COMMAND PROTOCOL

PREAMBLE:

Within the Omaha Police Department (OPD), the channels for delegating authority, issuing orders, approving reports, communicating requests, and receiving requests are like vertical chains; forming chains of command or a command structure. An established Chain of Command is necessary to promote consistency, reduce confusion, and enhance public safety operations. The Chain of Command serves all employees in a fair and equal manner. Each employee has a voice in the Department's operation, a necessity if the organization is to grow. In addition, the Chain of Command identifies the individual responsible and authorized to direct tasks toward their successful completion.

While non-sworn positions do not have command authority over sworn employees, non-sworn employees have significant expertise and are essential in contributing their expertise toward the mission of the Department where they are uniquely qualified to leverage their knowledge and/or skills.

DEFINITIONS:

Chain of Command: Lines of communication going downward or upward within the organizational hierarchy.

Command Officer: Any ranking officer of the Police Department, or any officer of the Police Department assigned by the Chief of Police to command an organizational component such as a division, bureau, detail, or other unit of the Department, regardless of rank. In the absence of such command officer, unless otherwise designated, such command will be assumed by the next ranking subordinate officer in seniority. When such occurs, they shall exercise the same authority, perform the same duties, and assume the same responsibilities as a command officer, and other officers or employees of the Police Department shall afford them the same obedience and respect.

Order: An authoritative command given by a ranking officer to a subordinate.

Ranking Officer: A superior officer who has the highest rank of the officers present. If two or more officers are the same rank, the superior officer is the one with the earliest date of appointment.

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Omaha Police Department (OPD) to utilize a structured Chain of Command to communicate with and direct Department employees. This Command Protocol ensures continued supervision at all levels within the Chain of Command during a position vacancy or absence from duty.

PROCEDURE:

I. Command Protocol

A. The Chief of Police represents the highest-ranking authority within the Police Department.

B. The Executive Deputy Chief of Police is the designated second in command and serves as the Acting Chief of Police in the Chief's absence.

C. Deputy Chiefs are the highest ranking sworn officers within a Bureau.

D. The Deputy Director of the Police Technical and Reporting Services Bureau may serve as the highest ranking non-sworn command within a Bureau, but such position shall not have supervisory authority over sworn employees.

E. Captains are the highest-ranking sworn officers within each section or precinct.

F. Lieutenants are considered middle managers and are usually assigned as unit supervisors and precinct shift supervisors and have command authority of units/squads or patrol shifts.

G. Sergeants are first-line supervisors and shall perform supervisory duties, as assigned, for subordinate employees.

1. Supervisory duties include reviewing and approving work, conducting shift briefings, conducting performance appraisals, and initiating corrective action.

H. Non-sworn managers, supervisors, or other authoritative positions command non-sworn personnel in units/squads as middle-managers or first-line supervisors.

1. Non-sworn positions do not have command authority over sworn employees.

EXCEPTION: In the limited instance of the Air Support Unit, the City and the Omaha Police Officers Association (OPOA) have reached an agreement that such Unit shall be managed by a non-sworn employee entitled Chief Pilot, but have also established a process whereby the Deputy Chief over the Unit will resolve any disputes as to management of sworn personnel by non-sworn personnel.

I. Each employee of the Department is granted appropriate authority to effectively execute their duties.

1. Managers and supervisory employees are held accountable for the proper exercise of their authority to subordinates, and they shall remain responsible for the actions of their bureau/section/unit and their employees.

II. Sworn Command Authority in the Absence of the Chief of Police

A. The Executive Deputy Chief of Police is the designated second in command and serves as the Acting Chief of Police in the Chief's absence.

B. If the Chief of Police becomes incapacitated due to injury or illness and is unable to communicate a designate, the following succession shall take place:

1. Executive Deputy Chief of Police (currently the Deputy Chief of the Uniform Patrol Bureau (UPB)).

2. Deputy Chief, Organizational Services Bureau (OSB).

3. Deputy Chief, Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB).

4. Deputy Chief, Police Services Bureau (PSB).

5. Deputy Chief, Professional Oversight and Tactical Operations Bureau (POTOB).

III. Assumption of Command and Acting Capacities

A. When an employee in the command structure is absent or incapacitated and has not designated anyone to act in the same capacity, and it becomes necessary for someone to do so, the determination as to whom will assume that capacity shall be made first by rank, then by time in rank, until the command designation has been officially made.

B. An employee in an acting capacity is vested with operational authority only during the term assigned.

C. Employees in an acting capacity shall not interfere with, countermand, or modify any order previously issued by the supervisor for whom they act.

D. Whether ascending or descending the Chain of Command, ranks shall not be bypassed on official matters, unless authorized by the Chief, a Deputy Chief**/**Director, a Captain, or City or OPD Policy.

IV. Command Protocol Involving Employees of Different Functions

A. When responsibility for an assignment is entirely within a single bureau, but requires assistance from other bureaus, the command officer of the responsible bureau has the authority over an officer of the same rank from another assisting bureau.

B. Incident Command of all police employees assigned to the scene of an emergency shall be assumed by employees in the regular UPB command structure of the geographic area in which the operation occurs, absent policies/procedures that dictate otherwise (i.e., UPB police officer, UPB sergeant, UPB lieutenant, UPB captain, and UPB Deputy Chief).

1. In situations lacking the regular command structure, the ranking officer shall supervise until the arrival of any employees activating the Chain of Command.

2. Any officer assuming Incident Command at the scene of an emergency shall inform the person being relieved of the superior officer's intent to assume Incident Command, and shall notify 911 Communications that Incident Command has been assumed.

C. When two or more officers of equal rank are working together on the same assignment or detail, and an emergency arises requiring a command decision, the senior shall assume command if no one has been assigned command by competent authority.

1. Seniority shall be determined first by rank and second by continuous service in the rank.

2. Seniority shall not be used to determine command except in an emergency.

V. Command Authority and Responsibility

A. Each employee shall be accountable to only one supervisor at any given time.

B. Commanders and supervisors shall be held accountable for the performance of the employees under their immediate supervision until relieved by an authorized person.

C. Supervisors shall have under their immediate supervision only the number of employees that they can reasonably be expected to direct, coordinate, and control.

D. Orders from a supervisor to a subordinate shall be in clear, understandable language and issued in pursuit of departmental business.

1. Employees shall be required to obey any lawful order of a supervisor, including any order relayed from a supervisor by an employee of the same or lesser rank.

a. This applies to the subordinate even if they are not normally under the supervisor’s direct command.

2. In the event an employee receives an order which is in conflict with a previous order, they shall notify the supervisor issuing the conflicting order.

    a. Responsibility for disobedience of the first order then shifts to the supervisor who issued the second and conflicting order.

3. At no time is a subordinate to obey an order from a superior that they know to be unlawful, or that violates OPD or City of Omaha policy.

E. Supervisors and commanders shall name a subordinate to acting authority whenever the supervisor cannot be physically present and able to assume command functions.

F. Acting supervisors and commanders have the full authority and responsibility of the position they assume until relieved by their supervisor or another superior officer.

REFERENCES:

I. Previous OPD Orders

A. Previous General Orders: #48-00, 03-05, 03-13, 113-17, 76-18, 55-21, 4-22, and 74-25.

II. Accreditation Standards

A. Relevant CALEA Accreditation Standards: 11.2.1, 11.3.1, 11.3.2, 12.1.2, and 12.1.3.

III. Other

A. PPM Monthly Updates: #10-2017, 11-2017, 08-2026.