

Commendations and Awards

804.1 VERSION

Review Date	Effective Date	Approving Authority
06/21/2021	7/9/18	Gabriel Camacho, Interim Chief of Police

804.2 POLICY AND PURPOSE

This policy provides general guidelines for recognizing commendable or meritorious acts of employees of the Harrisonburg Police Department and individuals from the community. It also outlines the wearing of ribbons presented to employees for these commendable acts or other achievements.

804.3 ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

All employees are expected to fully comply with the guidelines and timelines set forth in this policy. Responsibility rests with the supervisor to ensure that any violations of policy are investigated and appropriate training, counseling and/or disciplinary action is initiated. This directive is for internal use only, and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violation of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

804.4 DEFINITIONS

Award/Commendation - a prize or other mark of recognition given in honor of achievement. These words/terms are interchangeable.

804.5 CRITERIA

A commendable act may include, but is not limited to:

- Superior handling of a difficult situation
- Conspicuous bravery or outstanding performance
- Any action or performance that is above and beyond typical duties
- Noteworthy contribution to the welfare of others
- Achieving a higher level of proficiency in a particular job skill or function

In addition to any other criteria, the action taken by the employee was done so willingly, unselfishly, and with full knowledge of the risks involved, and the act was not foolhardy or occasioned by poor judgement on the part of the employee.

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804.6 COMMENDATIONS/AWARDS

Commendations may be bestowed upon employees of the Department and individuals from the community. These include:

- Ultimate Sacrifice
- Awards of Honor and Valor
- Service Awards
- Awards of Merit
- Proficiency Awards

Criteria for each award and the selection, presentation and display of any award are determined by the Chief of Police.

804.6.1 DESCRIPTION OF DEPARTMENTAL COMMENDATIONS

804.6.2 ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

(a) Ultimate Sacrifice (Medal/Certificate)

- (a) The Police Cross is awarded to the family or next of kin of any officer who dies while performing police department duties, as a remembrance of the officer's commitment to duty and the safety of the citizens of Harrisonburg.

804.6.3 AWARDS OF HONOR, VALOR AND MERITORIOUS ACTION

(a) Medal of Honor (Medal/Ribbon/Certificate)

1. The Medal of Honor is awarded to an employee of the Department for an extraordinary act(s) of conspicuous gallantry, heroism and personal courage at the risk of life above and beyond the normal demands of police service, while engaged in police activity involving any singular meritorious action.
2. This is the highest level of commendation the Department can bestow upon an employee.
3. Typically, criteria for this award is reserved for those who have distinguished him/herself by gallantry performed in the presence of dangerous subjects, lethal weapons, and/or criminal acts that result in lives saved and/or successful resolution of the situation.
4. The situation must have been extremely hazardous.

(b) Medal of Valor (Medal/Ribbon/Certificate)

1. The Medal of Valor recognizes a single act of personal courage under conditions where bravery is involved while engaged in police activities. The situation does not need to involve a criminal law violation or the involvement of dangerous or deadly weapons.

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2. While this act is of lesser magnitude than required for the Medal of Honor, it nonetheless was performed under circumstances considered to be more than ordinary hazards of service.
- (c) Meritorious Action (Ribbon/Certificate)
1. The Meritorious Action Ribbon is presented to an employee of the Department for an act of personal courage while engaged in a police activity that demanded immediate action and efforts to prevent injury or death to others or prevent significant property damage. The situation does not need to involve a criminal law violation or the involvement of dangerous or deadly weapons.
 2. This act is of lesser magnitude than required for the Medal of Valor but was performed during a situation deemed more than required of normal duty.

804.6.4 MERIT AWARDS

- (a) Life Saving Award (Medal/Ribbon/Certificate)
1. The Life Saving Award is presented to an employee of the Department who takes direct, immediate and positive action to preserve the life of another person who was in real and imminent danger of dying. Evidence indicates that the action of the member was the life-saving act itself, or the action prolonged a human life to the point the victim was released to the care of emergency medical authorities.
- (b) Purple Heart (Medal/Ribbon/Certificate)
1. The Purple Heart is presented to an employee of the Department who, while serving in an official law enforcement capacity, sustains a severe physical injury or a wound inflicted by a dangerous or deadly weapon, and was not accidental in nature.
- (c) Award of Excellence (Ribbon/Certificate)
1. The Award of Excellence is presented to an employee or group of employees in the Department in recognition of exemplary work, service, leadership or an act or series of acts, completed in a highly professional manner within the scope of normal duty, but performed in such a manner as to merit special recognition. The job performance does not meet any of the aforementioned awards.
- (d) Police Chief's Commendation (Certificate/Ribbon)
1. The Police Chief's Commendation is presented to an employee or group of employees in the Department to recognize work or service that is completed in a highly professional manner within the scope of normal duty and thereby contributes meaningfully to the Department's mission through exemplary action involving a case, project or service as selected by the Chief of Police.
- (e) Community Service Award (Certificate/Ribbon)
1. The Community Service Award is presented to a employee of the Department who contributes in a meaningful way to the betterment of the community in a police-related or non-police role, when on or off duty, and the action is not family related. Examples of such service might include activities such as organizing

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a youth team or league, a significant contribution on a Habitat for Humanity building project, volunteering on a regular basis with a Boys & Girls Club, participating in a disaster relief or community development activity, etc.

