

Report Preparation

343.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Vancouver Police Department is committed to documenting crimes and other police-related events that occur in its jurisdiction. The Vancouver Police Department will also assist other agencies by documenting crimes that have occurred in their jurisdiction if requested.

Writing police reports is a critical component of the responsibilities of employees who are tasked with documenting crime and other police-related events. Police reports provide a thorough, accurate, and timely written account of an employee's observations and actions throughout the course of his or her work. In turn, police reports serve as the foundation for ongoing investigations and prosecutions, help to refresh an officer's memory for court, guide strategic planning and tactical deployment of increasingly scarce resources, are a valuable officer safety tool, facilitate information sharing with others possessing the right and need to know the information documented, and provide victims with written documentation as evidence of their reported crime.

343.1.1 REPORT PREPARATION

Employees should ensure that reports are sufficiently detailed for their purpose and free from errors prior to submission. It is the responsibility of the assigned employee to complete and submit all reports taken during the shift before going off-duty unless permission to hold the report has been approved by a supervisor.

Handwritten reports or forms must be prepared legibly. If the report is not legible, the submitting employee may be required by the reviewing supervisor to promptly make corrections and resubmit the report. Employees who generate reports on computers are subject to all requirements of this policy.

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. Employees shall not suppress, conceal or distort the facts of any reported incident, nor shall any employee make a false report orally or in writing. The reporting employee's opinions shall not be included in reports.

343.1.2 DEFINITIONS

Bias Incident - Offensive derogatory comments directed at a person's sexual orientation, race, or other protected status which causes fear and/or concern in the targeted community during a non-criminal incident.

Police Report - Documentation of a crime or incident made in the Department's Records Management System (RMS)

343.2 REQUIRED REPORTING

Written RMS police reports are required in all of the following situations unless otherwise approved by a supervisor.

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343.2.1 CRIMINAL ACTIVITY REPORTING

When an employee 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 employee is required to document the activity in a police report. The fact that a victim is not desirous of prosecution is not an exception to completing a report. The following are examples of required police report documentation regardless of whether complete information pertaining to each element of the crime is available. If additional information is received at a later time, a supplemental report will be written:

- (a) In every instance where one or more of the following crimes has been reported:
 - i. a felony;
 - ii. a Part I crime (i.e., criminal homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft (to include misdemeanor theft, motor vehicle theft and arson);
 - iii. an assault, to include assault by mutual combat.
- (b) In every instance where a Hate Crime or a Crime with Bias Elements is reported.
- (c) In every case where any force is used against any person by police personnel.
- (d) All incidents involving domestic violence.
- (e) All arrests.

343.2.2 NON-CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Incidents that require documentation on the appropriate approved report include:

- (a) Any time an officer points a firearm at any person.
- (b) Any use of force against any person by a member of this Department.
- (c) Any firearm discharge.
- (d) Any time a person is reported missing, regardless of jurisdiction.
- (e) Any found property or evidence.
- (f) Any dispatched traffic collisions meeting the minimum reporting monetary level.
- (g) Any drug or alcohol related accident or arrest.
- (h) Suspicious incidents that may indicate a potential for crimes against children or that a child's safety is in jeopardy.
- (i) All protective custody or emergent detentions.
- (j) Suspicious incidents that may place the public or others at risk.
- (k) Whenever the employee believes the circumstances should be documented or at the direction of a supervisor.
- (l) Verbal domestic disturbances.
- (m) Every instance where a Bias Incident is reported.
- (n) Any time an Officer points a taser at another person, outside of a training environment

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In cases where a criminal offense did not occur, but a police report is completed to document the incident, employees should classify the report consistent with the initial allegation or call for service. Then a clearance code of "unfounded" or other appropriate title should be used. The offense classification of Information, or INFO.RPT, should be used sparingly, and typically reserved for incidents where no crime was ever alleged to have occurred.

343.2.3 DEATH CASES

Death investigations require specific investigation methods depending on circumstances. An officer handling a death investigation should notify and apprise a supervisor of the circumstances surrounding the incident and a determination will be made on how to proceed.

343.2.4 INJURY OR DAMAGE BY CITY PERSONNEL

A police report shall be taken if an injury occurs that is a result of an act of a City employee. Additionally, a police report shall be taken when any damage to City property or City equipment is a result of an act of a City employee.

343.2.5 MISCELLANEOUS INJURIES

Any injury that is reported to this Department shall require a police report when a supervisor deems it necessary and directs an employee to document the incident.

343.3 GENERAL POLICY OF EXPEDITIOUS REPORTING

In general, all officers and supervisors shall act with promptness and efficiency in the preparation and processing of all reports. An incomplete report, unorganized reports or reports delayed without supervisory approval are not acceptable. Reports shall be processed according to established priorities or according to a special need under exceptional circumstances.

