
	Department of Public Safety	
	Standard Operating Guidelines	
	Subject:	Complaints
	Section:	Administration
	Guideline Number:	224
	Effective Date:	January 26, 2009
	Review Date:	October 1, 2024
Signature of Approval:	Charles R. Pruitt Director of Public Safety 	

PURPOSE

To provide guidelines specifying how all complaints and/or concerns regarding department members and/or services will be addressed in a prompt, courteous and positive manner. All Accomack County Department of Public Safety members will respond to the public in a courteous, caring and appropriate manner.

SCOPE

This guideline applies to all members of the Accomack County Department of Public Safety.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Citizen complaint and/or concerns range from individual performance or nonperformance to the overall level of service delivery provided. Management and supervisory personnel will attempt to service and resolve complaints at the lowest appropriate level in the Department.

All complaints, including those from citizens who wish to remain anonymous, will be documented on a Complaint Record Form. The form will be filled out as completely as possible. The completed form will be forwarded to the Battalion Chief on duty where it will be assigned or forwarded to the proper Battalion Chief or Captain for investigation. All completed complaints will be returned to the Administration Office for filing.

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY ADMINISTRATION

Citizen complaints received in the Administration Office will be directed to the on duty Battalion Chief. A Complaint Record Form will be initiated and the complaint forwarded to the appropriate Battalion Chief or Captain for investigation. All complaints alleging criminal misconduct will be assigned to the Director.

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FROM OPERATIONS PERSONNEL

Citizens will be provided a Complaint Record Form or be directed to use the online form. The citizen will be instructed to fill out the form and submit it electronically, via regular mail, or hand delivered to the Administrative Office.

If a complaint pertains to serious misconduct, the Battalion Chief will be notified immediately. The completed Complaint Record Form will be forwarded to the Battalion Chief so it can be recorded and assigned to the appropriate person for investigation.

INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS

Each complaint received by the Department will be investigated thoroughly and promptly. Regardless of severity, each complaint should be regarded as an opportunity to examine our customer service at the point of contact.

If the complainant requests to be contacted the investigating officer should contact the complainant as soon as possible to inform the complainant that their concern is being addressed. Upon contact, the following steps should be performed:

- Inform the complainant of your name and rank and how you relate to the area of concern.
- Restate the complaint as you understand it.
- Ask if your understanding of the complaint is correct.
- Reconcile any discrepancies.
- Ask the complainant if they would like you to contact them when the investigation is complete.
- Thank the complainant for bringing the concerns to your attention.
- Interview the individual/crew that the complaint was lodged against, and document the results.
- Consider allowing union representation.
- Discuss the call/incident that generated the complaint.
- Ask if anything unusual occurred.
- Describe the incident as related by the complainant.
- Discuss any discrepancies.

DISPOSITION

After considering all available information, the investigating officer will make one of the following findings:

- UNFOUNDED The alleged act did not occur.
- EXONERATED The act occurred but was justified, lawful and proper.
- NOT SUSTAINED The investigation produced information insufficient to prove or disprove the allegation.
- SUSTAINED All or part of the act occurred as alleged. (A finding of "SUSTAINED" must be based on the existence of substantial fact in support of reasonable proof.)

DOCUMENTATION

The investigator will provide written documentation of all of his actions. The documentation will include the statements of the individual/crew. In some cases the investigator will need to obtain written statement/s from the individual crew, which will be attached to the Complaint Record Form.

FOLLOW UP

After the investigator has determined the appropriate finding, a meeting should be held with the crew/individual named in the complaint, along with their supervisor. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the finding of any pertinent information. If corrective or disciplinary action is required, it will be outlined at this time.

Many complaints will fall in the “Not Sustained” or “Exonerated” categories. These incidents must be thoroughly examined from a customer service point of view. The discussion of these incidents should be on how future encounters of a similar nature might be handled to avoid creating unhappy customers.

If the complainant requested follow up, the investigator should do so. Thank them for sharing their concerns and advise them that the complaint was investigated and that the proper action was taken.

The completed Complaint Record Form and all attachments will be forwarded to the Director for his review.



Accomack County Department of Public Safety Complaint Record Form

INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____ County _____
Telephone: Day (_____) _____ Evening (_____) _____

INFORMATION ON THE PERSON(S) YOU ARE COMPLAINING ABOUT

Name(s) _____
Date of Incident _____ Time of Incident _____

Location of incident:

Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____ County _____

Describe your complaint here. Be specific. What happened? When? Where? Use black ink.
Use additional sheets if necessary.

To the best of my knowledge, the information in this complaint is true and complete.

Signature _____ Date _____

- Check here if you have included additional sheets/material.
- Check here if you would like to be contacted at the completion of the investigation.