



Herndon Police Department GENERAL ORDERS

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REPORT WRITING

I. POLICY

- A. The Herndon Police Department will accurately record the events of an incident through effective report writing. Reports are official law enforcement records of an incident, and its contents must adequately support a truthful, unbiased, and unprejudiced summary of events. Effective report writing is critical to the credibility of the department to fulfill its mission and purpose.
- B. Department members shall promptly complete all required reports with supporting facts and information in accordance with law and department directives. Department members will be held accountable for their responsibility to create, submit, review, approve, follow-up, or manage reports, and any other required action as required by law or department directive.
- C. Officers are prohibited from using artificial intelligence systems to create reports. Officers' reports must specifically detail events that transpired based on human judgment that must meet certain requirements for legal scrutiny.

II. REPORT WRITING

Report writing is an integral part of law enforcement as incident details must be adequately represented with sufficient detail to be able to withstand critical review and legal scrutiny.

- A. Effective reports will contain the following characteristics: **<82.2.1c>**
 - 1. **Factual** - A police report is an objective accounting of the relevant and observed facts of the case, and any conclusions made by the reporting officer must be supported by articulated and documented facts. Unsubstantiated opinions or conclusions are not included in an effective report.
 - 2. **Accurate** - The decisions and actions taken must be supported by accurate information contained in the report. If any information is inaccurate, the credibility and reliability of the report will likely be jeopardized. Accuracy is achieved by carefully, precisely, and honestly reporting all relevant information.



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3. **Clear** - A police report speaks for the reporting officer when they are not present. There should be no doubt or confusion regarding what happened during an incident or crime, based upon the content of a police report. Clarity in report writing is achieved by clear and logical organization of information, the judicious use of simple, common, and first-person language, and effective writing mechanics.
 4. **Concise** - Reports should be brief but also contain all relevant information necessary for a complete understanding of the crime or incident, without additional explanation. Brevity should never take precedence over accuracy, completeness, or clarity in report writing.
 5. **Complete** - A complete report will contain all the relevant facts, information, and details that the reader will need for a comprehensive understanding of the crime or incident described in the report. The report is complete when it outlines a comprehensive picture of the incident, no questions are left unanswered by the reader, officer actions are explained and justified by the contents of the report, and both supporting and conflicting information is included.
 6. **Timely** - Reports must be submitted in a timely fashion to ensure that the most accurate information is available when needed.
- B. Creating Reports <82.2.1a,b; 82.2.2a-e>
1. Officers are responsible for appropriately documenting law enforcement activity that constitutes an official record, such as incident and supplemental reports, and the completion of required forms, such as citations, warrants, orders, investigative forms, field contacts, crash reports, tow sheets, etc., as applicable.
 2. Reports shall be created when an officer completes a call for service or a self-initiated event necessitating documentation. Activity required to be documented in a written report includes:
 - a. Arrests (misdemeanor/felony), and summonses
 - b. Criminal incidents



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- c. Criminal or civil legal process
 - d. Criminal intelligence
 - e. District Concerns (Officer or Citizen generated)
 - f. Deaths
 - g. Emotionally Disturbed Persons (EDP/Mental)
 - h. Non-criminal activity (found property/evidence, runaways, missing persons, etc.)
 - i. Searches (all types) to include:
 - Type and reason for search
 - Injuries or property damage occurring during the search
 - Sex of suspect, indicating if opposite sex, adult/juvenile, and any actions taken
 - Results of the search, to include a description of the property or evidence seized
 - j. Suspicious activity/events
 - k. Traffic accidents as required by § 46.2-373
 - l. Any incident where an officer believes circumstances should be documented in a report or whenever a supervisor directs that a report be written.
3. Supplements shall be written to further explain, expand, or update associated activity or status with an incident or investigation.
 4. Field Contact reports, although not necessarily case-specific, document officer-citizen contact information, suspect information, trespass notices, and other non-criminal events that should be recorded when a report may not be required.
 5. Discretion should be exercised as to whether a report should be written, if following a response and investigation an event cannot be established or is unlikely or improbable that an incident occurred.



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C. Submitting Reports <82.2.1d,e>

1. Documentation begins with a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) entry by Communications when a call for service is answered or an officer calls in a self-initiated event. Once entered in CAD, the incident becomes a record in the records management system and is automatically assigned a unique number. The case number consists of the four digits of the current year, followed by a dash, and then followed by a sequential case number. The number is consecutive, beginning with 00001, on January 1 of each year. <82.2.3>
2. Officers shall complete and submit reports for supervisory review prior to the end of the officer's shift, unless excused by the supervisor for an urgent extenuating circumstance (e.g., injury, fatigue, personal conflict, complex incident, etc.) If delayed due to extenuating circumstances, the report shall be completed and submitted by the officer's end of tour.
3. Arrest reports and documentation shall be completed and submitted prior to the end of the officer's shift.
4. Service of legal process shall be completed and submitted prior to the end of the officer's shift. Service of all warrants shall be documented by submitting an incident report or supplemental report, as appropriate. Service of town warrants may also necessitate an HP 817 (NCIC/VCIN Request) be submitted to ensure that wanted subjects are removed from computerized warrant files.

D. Review and Approval of Reports

1. Supervisors shall review reports for content and accuracy. If a correction is necessary, the reviewing supervisor shall notify the officer of the correction needed and the report shall be corrected in a timely manner.
2. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that all reports are completed, reviewed, approved, and submitted to the Records Section prior to the end of the supervisor's shift, unless excused by the lieutenant for an extenuating circumstance. If delayed, reports shall be completed and submitted by the supervisor's end of tour.



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3. Supervisors shall additionally review the case status of all open cases and the preparation of supplement reports, every 30 days to update case status, ensure report generation, and effective follow-up.
4. The Records Section shall review all reports entered in RMS (Records Management System) to ensure documentation requirements are met, reports are completed/submitted in a timely fashion, and classifications and status are accurate and up to date.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

- A. The Records Section shall electronically submit Incident Based Report (IBR) crime reporting data to the Virginia State Police monthly, pursuant to the established due date.
- B. The Records Section shall submit statistical traffic stop data to the Virginia State Police monthly, pursuant to the Virginia Community Policing Data Act.
- C. The Records Section shall review the status of reports every 30 days to ensure accountability for report submissions, appropriate follow-up investigations are being conducted, and accurate case classification updates are applied. Issues or problems encountered with maintaining reports and associated status shall be brought to the attention of the Support Services Division commander monthly.
- D. The Support Services Division commander will direct an annual audit of the department's report procedures process to determine if appropriate submission, documentation, follow-up, and status requirements of incident and supplement reports are being met. The audit will review the report cycle and all phases of the system on a random selection of cases to identify any problems or recommendations for changes.