Duty Major, who in turn will notify the Chief of Police of any unusual occurrences, such as homicides, police shootings, serious injury to police personnel, civil disorder, natural disasters or threats of the same, narcotic or organized crime activities, any particularly heinous crime or any emotional or controversial incident which is likely to become an issue for the news media or the City Administration;
8. Respond to media inquiries after normal business hours;
9. Relieve personnel of duty when necessary;
10. When designated by the Chief of Police or designee, notify the employee's family members and advise them of victim/witness services when any Department member is killed in the line-of-duty or sustains serious injury;
11. Ensure all preliminary investigations and reports related to unusual occurrences are submitted to the Chief of Police prior to ending their tour of duty; and

[CALEA 11.3.3]

12. Coordinate assistance with personnel and equipment for emergency situations at correctional or other institutions.

B. Tour of Duty:

1. The Watch Commander ***shall be assigned to the Watch Commanders office work on either A or B shift. The Watch Commander's hours are 1600 to 0330 hours, except for Sunday when their hours are 1600 to 0300 hours.***
2. Lieutenants may be assigned to serve as Watch Commander when the regularly scheduled Watch Commander is not available.

C. During any assigned weekend or holiday duty, a Watch Commander shall be required to mark on-duty and spend their tour of duty providing executive level presence by visiting police facilities, attending roll calls, responding to crime scenes, conducting inspections, etc.

D. Notifications to Immediate Supervisors and Watch Commander – Responding officers encountering any of the following incidents, shall immediately notify their first line (immediate) supervisors who will, in turn, notify the Watch Commander BEFORE activation of the notification process to ***the Department of Emergency Communications, Preparedness and Response (DECPR):***

[CALEA 11.3.3, 12.1.4, 41.2.4]

1. Homicide or suspicious deaths;
2. Any robbery;
3. All aggravated assaults, especially those involving injuries that are life threatening;

4. All Maydays and all pursuits that enter the City limits whether Richmond Police Officers are involved or not;
5. All rapes or sexual assaults;
6. Any large drug or weapon seizure;
7. Any abductions;
8. Any missing juvenile or mentally or physically challenged adult without the capacity to care for themselves;
9. Traffic fatalities;
10. Hate crimes;
11. Hostage, barricaded subject, or active shooter situations;
12. Bomb threats;
13. Civil disturbances;
14. Discharge of a firearm by a police officer;
15. Any injury to a citizen that requires medical attention that is either caused by or claimed to be caused by contact with a police officer;
16. Any escape of a prisoner while in police custody;

[CALEA 70.1.7a]

17. Any death, or injury, of a prisoner while in police custody;
18. City or public official arrested or involved in any incident likely to attract media attention;
19. Serious allegation of misconduct against a police officer or the arrest of a police officer for any offense other than a minor traffic offense;
20. Considerable property damage by a Department member while on-duty and all police vehicle accidents;
21. Any incident involving police response where a member of the media is present, or any incident likely to generate a public outcry or high degree of media attention including vice, drug, organized crime, surveillance, undercover, decoy or raid operations;
22. Any incident involving exceptional performance by any police officer;
23. Any search warrant executed;
24. Any employee injury;

NOTE: The reporting supervisor will provide the Watch Commander with any hospitalized employee's contact information. This information is to be provided to the Chief of Police.

25. Prior to dispatching any injured animal; *or*
 26. The use of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) by an RPD employee per GO 03-07, *Automated External Defibrillator AED Procedures*.
- E. Notification by immediate supervisor to the **DECPR**:

[CALEA 12.1.4, 41.2.4]

1. The immediate supervisor shall initiate the notification process by calling 646-5110 and briefing the on-duty **DECPR** supervisor.
2. The on-scene supervisor should be prepared to provide a brief description, including location and telephone contact number, to the **DECPR** supervisor.
3. The **DECPR** supervisor shall then activate the notification process.
4. The on-scene supervisor should be prepared to receive incoming telephone calls regarding the incident.
5. The following types of incidents will require activation of the notification process:
 - a) Police fatality or significant injury;
 - b) Life threatening employee injury;
 - c) Police-involved shooting;
 - d) Firearm discharges;

NOTE: The notification process does not need to be activated in the event an injured animal is dispatched once the Watch Commander has been notified.

