

	HARRISONBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT General Orders		Policy Number: 407
	Chapter: Field Operations		Total Pages: 6
	Section: Report Preparation		Issue Date: 01/21/2026
	Issued By: Rod Pollard, Interim Chief of Police		Effective Date: 07/02/2021
	Replaces: All General Orders Previously Issued Relative to Subject		
VALEAC Standards: ADM.16.01 (b), ADM.25.07 (a), ADM.25.07 (b)			

A. POLICY AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to those employees of the Department who complete investigations and reports as a part of their duties. Employees shall act with promptness and efficiency in the preparation and processing of all reports. Reports shall document sufficient information to refresh the employee's memory and shall provide enough detail for follow-up investigation and successful prosecution. When taking an offense report, the reporting officer will complete a thorough initial investigation. The officer will record all pertinent information accurately in the Records Management System. Incomplete reports, unorganized reports or reports that are delayed without supervisory approval are not acceptable.

B. 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.

C. DEFINITIONS

Incident – One or more offenses committed by the same offender, or group of offenders acting in concert, at the same time and place. “Same time and place” mean that the interval between the offenses

and the distance between the locations where they occurred were insignificant. However, incidents can also be comprised of offenses that by their nature involve continuing criminal activity by the same offender(s) at different times and places, as long as the activity is deemed to constitute a single criminal transaction.

D. REQUIRED REPORTING

Employees shall complete reports using the appropriate department-approved forms and reporting methods, unless otherwise approved by a supervisor. The reporting requirements are not intended to be all-inclusive. An employee may complete a report if he/she deems it necessary or as directed by a supervisor.

a. WHEN REPORTS ARE REQUIRED

An incident report will be completed by an officer when:

- a. It has been determined, through a call for service or initiated activity, that a crime has been or may have been committed, and an arrest would constitute a Group A offense
- b. There is a complaint or observation that, in the best interest of the public and/or the department would warrant a follow-up investigation
- c. There is any stolen/recovered/found property or evidence involved in the officer's handling of a situation
- d. There is a complaint of a missing or runaway juvenile or missing person under suspicious circumstances
- e. Any juvenile that is arrested or otherwise, for committing any offense for which he could be arrested
- f. Any use of force, as defined in the use of force policy
- g. Any case involving a death or serious injury likely to lead to death
- h. Any cases involving suspect or officer injury
- i. Any animal bites
- j. Any firing of firearms except in training at a range
- k. Any case involving an officer-initiated ECO
- l. Any case when directed by a supervisor
- m. Any case not listed that is covered in an existing general order

E. REPORT PREPARATION

All reports shall accurately reflect the identity of the persons involved; all pertinent information seen, heard, or assimilated by any other sense; and any actions taken. Generally, the reporting officer's opinions should not be included in reports unless specifically identified as such. Officers should submit

all reports or supplemental reports before the conclusion of each shift. Detectives are required to submit a case report or supplement to the original report within 24 hours of receiving a new case.

a. REPORT CONTROL

The Records Unit will maintain all records except those listed below:

Exceptions: The following units may maintain separate investigative case files of original report

- a. Internal Affairs Unit, for Internal Investigations
- b. Criminal Intelligence, for information reports and other intelligence information
- c. Major Crimes Unit/Investigative Unit, for sensitive ongoing investigations
- d. Personnel files

Other units and officers may retain copies of reports for analytical or investigative use, as long as the need exists, and they have received approval by the Division Commander.

b. MANDATORY REPORTING ELEMENTS

All reports shall contain all relevant facts and circumstances pertaining to the incident and shall contain the following information, if pertinent:

- a. Elements of all offenses reported
- b. Probable cause for arrests made, or in the event of a lawful detention that does not result in custodial arrest, the reasonable articulable suspicion to support detention
- c. Acknowledgment that a Victim's Rights Information brochure was provided to the crime victim
- d. Conditions and elements which led to an ECO/TDO
- e. Synopsis of injuries sustained by either suspects, witnesses, or involved members

c. CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

When an officer responds to a call for service, or as a result of self-initiated activity becomes aware of any activity where a crime has occurred, the officer shall document the incident regardless of whether a victim desires prosecution.

