



AGENCY CORRESPONDENCE

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I. POLICY

It is the policy of the Anne Arundel County Police Department to maintain open and efficient lines of written communication between agency members and component units. Members are expected to communicate and respond to written communications in a manner that is professional and timely. Inter-office communications are subject to relevant laws, including the Maryland Public Information Act.

II. GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE DIRECTIVES

1. *When corresponding within the agency, with other County agencies/departments, or with outside entities, personnel, or community members, all department members must communicate in a polite and professional manner, including the use of appropriate honorifics when addressing persons of higher rank or position.*
2. *Members must check for new correspondence on a regular basis and as directed by their respective commander. Absent alternative directives from a commander, the following directives apply:*
 - a. *Email must be checked at least once each workday.*
 - b. *Voicemail must be checked at least once each workday.*
 - c. *Members with physical mailboxes must check their mailbox within timeframes established by their respective commanders.*
3. *Members must respond to correspondence within reasonable timeframes. Unless otherwise excepted, members must acknowledge, respond to, or forward to an appropriate party or entity, all correspondence received within THREE of the receiving member's workdays.*
4. *Members who are expecting to be unable to respond to correspondence in a timely manner due to an expected absence should set appropriate outgoing away messages or otherwise ensure that a response to correspondence is arranged.*
5. *Members must adhere to county policies regarding the use of email systems.*
6. *Email correspondence which requires retention for more than one year must be printed and retained as a hard copy or saved as a computer file outside of the County email system.*
7. *Members have no reasonable expectation of privacy in any agency correspondence.*

III. INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

A. Standardization and Use of Inter-Office Correspondence

Inter-office correspondence is used to disseminate information to and among department members in those situations not requiring the use of a formal written directive. Inter-office correspondence may also be used to communicate and coordinate efforts with other agencies of the Anne Arundel County Government

The primary method of **written** inter-office correspondence is the County email system.

Members may use the agency inter-office correspondence form attached to an email or may use a standard email itself for correspondence. When using a standard email to address a message through the chain of command, the email body must begin as follows:

To: (ultimate recipient)

Via: Chain of Command

The inter-office correspondence form is a standard, formal mechanism to communicate requests, recommendations, advertisements of training, positions, and assignments, or other official or ceremonial correspondence. The inter-office correspondence form is most appropriate for messages which may be kept on record for a time period exceeding the email system's retention schedule.

The format for the inter-office correspondence form is the standard business memo format, standardized in Appendix A of this policy. When inter-office correspondence form is printed for delivery, the author must initial the inter-office next to his or her typed name and white paper must be used.

Signature requirements for inter-office correspondence sent via email, including email attachments of inter-office correspondence forms, are satisfied by the sender transmitting the message from their county email account. Inter-office correspondence forms sent via email should be attached as an original, saved .PDF file, without printing and scanning.

B. Sending and Receiving Inter-Office Communications

1. Inter-office correspondence directed to superior officers or professional staff should be transmitted via the member's chain of command. Exceptions include:
 - a. Grievances filed in accordance with applicable labor agreements or County law and policy.
 - b. Personal or confidential communication.
 - c. Circumstances where permission for communication outside of the chain of command has been granted for direct communication with the superior.
 - d. *Circumstances where the superior initiates direct communication with the subordinate.*
2. *Members receiving inter-office correspondence for transmission through the chain of command must forward the message with the addition of comments indicating approval/endorsement, disapproval, or acknowledgement of the message.*
3. *Members are prohibited from using personal, electronic, communications systems, including email and social media, to communicate as a county employee.*

IV. TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS

Members are expected to answer telephone calls in a professional manner. Calls from external (outside of Anne Arundel County Police) telephone numbers should be greeted by identifying the police department, the member's name, and by offering assistance.

Example: "Anne Arundel County Police, Officer Smith, how may I assist you?"

Members with voicemail should check and respond to messages each workday.

Outgoing voicemail greetings must be professional and identify the name of the member to the incoming caller.

V. DEPARTMENT LETTERHEAD

Letterhead correspondence **should be** used for **formal**, written communications to individuals outside the department and County government. Letterhead correspondence must be reviewed and approved by an officer of the rank of Lieutenant or above in the affected member's chain of command before dissemination. See Appendix B for the standardized format that must be used. ***Customization of the department letterhead without authorization of the Chief of Police is prohibited.***

VI. SIGNATURE BLOCKS

Members may create and use professional signature blocks for use on email and letterhead correspondence. Signature blocks are not appropriate for use on the standardized inter-office correspondence form.

Signature blocks must be designed in a manner that represents the agency in a professional manner and must conform to rules regarding the use of agency and county insignia, including badges, patches, and other emblems.

Signature blocks should include the following:

- 1. The sender's rank or title.*
- 2. "Anne Arundel County Police Department".*
- 3. The sender's contact information.*
- 4. The sender's assignment, unit, or section.*

Signature blocks may include:

- 1. Professional post-nominals (position, office, honor, education, certification, etc.).*
- 2. Confidentiality statements.*
- 3. Professional quotations, with attributions.*
- 4. An authorized agency badge, patch, emblem, or Anne Arundel County emblem.*

VII. PERSONNEL ORDERS

Personnel Orders provide a formal, written record of transactions such as:

- Transfers or promotions of employees.
- Appointment to positions.
- Disciplinary actions.
- Employee hiring & resignations.
- Departmental training/educational courses.
- Information about changes in benefits or personnel procedures, not warranting issuance of a written directive.
- Any other personnel matters deemed appropriate by the Police Personnel Manager.

These orders *are* issued by the Police Personnel Manager upon authorization from the Chief of Police or *the Chief's designee*. *Distribution of Personnel Orders is based on Police Personnel Section procedures*. A copy of each personnel order directed at a specific member must be placed in the affected member's personnel files.

Personnel Orders *are* consecutively numbered and a record of their issuance and distribution *is* maintained by the Police Personnel Section.

VIII. PROPONENT UNIT: Staff Inspections Section.

IX. CANCELLATION: This directive cancels Index Code 206, dated *10-27-20*.