804.6.5 SERVICE AWARDS

- (a) Distinguished Service Award (Ribbon/Certificate)
 - 1. The Distinguished Service Award reflects outstanding professional performance that exceeds the requirements of normal duty, involving a single act or project that contributed in significant measure to the success of a major endeavor; or sustained exemplary service to the Department or the community over an extended period of time.
- (b) Meritorious Service Award (Ribbon/Certificate)
 - 1. The Meritorious Service Award is presented to a employee of the Department in recognition of superior work or service that is completed in a highly professional manner sustained over a period of time within the scope of normal responsibilities but does not meet the criteria for a distinguished service award; or is presented to a member who, upon retirement, has completed 20 or more actual years of active and honorable service with the Department, and has not received a departmental service commendation previously.
- (c) Auxiliary Distinguished Service Award(Ribbon/Certificate)
 - 1. The Auxiliary Distinguished Service Award is presented by the Chief of Police to an Auxiliary officer who has served more than 2,000 hours in a five-year period commencing with the first calendar year of sworn service. The officer must have demonstrated outstanding professional performance in a project that has contributed in significant measure to the success of that undertaking, or sustained superior service to the Department over an extended period of time. This award will be presented in five-year increments and a device, such as a star, on the original ribbon will denote multiple awards.
- (d) Auxiliary Meritorious Service Award (Ribbon/Certificate)
 - 1. The Auxiliary Meritorious Service Award is presented to Auxiliary employees who have served more than 1,500 hours over a five-year period. That period would commence on the first calendar year of sworn service. The recipient must have executed his/her duties in such an exemplary manner that it is easily identifiable as having earned the esteem of fellow members of the Auxiliary Police Unit and of the Department. This award will be presented in five-year increments and a device, such as a star, on the original ribbon will note multiple awards.
 - 2. Administrative employees will be eligible for the same awards, except that the Distinguished Service criterion shall be 1,000 hours and the meritorious Service criterion shall be 750 hours, and the recognition ribbons shall be miniatures suitable for wear on suit coats, blazers or similar dress.

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804.6.6 CITIZEN AWARD

(a) Citizen's Service Award (Certificate/Plaque)

1. This award is presented to a citizen of the community in recognition of an act or service that contributes to the mission of the Department or advances its goals and objectives. This can include:
 - (a) A citizen that performs a direct, immediate, or positive act which results in the saving or attempted saving of a human life, directly prevented serious bodily harm to others, or stopped a major crime in progress.
 - (b) Service which was of obvious and significant benefit to the department and community.
2. This award is presented by the Chief of Police.

804.6.7 COMMENDABLE ACTION

This award (certificate) is issued to an employee who, through a single act, has accomplished some task or handled some incident wherein his/her personal performance requires recognition. Although not enough to rise to the level of a Merit or Service award, this award identifies work which improves the ability of the department to fulfill its mission of service to the community. Recognizable acts are not necessarily limited to law enforcement functions. Any department employee may be nominated to receive a Commendable Action certificate.

804.6.8 PROFICIENCY AWARDS

(a) Safe Driving (Ribbon)

1. The Safe Driving Award is presented to employees of the department who operate Department vehicles and who have no chargeable accidents.
2. Awards will be presented to mark 3, 6, 9 and 12 years of accident-free driving. A distinguished Safe Driving Award will mark 15 years of accident-free driving.

(b) Firearms Proficiency (Ribbon)

1. The Department recognizes marksmanship achievements with the service pistol. Separate devices will indicate levels of expertise.
2. The award is based on the annual DCJS approved daylight qualifications for pistol.
3. The awarding and display of this ribbon is contingent on the officer maintaining the proficiency outlined in the criteria. Annual scores will subsequently determine continued wearing or upgrading/downgrading of this proficiency ribbon.
4. Officers will be awarded proficiency ribbons as follows:
 - (a) Sharpshooter – 95.2-99.2% on the qualification.
 - (b) Expert – 100% on the qualification.

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804.7 NOMINATION PROCESS

Any Department employee may initiate a nomination for any Department employee or citizen to be considered for an award or commendation. In addition, nominations can be submitted by citizens for Department employees who perform meritorious or commendable acts and/or other significant contributions to the community.