Activity to be documented in a written report includes:

- a. All custodial arrests.
- b. All felony crimes.
- c. Non-felony criminal incidents involving threats or stalking behavior.
- d. Situations covered by separate policy. These include:
 - 1. Use of Force Policy
 - 2. Domestic or Family Violence Policy
 - 3. Child Abuse Policy

- 4. Adult Abuse Policy
- 5. Hate Crimes Policy
- e. All misdemeanor crimes where the victim desires a report.
- f. Criminal and non-criminal cases initiated by law enforcement employees.
- g. When a summons is issued. (i.e. In-custody, have evidence, possession of marijuana)

Misdemeanor crimes where the victim does not desire a report shall be documented.

d. NON-CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Non-criminal activity to be documented includes:

- a. Any found property or found evidence.
- b. All protective custody and welfare detentions.
- c. Any time a person is reported missing within the City of Harrisonburg, regardless of jurisdiction (see the Missing Persons Policy).
- d. Suspicious incidents that may indicate a potential for crimes against children or that a child's safety is in jeopardy.
- e. Suspicious incidents that may place the public or others at risk.
- f. Any use of force by employees of this department against any person (see the Use of Force Policy).
- g. Any firearm discharge (see the Firearms Policy).
- h. Any traffic accidents above the minimum reporting level (see the Traffic Crash Policy).
- i. Whenever the officer believes the circumstances should be documented or at the direction of a supervisor.

e. MISCELLANEOUS INJURIES

Any injury that is reported to this department shall require a report when:

- a. The injury is a result of drug overdose.
- b. There is an attempted suicide.
- c. The injury is major or serious, and potentially fatal.
- d. The circumstances surrounding the incident are suspicious in nature and it is desirable to document the event.

f. CITY PERSONNEL OR PROPERTY

Incidents involving City personnel or property shall require a report when:

- a. An injury occurs as the result of an act of a City employee or on City property.
- b. There is damage to City property or equipment.

g. NON-REPORTABLE CALLS FOR SERVICE

Upon arriving at a dispatched assignment an officer may determine that a report is unnecessary. A report is not necessary when upon arrival at the scene of a dispatched assignment; the officer cannot locate a victim, witness or circumstances which require police action of any kind. Additionally, a report may not be necessary when the assignment is a police service not related to an alleged or actual police violation/incident. The radio clearance “service performed” or “unfounded,” shall be used by the officer to advise the Emergency Communications Center that a report will not be made.

F. SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervisors shall review reports for content and accuracy. If a correction is necessary, the reviewing supervisor should return the report to the officer for correction(s). It shall be the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that any report returned for correction is processed in a timely manner.

Division and Bureau Commanders will review incident reports routinely for quality control purposes and to keep abreast of activity across the shifts.

a. CHANGES, ALTERATIONS, AND SUPPLEMENTS

Reviewed reports that have not yet been submitted to the Records Unit may be corrected or modified by the reporting officer.

Reports that have been approved by a supervisor and submitted to the Records Unit for filing and distribution shall not be modified or altered except by way of a supplemental report.

Supplementary reports should include information pertinent to any case to include suspect identification, additional evidence obtained, additional property stolen, lost or recovered, additional victim's, witness, or informant information, etc.

G. CLOSURE OF REPORTS

If the reporting officer determines there is no evidence or witnesses and no viable crime scene to assist detectives in identifying the individual(s) responsible for the offense and is not the crime of burglary (breaking and entering), the case may be subject to immediate closure by providing the request of the closure through the report narrative.

a. INFORMATION

Reports assigned to Patrol Bureau and Major Crimes Unit, with the exception of homicide cases, embezzlements, credit card fraud and missing persons shall be “closed” within thirty days from the date reported to the police department, with the exception of a requested extension.

The recovery of stolen property is supplemental to the closure of an offense. It has no bearing on the type of closure.

The supervisor must review and approve closing reports to ensure the report is completed and correct.

H. CONTROL AND SECURITY OF REPORTS

- a. Employees will retain reports and copies with suitable precautions against loss or disclosure.
- b. Officers will shred/destroy any copies not needed.
- c. Employees will not remove, alter, or destroy original reports without supervisory authorization.

Officers should classify reports confidential if the release or dissemination of the information it contains would be likely to jeopardize an investigation (A supervisor may make this designation).