

**FAIRFAX COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

**SOP NUMBER: 022
SUBJECT: EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION**

I. PURPOSE

To establish procedures for recognizing and rewarding employees and Reserve Deputy Sheriffs who demonstrate honor, courage and commitment to service with an array of awards appropriate to the employees' achievement or accomplishment.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Fairfax County Sheriff's Office that the Awards Committee, with the exception of Letters of Appreciation, will review all Sheriff's Office Honors Award and Valor Award nominations.

III. PROCEDURE

- A. The committee will be appointed by the Sheriff, or her designee, to review and recommend staff for receipt of various agency awards. The ten-member committee includes the following Sheriff's Office personnel:
1. Deputy Sheriff Captain will serve as the chairperson, and will appoint a vice-chairperson.
 2. Deputy Sheriff First Lieutenant
 3. Deputy Sheriff Second Lieutenant
 4. Deputy Sheriff Sergeant
 5. Any combination of, to equal three Deputy Sheriffs: Master Deputy Sheriff, Deputy Sheriff Private First Class, or Deputy Sheriff Private
 6. Civilian
 7. The Public Information Officer, or designee, will be responsible for final preparation of the awards to be presented.
 8. The Administrative Services Division's Administrative Assistant will act as the committee's secretary.
- B. In order to provide the necessary continuity and stability of the committee, all appointees are required to participate for one calendar year. Each January, the composition of the Awards Committee will be evaluated against the membership composition described above. New appointments will be made at that time, if necessary. Appointees serve from January through December regardless of promotions that occur within that period.
- C. Nominations of Award Recipients
1. Nominations for all Sheriff's Office Honors Awards can be initiated by any agency employee. A detailed written memorandum with supporting documentation (e.g. reports, letters, newspaper clippings) requesting the appropriate award will be submitted to the Awards Committee chairperson for review. (This memorandum is not required to go through the chain of command.) To ensure receipt in a timely manner, this memo should also be e-mailed to the Awards Committee chairperson. (See [Attachment 1, Procedure to Submit Nominations](#), for

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procedure.) The subject line should read Sheriff's Office Honors Award Nomination". The first line in the body of the memo should read, "I nominate (name of person) for the (name of award)." (See [Attachment 2, Nomination Memorandum](#), for proper format.) It is highly recommended that the memorandum contains as much detail as possible. Nominations for this category can be submitted anytime. The criteria and procedures for all of the awards in this category may be obtained in Section V of this SOP.

2. Nominations for all Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce Valor Awards can be initiated by any agency employee. A detailed letter requesting the appropriate award will be submitted to the chairperson of the Awards Committee for review. (This memorandum is not required to go through the chain of command.) To ensure receipt in a timely manner, this memo should also be e-mailed to the chairperson of the Awards Committee. (See Attachment 1, **Procedure to Submit Nominations** for procedure.) The subject line should read "Chamber of Commerce Valor Award Nomination". The first line in the body of the memo should read, "I nominate (name of person) for the (name of award)". (See [Attachment 2, Nomination Memorandum](#), for proper format.) It is highly recommended that the memorandum contain as much detail as possible. Nominations for this category can be submitted anytime. In order to ensure that Valor Award nominations are reviewed and acted upon in a timely fashion, each nomination shall be submitted to the Awards Committee chairperson as soon as possible. The first of November is the stop date for submissions that calendar year. Should a valorous act occur between November 1 and December 31, the Awards Committee chairperson shall be contacted as soon as possible. The criteria and procedures for all of the awards in this category may be obtained in Section VI of this SOP.
3. Nominations for the Fairfax County Performance Awards will be submitted in accordance with county policy and procedures governing the appropriate individual award. The criteria and procedures for all of the awards in this category may be obtained from Section VII of this SOP. These awards are not submitted to the Sheriff's Office Honors Awards Committee. Forms for nominations are located on [FairfaxNET](#). The Awards Coordinator, of the County's Department of Human Resources, will coordinate the administration of all countywide awards, notify department heads/employees, prepare checks and certificates, and arrange the award ceremony and related publicity. All cash awards will be processed through the automated payroll system.
4. It is highly recommended that Sheriff's Office personnel submit one award nomination per event. Duplicate submission of a nomination for the Sheriff's Office Honors Awards and Fairfax County Performance Awards for actions arising from a single incident is not permitted.