804.7.1 NOMINATION PROCESS BY A DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE

Employees of the Department should document meritorious or commendable acts of other employees. The nominee documentation should contain:

- (a) Identifying information:
 - 1. For employees of the Department - name, bureau and assignment at the date and time of the meritorious or commendable act
 - 2. For individuals from the community - name, address, telephone number
- (b) A brief account of the meritorious or commendable act with report numbers, (CFS), as appropriate.
- (c) The name and contact information of the employee submitting the documentation.

804.7.2 NOMINATION PROCESS BY A COMMUNITY MEMBER

Documentation of a meritorious or commendable act submitted by a person from the community should be accepted in any form. However, written documentation is preferred. Department employees accepting the nomination should attempt to obtain detailed information regarding the matter, including:

- (a) The name and other identifying information of the employee being nominated.
- (b) A brief account of the meritorious or commendable act with any report numbers, (CFS), witnesses, etc., as appropriate, to include the date and time the act occurred.
- (c) The name, contact information, including name and email address of the person submitting the documentation.

804.7.3 SUBMITTING AND FORWARDING NOMINATIONS

- (a) When nominating employees, nominations, except for the Commendable Action (certificate) Award, are to be submitted by completing a Guardian entry (Award-Nomination) as soon as practical subsequent to the commendable act.
- (b) Commendable Action nominations can be nominated by any employee in the form of a memorandum or letter up through the Chain of Command up to the nominee's Bureau Commander. All other commendations/awards nominations, other than the Chief's Commendation Award, will be placed in Guardian, reviewed and routed through the nominee's chain of command, and given to the Chief of Police for final approval.
- (c) A separate nomination detailing specific actions of each nominee shall be completed for each incident and nominee.
- (d) Submitted nominations are not to be altered at any level in the chain of command, however supervisors and commanders are encouraged to attach any

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additional information, comments, opinions, or recommendations for inclusion with the nomination documents.

- (e) When nominating non-employees, nominations are to be submitted by memo or letter up through the chain of command.
- (f) Upon approval at the Bureau Commander level, awards of Honor and Valor documentation will be forwarded to the assigned Awards Committee chairperson pending the committee's next meeting.

804.8 AWARDS COMMITTEE

- (a) Nominations for Honor and Valor awards will be reviewed by an Awards Committee comprised of (3) employees and (2) citizens (Harrisonburg residents) selected by the Chief of Police. The committee shall meet as needed, but no later than January/February of each year, to consider the previous years' nominations, and to determine whether an award is merited based on information contained in the nominating documents. Recommendations for awards from the committee will then be forwarded to the Chief of Police.
- (b) The Chief of Police or his designee will serve as chairperson of the committee. The chairperson will facilitate the nomination process and clarify or answer questions regarding each nomination. The chairperson is a non-voting position within the committee.
- (c) The committee may request additional information in writing from the nominator, nominee, or witnesses to obtain clarification and additional details not included on the original nomination. If needed, the committee may request the nominator, the nominee and/or witnesses to answer committee questions in person.
- (d) The committee may recommend approval, amendment, or rejection of any nomination submitted.
- (e) Final authority regarding all awards and commendations is within the purview of the Chief of Police.
- (f) See Harrisonburg Police Department Supplemental Manual: 700.2 COMMITTEE MEETINGS outlining committee proceedings.

804.9 PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

- (a) The procedure for presenting awards and commendations will be determined by the Chief of Police.
- (b) Awards for Honor and Valor shall be presented at an annual Awards ceremony.
- (c) Service awards may be presented either at an annual awards ceremony, upon retirement, or as determined by the Chief of Police.
- (d) Merit and proficiency awards may be presented at an annual awards ceremony, regular staff meetings and other occasions appropriate for recognizing the recipients accomplishment(s). The appropriate Bureau Commander will coordinate with the Administrative Assistant for scheduling of the presentation and obtaining appropriate ribbon(s) and certificates.

- (b) Employees who receive recognition from external entities are responsible for providing appropriate documentation to be included in their personnel files.

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- (e) The Commendable Action (Certificate) Award should be presented, when appropriate, upon approval by the respective Bureau Commander.

804.10 DISPLAY/WEARING OF AWARDS

The display and wearing of awards and commendation devices will be in accordance with the Uniform and Civilian Attire policy.

804.11 EXTERNAL AWARDS

A employee of the Department who is nominated for or receives an external award, commendation, certificate or letter from a citizen, group, or organization, shall prepare a memorandum documenting such occurrence (including a copy of the award, if possible) and forward it to the employee's immediate supervisor who will promptly forward the information, via the chain of command to the Chief of Police for information purposes.

Certain external awards and public service-related recognition are represented by Department approved ribbons and devices.

804.12 PERSONAL RECORDS

- (a) Copies of all nominations, awards, commendations and accompanying letters will be included in the employee's individual personnel file. Copies will also be forwarded to the recipient's Bureau Commander for information purposes.
- (b) Employees who receive recognition from external entities are responsible for providing appropriate documentation to be included in their personnel files.