



# Seattle Police Department Policy Manual



## 5.001 - Standards and Duties

Effective Date: 05/01/2021

### 5.001-POL

This policy provides the philosophy for employee conduct and professionalism. It is not the Department's intent to interfere with or constrain the freedoms, privacy, and liberties of employees; discipline will only be imposed where there is a connection between the conduct and the duties, rank, assignment, or responsibilities of the employee.

The Department expects all employees to treat all people with dignity; remember that community caretaking is at times the focus, not always command and control; and that the guiding principle is to treat everyone with respect and courtesy, guarding against employing an officious or overbearing attitude and refraining from language, demeanor, and actions that may cause the individual feeling belittled, ridiculed, or intimidated.

This section applies to all Department employees. The content is not all-inclusive. Employees must also comply with conduct expectations in other manual sections pertaining to them.

#### 1. The Chief of Police Determines Employee Duty Status

The Chief of Police has final authority through the Charter of the City of Seattle to determine the on-duty status of any employee, and whether their actions are within the course and scope of their duties.

Completion of overtime or other Department forms by an employee does not establish the employee's duty status.

#### 2. Employees Must Adhere to Laws, City Policy, and Department Policy

Employees adhere to:

- Federal laws
- State laws

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- Laws of the City of Seattle
- City of Seattle policies
- The Seattle Police Manual
- Published Directives and Special Orders
- Applicable collective bargaining agreements and relevant labor laws

## **3. Employees Use Training to Assist in Following Policy**

Department training is intended to provide guidance on how to implement and follow policy.

Not following training, in itself, is not a policy violation.

Regardless of the result, an employee may need to explain, and possibly document, a substantial deviation from training.

## **4. Employees Must Attend All Mandatory Training**

Employees will attend mandatory training and follow the current curriculum during their duties.

Employees who have missed any mandatory training because of excused absences, such as a sick day or court appearance, will arrange through their immediate supervisor to complete that training within a reasonable time frame.

Employees on approved limited duty who cannot participate in a mandatory training program will request a waiver using SPD Memorandum (form 1.11), and an Insurer Activity Prescription Form (APF) through their chain of command.

Also See: [1.075-Failure to Complete Required Training](#)

## **5. Employees Complete Work in a Timely Manner**

Absent exigent circumstances or supervisory approval, employees will complete all required duties and official reports before going off duty.

## **6. Employees May Use Discretion**

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Employees are authorized and expected to use discretion in a reasonable manner consistent with the mission of the Department and duties of their office and assignment.

Discretion is proportional to the severity of the crime or public safety issue being addressed.

## **7. Employees Engaged in Department-Related Activities Identify Themselves When Requested**

Employees will provide their name and Department serial number verbally, or in writing if requested.

Employees may use a Department-issued business card that contains their name and serial number to satisfy the request for the information.

Employees will also show their department identification card and badge (sworn) when specifically requested to do so.

**Exception:** Employees are not required to immediately identify themselves if:

- An investigation is jeopardized
- A police function is hindered
- There is a safety consideration

## **8. On-Duty Officers in Civilian Attire Identify Themselves When Contacting Citizens**

Officers will accomplish this verbally and/or by displaying their badge or Department-issued identification.

**Exception:** Employees are not required to immediately identify themselves if:

- An investigation is jeopardized
- A police function is hindered
- There is a safety consideration

## **9. Uniformed Employees Will Not Initiate Contact With Officers Dressed In Civilian Clothing**

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When any uniformed employee meets an officer dressed in civilian attire, that uniformed employee will not openly recognize the plain-clothes officer unless greeted first.

## **10. Employees Will Strive to be Professional**

Regardless of duty status, employees may not engage in behavior that undermines public trust in the Department, the officer, or other officers. Employees will avoid unnecessary escalation of events even if those events do not end in reportable uses of force.

Any time employees represent the Department or identify themselves as police officers or Department employees, they will not use profanity directed as an insult or any language that is derogatory, contemptuous, or disrespectful toward any person.

Employees on duty or in uniform will not publicly ridicule:

- The Department or its policies
- Other Department employees
- Other law enforcement agencies
- The criminal justice system or police profession

This applies where such expression is defamatory, obscene, undermines the effectiveness of the Department, interferes with the maintenance of discipline, or is made with reckless disregard for truth.

## **11. Employees Will Be Truthful and Complete in All Communication**

**Exception:** Employees may use deception for a specific and lawful purpose in certain circumstances, when:

- There is an exigent threat to life safety or public safety
- It is necessary due to the nature of the employee's assignment
- There is a need to acquire information for a criminal investigation

## **12. Employees Must Promptly Report Exonerating Information**

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Employees must report any information they discover that may exonerate a person who is under investigation or has been charged with or convicted of a crime.