D. ATTACHMENTS TO THIS PROCEDURE

1. [Procedure to Submit Nominations](#) (see Attachment 1)
2. [Nomination Memorandum](#) (see Attachment 2)
3. [Award Pin Table](#) (see Attachment 3)

IV. AWARD CATEGORIES

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- A. Sheriff's Office Honors Awards (See Section V for explanations and criteria)
 - 1. Distinguished Service Award
 - 2. Meritorious Action Award
 - 3. Distinguished Field Training Instructor Award
 - 4. Community Service Award
 - 5. Volunteer Service Award
 - 6. Team Award
 - 7. Certificate of Commendation
 - 8. Letter of Appreciation
 - 9. Citizen Award
- B. Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce Valor Awards (see Section VI for explanations and criteria)
 - 1. Gold Medal of Valor
 - 2. Silver Medal of Valor
 - 3. Bronze Medal of Valor
 - 4. Certificate of Valor
 - 5. Lifesaving Award
- C. Fairfax County Performance Awards (See Section VII for explanations and criteria)
 - 1. A. Heath Onthank Award
 - 2. Outstanding Performance Award
 - 3. Team Excellence Award
 - 4. Managerial Excellence Award
 - 5. Employee Suggestion Award

V. SHERIFF'S OFFICE HONORS AWARD CRITERIA

- A. **Distinguished Service Award:** This award recognizes a career of sustained, exemplary performance by an employee within the scope of their normal responsibilities, over a prolonged period and performed in such a manner as to deserve special recognition.

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1. Sworn recipients of this award, the highest Sheriff's Office award, must have a minimum of 15 years of service to be eligible for consideration.
 2. Factors to consider in submitting an employee for a Distinguished Service Award are reliability, conduct, demeanor, productivity, consistency, judgment, appearance, attitude and dedication to the goals and objectives of the agency.
 3. Sworn recipients of this award will be presented a blue- white-blue enameled pin with star and mounted certificate. Civilian recipients of the Distinguished Service Award will receive a silver engraved pen and mounted certificate. All Distinguished Service Award recipients will receive eight (8) hours of administrative leave. Recipients will be recognized and receive this certificate at an award ceremony.
- B. Meritorious Action Award:** This award recognizes exemplary professionalism during a critical incident that enabled the protection of life and/or property.
1. The meritorious action must be appropriate and timely and involve unusual diligence, focus, determination, and initiative.
 2. Sworn or Reserve Deputy Sheriff recipients of this award will be presented a white and blue enameled pin and civilians will receive a white and blue enameled lapel pin. Sworn and civilian employees will receive four (4) hours of administrative leave and all recipients will receive a mounted certificate. Recipients will be recognized and receive this certificate at an awards ceremony.
- C. Distinguished Field Training Instructor Award:** This semi-annual award recognizes a sworn Field Training Instructor (FTI) based on the following criteria:
1. Requires a minimum of five (5) consecutive years as a FTI and must have successfully trained at least 10 employees either as a "primary" or "secondary" FTI within any Section or Division. (Considerations will be made based upon the number of employees available to train during employment cycles).
 2. Demonstration of distinguished performance such as reliability, conduct, demeanor, productivity, consistency, judgment, appearance, attitude, and dedication to the goals and objectives in the area of field training. Quality of documentation and overall interpersonal communication skills should also be considered.
 3. Nominations can only be submitted by a supervisor. The ending date for accepting nominations will be announced annually by e-mail from the Awards Committee.
 4. Recipient of this award will be presented a green and white enameled pin, a mounted certificate and four (4) hours of administrative leave. Recipient will be recognized and receive this certificate at an awards ceremony.
- D. Community Service Award:** This award recognizes outstanding community service of a sustained, direct, and consequential nature.
1. Factors to consider include volunteer service, community service, hands on participation, and no expectation of personal gain.
 2. Actions significantly contribute to the betterment of the human condition.

