



GENERAL ORDERS: Chapter 20

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Written Directive System

I. Purpose

This policy establishes the structure and application of the written directive system and provides employees with an understanding of its importance, use, and applicability. Employees are responsible for reviewing and becoming familiar with all written directives.

II. Policy

A written directive system has been established to inform employees of what is expected of them, to provide guidance in the performance of their duties, and to establish the basis for employee accountability along with a means to fairly evaluate employee performance.

III. Definitions

Written directives – Position statements by or authorized through the Chief of Police that guide or direct the actions and activities of employees. Directives encompass all means by which this department communicates instructions, orders and duty requirements to its employees, to include policies, procedures, rules, regulations, general orders, special orders, memorandums, and instructional materials.

Policies and Procedures – A written directive which is a guideline for carrying out departmental activities. Policy or procedure statements are made mandatory through the use of words such as "must" or "shall." Those that allow differing degrees of latitude and discretion in carrying out an activity may be characterized by words such as "may" or "should."

PowerDMS – The electronic software system used to manage all of the department's policies and procedures as well as other important written directive documents.

IV. Written directive system

A. General

1. The written directive system shall include any communications that serve to guide or affect the performance or conduct of employees.
2. Written directives shall not conflict with established policies and procedures of the Chief of Police and should note any orders that are to be rescinded or superseded by the document when appropriate.
 - a. Written directives that rescind or supersede other documents should contain the identifying reference notations necessary to connect them.

B. Distribution

1. The distribution to all affected personnel is the responsibility of the issuing authority.
 - a. Written directives shall be made widely available unless they pertain to a specific:

- (1) Division, bureau, section, unit or squad, in which case they will be distributed to those affected.
- (2) Individual or group of individuals, in which case they will be distributed on a need-to-know basis.

C. Authority

1. The Chief of Police is vested with the authority to issue, modify, or approve all written directives affecting department functions, provided such directives are not inconsistent with those of the City of Des Moines, the law, or a current collective bargaining agreement.
2. Division commanders are vested with the authority to issue, modify, or approve written directives, such as standard operating procedures (SOP's) or memorandums, that apply specifically to their operations or responsibilities, provided such directives do not conflict with those issued by the Chief of Police and are not inconsistent with those of the City of Des Moines, the law, or a current collective bargaining agreement.

D. Accountability

1. Employees shall be familiar with written directives pertaining to their work assignment. This involves reading and understanding new, revised and existing directives, and when required, electronically acknowledging the directive to document they:
 - a. Have been notified of the directive
 - b. Have read and understood the directive
 - c. Will comply with the directive
 - d. May be held responsible for failing to comply with the directive

E. Numbering

1. Chief of Police Special Orders and Memorandums, Personnel Orders, and Training Bulletins will be numbered consecutively, beginning with the four-digit current year and followed by consecutive numbers, beginning with "one" on 1 January of each year.

F. Maintenance

1. Maintenance of the written directive system is the responsibility of the Policy Manager. In coordination with the divisions, sections and units, the Policy Manager is responsible for the organization, update, and review of revised or proposed written directives on a continual basis and to ensure those directives do not contradict other written directives or applicable law.
 - a. Division commanders are responsible for review of division written directives (i.e. SOP's) and for coordinating the review process with the Policy Manager.

G. Revisions

1. Any employee of the department identifying the need for a new directive or to revise an existing directive will submit the proposed directive or revision with all pertinent information, including reason for the requested revision, through their chain of command by memorandum. Such input from employees is encouraged.

V. Types of written directives

A. General Orders

1. General Orders are written directives issued by the Chief of Police that establish policies and procedures for all employees.

B. Chief of Police directives

1. Chief of Police Memorandums
 - a. Issued by the Chief of Police to disseminate information to the department.

2. Chief of Police Special Orders
 - a. Issued by the Chief of Police to announce:
 - (1) A new or revised policy that may not be immediately reflected in the General Orders
 - (2) A direct procedure concerning a specific event or circumstance which may or may not be temporary in nature.
- C. Personnel Orders
 1. Issued by the Chief of Police to announce changes in the status of personnel, such as new hires, promotion, transfer, demotion, resignation or retirement.
 2. Issued by the division commander or designee to announce assignment or transfer of personnel within the division.
- D. Training Bulletins
 1. Training bulletins, approved through the Chief of Police, may be drafted by the Police Legal Advisor or another subject matter expert, to provide information on:
 - a. New or revised laws
 - b. Clarification or explanation of legal issues arising from court cases and litigation
 - c. Any other items of legal interest or training updates that are pertinent to job performance
- E. Standard Operating Procedures
 1. A written directive providing instruction on methods and procedures to be followed in the performance of routine duties specific to a division, section or unit.
 2. Division commanders will be responsible for amendments to their respective SOP's.
- F. Operation Plans
 1. Issued at Chief of Police, division or section level. An operation plan is formulated for an anticipated future police operation.
 - a. An operation plan may be required for off-duty events requiring five or more officers plus a supervisor as described in [General Order Chapter 14 Off-Duty Police Work](#).
- G. City Administrative Manual
 1. Policies issued by the City Manager designed to provide broad general direction and guidance for all city employees in the performance of their duties.
- H. City Employee Handbook
 1. Policies issued by the City Human Resources Department to provide broad general direction and guidance for all city employees on human resources related topics.

VI. Memorandums

- A. General
 1. Commonly referred to as a "greenie" that is a written document drafted on green paper by any employee of the department and generally used to clarify, inform, inquire or make a request.
 2. Memorandums shall be written in the prescribed format.
 3. Memorandums are addressed to the employee's direct supervisor for an endorsement and/or recommendation and forwarded through the chain of command as necessary.
 - a. Written communications received at the division level that are applicable to a specific section or unit, will be endorsed by the Division Commander and forwarded to the personnel affected.
- B. Endorsements
 1. Prior to endorsement, the endorser shall review the information contained in the original communication and subsequent replies and endorsements, to ensure the information is complete and the fundamental question or issue is clearly addressed.

2. Endorsements will contain a concise statement of action taken, findings, present status, and where required, recommendations. The signature of originator shall be entered at the conclusion of endorsements.