## **13. Employees Will Not Use Their Position or Authority for Personal Gain**

## **14. Retaliation is prohibited**

No employee will retaliate against any person who:

- Exercises a constitutional right
- Records an incident
- Makes a public disclosure request
- Publicly criticizes an SPD employee or the Department
- Initiates litigation
- Opposes any practice reasonably believed to be unlawful or in violation of Department policy
- Files a complaint or provides testimony or information related to a complaint of misconduct
- Provides testimony or information for any other administrative criminal or civil proceeding involving the Department or an officer
- Communicates intent to engage in the above-described activities
- Otherwise engages in lawful behavior

Retaliation includes discouragement, intimidation, coercion, or adverse action against any person. This prohibition will include any interference with the conduct of an administrative, civil, or criminal investigation.

Such retaliation may be a criminal act, may give rise to personal civil liability, or constitute independent grounds for discipline, up to and including termination.

## **15. Employees Obey any Lawful Order Issued by a Superior Officer**

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Failure to obey lawful orders from a superior officer constitutes insubordination. Orders may be issued directly, relayed through a subordinate employee or current Department training, published in notices, and other forms of communication.

## **16. Supervisors Clarify Conflicts in Orders**

Should any orders conflict with a previous order, or published regulation, employees may respectfully bring this to the supervisor's attention.

The supervisor who issued the conflicting order will try to correct the conflict in orders.

## **17. Employees May Object to Orders Under Certain Conditions**

An employee may object to a supervisor's orders under these conditions:

- When such orders represent unjustified, substantial and/or reckless disregard for life or safety
- When such orders are illegal or unethical
- When the supervisor has been relieved of duty by an employee of higher rank
- When other circumstances are present that establish the supervisor's inability to discharge the duties of the assignment

Employees in this situation will, if practical, state the basis for objecting to the order to the supervisor.

If the situation remains unresolved, the employee will immediately contact the next higher-ranking supervisor in the chain of command.

## **18. Employees Must Avoid Conflicts of Interest**

Employees will not associate with persons or organizations where such association reasonably gives the appearance of conflict of interest.

Employees will not engage in enforcement, investigative, or administrative functions that create or give the appearance of conflicts of interest.

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Employees will not investigate events where they are involved. This also applies where any person with whom the employee has a personal relationship is involved in the event.

Except in cases of emergency, officers will not arrest family members, business associates, or social acquaintances.

Employees will not show preference by recommending or suggesting the employment of any attorney, bondsman, or other business during the course of, or because of, their official business as employees of the Department.

See also [SMC 4.16-City Code of Ethics](#) and [5.120 – Off-Duty Employment](#).

## **19. Employees Must Disclose Conflicts**

Employees will immediately disclose to the Chief of Police, via their supervisor, any activities or relationships that may present an actual, potential, or apparent conflict of interest for themselves or other Department employees.

## **20. Employees Will Not Use a Department Mailing Address for Personal Reasons**

This provision includes using a Department address for a driver license, vehicle registration, telephone service, etc.

## **21. Employees Will Not Imply to Another Agency the Department's Approval or Disapproval of That Agency's Actions**

## **22. Employees Will Not Use Their Position to Inappropriately Influence Court Proceedings**

Department employees are regularly called as witnesses to testify in court pursuant to their official duties. Outside of these official appearances, employees will not use their positions to make any recommendations or otherwise influence the disposition of any court proceedings.

**Exception:** Employees may address the court on behalf of a crime victim during sentencing, if requested. However, employees who intend to address the court in this capacity will first consult with the prosecuting attorney's office to review the employees' intended remarks.

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## **23. Employees Notify the Department Before Initiating any Claim for Damages Related to Their Official Position**

Employees must report their intention to initiate a claim for damages sustained while working in a law enforcement capacity or by virtue of employment with the Department. This notification is to the Chief of Police via the employee's chain of command.

## **24. Officers Report any Off-Duty Assault on Themselves Related to Department Employment**

If an employee is assaulted while working off-duty in a law enforcement capacity, that employee must report the assault. The employee must then notify the Department before seeking a No Contact or Restraining Order related to the assault. This notification is to the Chief of Police via the employee's chain of command.

## **25. Employees Report Their Intent to Initiate Lawsuits or Seek Court Orders**

Employees must report to the Chief of Police their intention to sue for damages sustained while working in a law enforcement capacity or by virtue of employment with the Department.

Sworn employees will notify their supervisor prior to applying for a No Contact or Restraining Order stemming from an assault on the employee that occurred while the employee was working in a law enforcement capacity.

## **26. Employees Follow the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) in the Performance of their Job**

Employees interacting with persons with disabilities will take steps to provide needed accommodations to provide police services or achieve a law enforcement goal.

See: [Commonly asked questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act and Law Enforcement](#), [ADA.gov](#), [City of Seattle ADA](#).