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3. If an employee has earned the Volunteer Service Award over the previous four years and meets the requirements of the award for the fifth consecutive year, the employee becomes qualified for the Community Service Award.
 4. Sworn or Reserve Deputy Sheriff recipients of this award will be presented with a dark blue enameled pin and a certificate. Civilian recipients will receive a mounted certificate. Recipients will be recognized and receive this certificate at an awards ceremony.
- E. **Volunteer Service Award:** This award recognizes sworn or civilian employees who participate in a volunteer program within Fairfax County which necessitates direct involvement or engagement with an adult, child, family or animal in need of support or assistance or whose direct function is to raise funds to support such program.
1. If a minimum hourly requirement is not defined by a specific program, a deputy must log a minimum of 50 hours over a 12 month period.
 2. The volunteer cannot receive any compensation for any portion of the hours applied to the program minimum.
 3. A nomination for this award will require an official report of hours and duties performed from the selected program's administrator.
 4. Sworn recipients of this award will be presented a purple-white-purple enamel pin. Civilian recipients will receive a mounted certificate. Recipients will be recognized and receive this certificate at an awards ceremony.
 - a. Subsequent, consecutive years of volunteer service will be identified with a star, up to three silver stars for four years of service.
 - b. Five consecutive years of qualifying volunteer service will qualify the recipient for the Community Service Award.
 5. Volunteer programs may include but are not limited to:
 - a. Programs found within the Fairfax County Volunteer Management System (<https://volunteer.fairfaxcounty.gov/custom/1380/>)
 - b. Fairfax Area Christian Emergency and Transitional Service (FACETS)
 - c. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
 - d. Lorton Community Action Center (LCAC)
 - e. Special Olympics Virginia (SOVA)
 - f. Fairfax County Animal Shelter (FCAS)

Team Award: This award recognizes multiple individuals who work in concert to achieve a positive outcome to an unplanned incident; a planned incident; or a long-term agency initiative.

1. The functional unit must perform in a superior manner with unity and purpose. The event may be specific in nature or a long-term agency initiative.
2. This award consists of a plaque identifying each team member and name of the service rendered. Additionally, each member will receive a Letter of Appreciation from the appropriate division commander. The plaque will be presented to the

supervisor of the team at an awards ceremony.

- F. **Certificate of Commendation:** This certificate recognizes sworn or civilian employees who contribute to the Agency's goals.
 - 1. Performance of an act that warrants special recognition.
 - 2. Performs a commendable service.
 - 3. Education – college degrees, professional or technical certification.
 - 4. Recipients will be recognized and receive this certificate at an awards ceremony.
- G. **Letter of Appreciation:** This letter recognizes sworn or civilian employees for his/her efforts.
 - 1. Appropriate to thank, praise, or applaud a single event or accomplishment.
 - 2. A copy of the letter shall be forwarded to Administrative Services Division for inclusion in official files. This award does not require review or approval by the Awards Committee.
- H. **Citizen Award:** This award recognizes residents of Fairfax County who have assisted this Agency in some manner that directly affects the outcome of an event.
 - 1. Assist with arrest, lifesaving, community effort, etc.
 - 2. It will be incumbent upon the Awards Committee to ensure a background check has been completed of the nominee.
 - 3. The recipient will receive a mounted certificate at an awards ceremony.

VI. **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE VALOR AWARD CRITERIA**

- A. **Gold Medal of Valor:** The highest award in recognition of an act involving extreme personal risk that is clearly above and beyond the call of duty.
- B. **Silver Medal of Valor:** The second highest award. This shall be awarded in recognition of acts involving great personal risk.
- C. **Bronze Medal of Valor:** The third highest award. This shall be awarded in recognition of acts involving unusual personal risk beyond that which should be expected while performing the usual job responsibilities. This award may also be awarded to personnel who demonstrate unusual judgment, zeal or ingenuity during an emergency situation when such act is beyond that normally expected in the performance of duty.
- D. **Certificate of Valor:** This shall be awarded for acts that, although not qualifying for a bronze medal, involve personal risk and/or demonstrate judgment, zeal or ingenuity not normally involved in the performance of duties.
- E. **Life Saving Award:** This award is to recognize any member of the Agency who, above and beyond the normal duties and responsibilities, or while off-duty, is instrumental in saving a human life without encountering personal risk.

