



WRITTEN REPORTS: CONTENT & STYLE

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I. POLICY

It is the policy of the Anne Arundel County Police Department that all incident and offense reports, supplemental reports, and investigative reports will be written in a professional, timely, complete, and concise manner. The content of all reports will include all information necessary to properly assist with and document the ongoing investigation of crime, including exculpatory information as required by law; prosecute criminal acts; create required statistical reports; and document the actions of employees and other parties involved with the incident or event which prompted the report.

II. REPORT WRITING REQUIREMENTS

1. All written reports, except those on printed, departmental forms and reports specifically segregated from the records management system (RMS) in accordance with another policy or standard operating procedure, must be written electronically in the agency's records management system. All reports segregated from the agency's RMS must be written electronically.
2. The reporting officer is responsible for all of the following:
 - a. Proper content (See Section III), grammar, and completeness of the officer's reports.
 - b. Verifying the accuracy of all information collected for a report.
 - c. Collecting and submitting required data for the National Incident Based Reporting System and any other statistical or reporting requirements relevant to the officer's report.
 - d. Collecting and submitting additional available data for inclusion in reports as may be useful for other investigations.
 - e. Timely submission of all reports. Unless specifically directed otherwise by a supervisor, the officer in charge of an investigation will prepare and submit the initial incident/offense report before the end of his or her tour of duty
3. The approving supervisor of a report is responsible for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the report, that it is submitted in a timely manner, and that it meets the standards of this policy
4. The approving supervisor of a report is responsible for ensuring compliance with the reporting standards of this policy.

III. CONTENT

Every police report must include or address the following:

1. Investigative steps or inquiries made by involved officers. (See subsection A)
2. The actions of involved officers. (See subsection B)

3. The status of any criminal investigation related to the incident. (See subsection C)
4. Appropriate data and statistical elements.
5. If a subject was charged, a list of officers who should be summonsed to court.
6. Other elements as required by other applicable policies.

A. Investigation

The purpose of an investigation, whether related to a crime or not, is to determine the facts of an event of interest to law enforcement. The following questions should be answered by each report:

- a. WHO - Name the victims, suspects, witnesses, and other related parties, including police officers. Describe each party's involvement, and relevant actions and statements. Persons should be identified in reports by their full name, address, date of birth, and include contact information such as telephone numbers and email addresses. For any person charged with a crime, the report must indicate the nature of the charges, the arresting and charging officers(s), and the custody status of the person charged.
- b. WHAT - What happened? What, if any, crime was committed? What was taken or harmed? What was used to commit the crime?
- c. WHEN – The time of day, day of week, month, and year of relevant events.
- d. WHERE - Where was the crime committed? Where was evidence found? Where were the victim(s), witness(es), suspect(s), and others?
- e. HOW - How was the crime committed?
- f. WHY – What is the motive of the person who committed crime?

B. Action Taken

Each written report should describe the efforts of the officer to resolve the incident including any law enforcement action taken.

C. Case Status

The status of a case is determined by the assigned investigator and approved by the investigator's supervisor according to criteria stated in Index Code 2203. Any changes in case status must be reported by the investigator in a supplement report and, if applicable, the Investigative Case Status must be updated in the case management application the records management system. See Index Code 2203.

IV. STYLE OF REPORT WRITING

The following serves as a general guide to report writing. Supervisors are responsible for continuing to develop the report writing performance, skills, and abilities of the officers under their supervision or command.

1. Reports should be concise and include relevant and exculpatory facts and information.
2. Reports should not be copies of statements of probable cause and vice-versa.
3. Lengthy or run-on sentences should not be used.
4. Active voice should be used. Passive Voice should not be used.
 - a. Examples of Active Voice:
 - i. "Officer Doe found the drugs in trunk of the car."
 - ii. "Officer Doe searched the suspect."
 - b. Example of Passive Voice:
 - i. "The drugs were found in the trunk of the car."
 - ii. "The suspect was searched."
5. Verbatim statements must be reported in quotation marks and attributed to the speaker.
6. Lengthy statements should be documented by audio/video recording, as permitted by law and policy, or by requesting the party provide a signed, written statement.
7. Reports should not include slang, jargon, 10-codes, or other lingo that is not known to the general public, unless the phrase is being reported as a verbatim statement.
8. Opinions should be distinguished from facts. Opinions of officers and investigators are appropriate for inclusion in a written when supported by reasonable facts.

9. Reports should be composed in a logical sequence.
10. Officers may use the first person singular (“I”) when reporting their own actions.
11. Reports should refer to people by their unique name, and not by generic labels such as “Victim-1” or “Suspect-2” unless the person’s identity is unknown.
12. Abbreviations should be avoided.

V. PROPONENT UNIT: Training Division

VI. CANCELLATION: This directive cancels Index Code 2205, dated *11-01-21*.