- e) Traffic fatalities;
- f) Commercial robberies;
- g) Murder;
- h) Aggravated assault (life-threatening);
- i) Civil disturbance;
- j) 3- Alarm fire;
- k) Suspicious package;

- l) SWAT calls;
- m) Hostage and/or barricaded suspect situations; and
- n) Significant arrests (Arrests that would generate an unusual amount of media attention).

F. Reports to the Watch Commander:

[CALEA 12.1.4]

Reports of any of the incidents listed in section ***V.I.D*** of this order, which occur on Monday through Friday during normal business hours, shall be forwarded through the chain of command to the Watch Commanders' Office.

1. In the event of any of the above referenced incidents, the Watch Commander should be notified immediately or as soon as practical thereafter, given the nature of the incident/investigation.
2. If any of the incidents listed under section ***V.I.D*** of this order occur on weekends, holidays, or after normal business hours, a brief synopsis containing the pertinent details of the report shall be submitted to the Watch Commander via email as soon as practical, after completion of the report.

NOTE: The report shall be submitted to both the Watch Commander's personal email account and to the Watch Commander's Administrative inbox Watch.Commanders@rva.gov.

3. Each Major or ***Professional Staff*** Manager of the affected service shall be notified by personnel under their command in accordance with that service's notification guidelines.
4. The Watch Commanders Office will notify the Internal Affairs Division whenever a police officer discharges their firearm.

EXCEPTION: Notification will not need to be made for officers participating in authorized training or firearm qualifying exercises.

G. The Watch Commanders' Office will use their best judgment in determining when to notify ***the Duty Major, who will, in turn, notify the Chief of Police and any other pertinent staff.***

H. Incidents Involving other Personnel, Equipment or Property:

[CALEA 12.1.4]

When personnel, equipment, or property, that is the responsibility of a City Department other than the Police Department, is involved in serious or unusual occurrences, the Watch Commander shall instruct the ***Department of Emergency Communications, Preparedness and Response*** to notify the appropriate departmental supervisor.

I. Notification of Appointed Officials:

[CALEA 11.3.3, 12.1.4]

1. The Precinct Commanders or designees shall notify elected officials of a serious occurrence or event that has occurred within the jurisdiction of their precinct.
2. The Chief of Police or designee will notify the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), if deemed appropriate.

J. Notification when a police employee is the victim of a felony:

[CALEA 12.1.4]

1. When a police employee is a victim of a felony while on duty (or when the offense occurs in the City of Richmond while the employee is off duty), the following steps will be followed to maintain investigative integrity:
 - a) A field supervisor will respond, and notifications will be made to include the Precinct's Commander or equivalent. After normal working hours, the Watch Commander shall be notified.
 - b) The field supervisor will notify a Detective Supervisor. If after normal working hours, the on-call Detective Supervisor will be called. The Detective Supervisor will determine if a detective is needed to assist further in the arrest, investigation, recovery of evidence, or in obtaining warrants.
 - c) Notifications will be made regardless of whether an arrest is made.

K. Notification to be made when a sworn police employee is hospitalized:

[CALEA 12.1.4]

When a sworn police employee is hospitalized because of injuries sustained while on duty, the following steps will be followed:

1. A field supervisor will respond, and notification will be made to include the Precinct's Commander or designee. After normal working hours, the Watch Commander shall be notified.
2. All notification will be made through channels to the Chief of Police or designee.

NOTE: Refer to General Order 04-07, Duty and Non-Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses, for the procedure of reporting in-the-line-of-duty injuries.

L. Electronic Notification:

[CALEA 11.3.3, 12.1.4]

1. By 0400 hours each day of the week, the Watch Commander will disseminate an electronic copy of the Noteworthy and Unusual Events Report.

2. Whenever the Watch Commander issues a statement to the media, it shall be noted in the Noteworthy and Unusual Events Report.

VII. FORMS

- A. PD-049, Noteworthy and Unusual Events Report