VII. COUNTY-WIDE PERFORMANCE AWARD CRITERIA

A. Heath Onthank Award

1. An Onthank Award is granted to employees who achieve accomplishments of outstanding worth in advancing and improving public service in County Government and the School System.
2. Merit employees of the County and contracted unified salary scale and food service employees of the School System are eligible. Employees must have completed their initial probationary period.
3. Onthank nominations may be made by any group or individual and are sent directly to the Fairfax County Department of Human Resources. Input from department heads for nominated employees is also obtained.
4. The following criteria should be considered when making an Onthank nomination:
 - a. Direct identification with the achievement through personal leadership or through development and application of program content and techniques.
 - b. Worth of the accomplishment in terms of tangible results achieved.
 - c. The achievement was a remarkable or unusual performance of the nominee's assigned duties or above and beyond those duties.
 - d. The achievement on which the nomination is based must be within the preceding year.
5. The Onthank Award includes recognition at a Board of Supervisors' meeting, a cash award, a plaque, and engraved name on the Onthank Award Plaque at the Government Center.
6. Onthank Award nominations are accepted from December through February.

B. Outstanding Performance Award (OPA)

1. An OPA is granted to employees who perform the duties and responsibilities of their position in an outstanding manner and whose work generally is well above expectations.
2. Any merit employee who has completed the initial probationary period is eligible to be nominated for an OPA.
3. OPA nominations are made by the employee's supervisor and sent through the department chain of command to the appropriate Deputy County Executive, Chief Information Officer, Chief Financial Officer, or County Executive for approval.

4. The following criteria should be considered when making an OPA nomination:
 - a. Consistent, exceptionally high level of performance for the current position and grade level.
 - b. Significant benefit to County and/or department operations resulting from employee's outstanding performance (e.g., improvements in County services and efficiency, improved customer service).
 - c. Exemplary performance on a specific project or assignment exceeding all normal expectations (such as outstanding results, timeliness, efficiency, thoroughness in completing the assignment, and/or effective cooperation with others).
5. The OPA includes a cash award, a certificate, a day of administrative leave, and an imprinted mug.
6. Nominations for an OPA may be submitted at any time but should be submitted as closely as possible to the meritorious acts being recognized.

C. Team Excellence Award (TEA)

1. A TEA is granted to a group of employees who perform the duties and responsibilities of their team assignment in an outstanding manner and whose work generally is well above expectations.
2. Both merit and exempt employees are eligible to be nominated for a TEA. Nominators should ensure that all members of the team, including support personnel, are included.
3. Supervisors, department heads, Deputy County Executives, the Chief Information Officer, the Chief Financial Officer, or the County Executive may make TEA nominations. A committee composed of the County Executive, the Deputy County Executives, the Chief Information Officer, the Chief Financial Officer, Employees Advisory Council Representative, and several senior managers will approve TEAs.
4. The following criteria should be considered when making a nomination for a Team Excellence Award:
 - a. Results of the highest professional quality
 - b. Demonstrable team unity and efficiency
 - c. Completion of project within deadline
5. Ten TEAs may be awarded annually for teams of any size.
6. Each team member will receive a cash award, a certificate, a day of administrative leave, and a token "team spirit" award.
7. Nominations for a TEA may be submitted at any time but should be submitted as

closely as possible to the meritorious acts being recognized.

