



POLICY AND PROCEDURE

NO.570

Missing Person(s)

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GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES:

The following policy and procedure has been developed to assist the patrol officer in the effective investigation of a missing person and assist the officer in obtaining all the information necessary to make an accurate determination of the urgency of the situation. It provides the guidelines to follow and the appropriate personnel to contact in the event that a search operation is warranted.

Every missing person's incident is unique and no policy can possibly address every potential circumstance. The officer must use this procedure along with his own expertise and experience to assist him in making appropriate decision.

POLICY:

1. **SEARCH IS AN EMERGENCY!!!** It is important to respond to a missing person incident quickly and efficiently. Information gathering is very important and it will assist in evaluating the urgency of the situation.
2. **SEARCH DIFFICULTY INCREASES WITH THE SEARCH AREA!!!** It is important to remember that the search area can grow larger with each passing hour and thus increase search difficulty. Early confinement of the missing subject can help minimize the search area and assist in early subject recovery.
3. **OVER-REACTION IS JUSTIFIABLE... UNDER-REACTION IS INEXCUSABLE!!** Remember some kind of response should always happen immediately- even if it is only an increase in planning for the higher potential that the problem will become more serious.

PROCEDURE:

PERSONNEL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

A. Dispatcher:

Upon receiving a report of a missing person, the dispatcher should collect the following information:

1. Name, Home address, Home telephone number, and present address and telephone number of caller.
2. Name, Home address, Home telephone number, Age, Sex, Physical description of missing person and the time and place last seen.

The dispatcher should then dispatch the appropriate cruiser to take a written report and the other cruisers should be given the preliminary information that the dispatcher has obtained.

B. Reporting Officer:

Upon arriving at the location of the reporting person(s), the officer should obtain the following information:

1. Name, Home Address, Home telephone number, relationship of the reporting person as well as how they can be contacted at a future date for further questioning.
2. Name, Home address, Home telephone number, DOB, Sex, SSN, Physical description and clothing description of the missing party.
3. Any destination plans that the missing party may have had.
4. The missing persons state of mind and any statements made before they were last seen.
5. Missing persons health/general condition.
6. Any previous missing incidents and where the party was eventually located.
7. Address and telephone numbers of work, close friends, usual hangouts.
8. ***VERY IMPORTANT!!! *** Time and Place last seen or heard from.

After completion of the interview, the dispatcher and the other cruisers should be updated with any pertinent information. The initial responding officer is responsible for the continued investigation of the incident until relieved by a Supervisor or by the Commanding Officer.

After obtaining all this information the officer should be able to make an appropriate determination about the urgency of the situation. For example: the information obtained along with the missing person's health, mental state, the time of day and weather conditions will all influence the urgency of the search. Special attention should be given to vulnerable persons i.e. elderly, children, special needs, infirmed, etc.

If the officer determines that the situation is non-urgent, then the standard procedures of visually checking the area contacting friends and relatives who may have heard from the missing person and checking out their "usual hangouts" can be followed. However, if the officer determines that the search is of some urgency or if all previously mentioned procedures have been unsuccessful in locating the individual, after a reasonable amount of time, and the officer believes that the person may still be within the town limits, then the assistance of additional personnel should be obtained.

C. Commanding Officer:

The Commanding Officer should be kept informed of the progress of any missing person investigation. It is his responsibility to assure that all procedures are being adhered to and that the appropriate resources are being utilized. As circumstances dictate, the missing person should be entered into the NCIC computer as soon as possible. If the situation is obviously a search a young child or an elderly patient missing from a nursing home, the Commanding Officer should ensure that all appropriate resources are utilized.

Whenever a parent, guardian or governmental unit responsible for a child, reports to any police officer or law enforcement official that a child is missing, such police officer or official shall immediately cause to be entered into the central register relevant information relative to said missing child. Such police officer or law enforcement official shall also immediately undertake to locate such missing child.

When the initial responding officer and the Commanding Office determine that the situation requires the assistance of someone with specialized search and/or rescue training, a Search Manager should be contacted first and he/she in turn will notify other appropriate resources. The Search Manager should be briefed on the situation and any actions taken thus far. A Command Post should be established at a location that is easily accessible to all authorized personnel somewhere near the search site.

Entry will be made through our department's C.J.I.S. terminal.

Per:

Edward P. Gardella
Chief of Police

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