D. Managerial Excellence Award (MEA)

1. A MEA is granted to a branch/division chief or a department head to recognize outstanding leadership in customer service, team building, work redesign, or overall program management. Managers should be recognized for encouraging a climate in which employees feel a strong connection with the County's mission and are motivated to contribute to organizational excellence.
2. Any merit employee who has completed the initial probationary period is eligible to be nominated for a MEA. Exempt department heads that have completed one year of service are also eligible to be nominated.
3. Supervisors, department heads, Deputy County Executives, the Chief Information Officer, the Chief Financial Officer, or the County Executive may make MEA nominations. A committee composed of the County Executive, the Deputy County Executives, Chief Information Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Employees Advisory Council representative, and several senior managers will approve MEAs.
4. The following criteria should be considered when making a MEA nomination:
 - a. Demonstrable commitment to improving customer service
 - b. Development of new processes that enhance efficiency and effectiveness, with no service loss to the customer
 - c. Proven ability to inspire or empower subordinates of coworkers, fostering pride, teamwork, and spirit in the agency
 - d. Exercise of originality, ingenuity or inventiveness to solve a significant problem
 - e. Exceptional problem-solving, decision-making or leadership abilities that direct the division, department or County in a positive direction
5. A MEA consists of a cash award, a framed certificate and a day of administrative leave.
6. A maximum of 10 awards may be given annually, two each from the County Executive, each Deputy County Executive, Chief Information Officer, and the Chief Financial Officer.
7. Nominations for an MEA may be submitted at any time but should be submitted as closely as possible to the meritorious acts being recognized. Onthank Award nominations are accepted from December through February.

E. Employee Suggestion Award

1. A Suggestion Award is granted to an employee who contributes a practical idea for monetary savings, greater efficiency, and increased effectiveness of service to the public, safer working conditions, or better employee relations.

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2. Any County employee is eligible to submit a suggestion.
3. The department with primary responsibility for implementation will evaluate the suggestion.
4. The Suggestion Award Committee will review department evaluations. If a positive evaluation is approved, the committee decides on the award. Members of this committee represent a variety of agencies as well as the Employees Advisory Council (EAC).
5. The following criteria should be considered when submitting a suggestion:
 - a. Increased efficiency
 - b. Enhanced customer service
 - c. Savings of time, labor, space, material, or supplies
 - d. Elimination of unnecessary procedures, records, or forms
 - e. Improvements in safety or working conditions
6. To be considered for an award, suggestions must meet the criteria, be approved by the Suggestion Award Committee, and be implemented by the appropriate department. If a suggestion is not implemented within two years of a positive evaluation by a department, no award will be given.
7. Suggestions, which have already been implemented, may also be submitted to the Suggestion Award Program. To be eligible for award consideration, the suggestion must be submitted no later than six months after implementation. In the evaluation, the department head or designee must attest to the fact that:
 - a. The original suggestion came from the current suggester
 - b. Implementation was directly related to that suggestion
8. Employees whose suggestions are implemented and approved for an award will receive certificates of commendation. Cash awards are given for suggestions with tangible and intangible results.
 - a. Tangible Results – A suggestion with tangible results has measurable monetary savings or an increase in revenue. The amount of a tangible award may be up to ten percent of the first year's net savings or net increase in revenue, not to exceed \$5,000. The minimum award is \$50.
 - b. Intangible Results – A suggestion with intangible results has observable but not measurable improvement, such as enhanced efficiency, customer service, employee morale, safety, or public relations. Cash awards for suggestions with intangible results may range from a minimum of \$50 to a maximum of \$150. The Suggestion Award Committee may also grant an additional cash award not to exceed \$100 for innovation or for special safety considerations.

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9. Acceptance of a cash award constitutes a waiver of any claims of rights or interest in the suggestion by the eligible employee or his/her heirs, unless the suggestion is deemed to be patentable by the County.
10. If deemed patentable by the County, the employee retains all rights or interest in the suggestion, except for a royalty-free, non-exclusive license for the County to use the suggestion before a patent application is filed, while the patent is pending and/or after the patent is granted.
11. If a suggestion was not approved and a similar idea is subsequently implemented within one year of the rejection, the suggester may request a reconsideration of the suggestion. If a suggestion was not approved and conditions change, the suggester may resubmit the suggestion at any time.



**STACEY A. KINCAID
SHERIFF**

05/09/2003
DATE APPROVED

06/26/2024
EFFECTIVE DATE

Revised: August 2005, June 2008, February 2010, October 2016, June 2024