343.4 REPORT CORRECTIONS

Supervisors shall review reports for content and accuracy. If a correction is necessary, the reviewing supervisor should return the report to the reporting employee for correction as soon as practical. It shall be the responsibility of the originating officer to ensure that any report returned for correction is processed by the end of their next scheduled work shift for approval by a supervisor.

343.5 REPORT CHANGES OR ALTERATIONS

Reports that have been approved by a supervisor and submitted to the Records Division for filing and distribution shall not have its core narrative or an individual's information modified or altered except by way of a supplemental report.

Report coding information may be amended by Records Division staff or the Case Management Sergeant to reflect state and national data filing requirements.

Reviewed reports that have not yet been approved by a supervisor may be corrected or modified by the report writer.

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343.6 PRIVATIZING SENSITIVE AND CONFIDENTIAL CASES

Upon approval from a supervisor, police reports can be made private, and not accessible by users of the VPD Records Management System (RMS). Employees should only privatize cases where the release of critical or sensitive information could jeopardize the investigation or the safety of an individual.

Supervisors must balance the decision to privatize cases and critical information against maintaining transparency within the department RMS.

In utilizing the privatization features, it is imperative to include the appropriate Supervisors/ Commanding Officers, Records Division Staff, and members of the Prosecutor's Office as part of the group who can view the case. Each approving supervisor is responsible to work with the Case Management Sergeant or Records Manager to set up the appropriate routing and notifications to ensure cases are not rendered inaccessible by those who need to view them as part of their duties.

343.6.1 PROCEDURE

- A. Definitions
 - 1. Private - Cases that will only display a case number and a contact person to request information about the case.
 - 2. Private Invisible - Cases that do not appear at all when searched. The Vancouver Police Department will not be utilizing this level of privatization due to public records liability.
- B. It is the responsibility of supervisors to monitor and approve their unit's privatization usages.
- C. The following are a list of cases that are acceptable to privatize:
 - 1. Sex Assault
 - 2. Child Abuse
 - 3. Gang Cases
 - 4. Incidents involving Police Employees
 - 5. Drug Trafficking Organization Cases
 - 6. Homicide Investigations
 - 7. Officer Involved Shootings involving the Vancouver Police Department
- D. Just because a case may be privatized does not automatically mean that it should be privatized. Supervisors should strive to privatize only cases containing information that is critical or sensitive in nature, and when the release of that information could jeopardize the investigation or the safety of an individual. If cases have minimal confidential or sensitive information, the officer should consider privatizing only the critical information. Privatizing the entire case may not be necessary.
- E. The privatization status of a case does not release the Vancouver Police Department from its due diligence to comply with the Public Records Act.

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- F. At the first opportunity to un-privatize a case (i.e., adjudication of a case, referral of a case for prosecution, or the statute of limitation is up), the investigating officer or supervisor shall notify the Case Management supervisor or Records Division manager to un-privatize the case.
- G. Copies of privatized reports shall be released only for law enforcement purposes upon authorization of the investigator assigned to the case or of a supervisory sergeant in the investigative unit concerned.
- H. Cases which are privatized will be reviewed at least quarterly by the Records Manager to determine if there is a persistent need for the privatized portion of the case to remain private. Such reviews should be documented as part of the case.

343.7 CASE MANAGEMENT

Case management is a system to manage investigative resources, increase investigative effectiveness, and improve case solvability. The process involves regulating case flow, monitoring investigative activities, and assessment of individual performance.

Investigative resources should be applied to those cases and investigations that can most benefit from expenditure of the resources. Department supervisors will screen and assign cases, establish deadlines for reporting investigative progress, and manage investigator caseloads.

Department resources should be dedicated to investigating serious crime, incidents of community importance, and cases that are likely to be solved and cleared by arrest.

343.7.1 ASSIGNMENT OF CASES - PATROL

- A. Patrol officers and police service technicians will conduct follow-up investigations:
 - 1. On cases they initiate from assigned calls, as circumstances and workload dictate.
 - 2. On other cases, as assigned by a supervisor.
- B. The approving supervisor will review each case and determine whether further follow-up investigation by patrol officers is justified. Cases returned to the initiating officer or another assigned officer for further follow-up investigation remain in open status, until completed.
- C. Cases which do not merit follow-up investigation shall be suspended.
- D. Cases found to be linked together by crime analysis shall be routed to a supervisor.
- E. In the event that new investigative information is developed on a previously suspended case, the officer who discovered the new information is responsible for bringing it to the attention of a supervisor for evaluation and disposition.

343.7.2 ASSIGNMENT OF CASES - INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

Investigations Division case assignments will be made by the unit supervisor. The unit supervisor will review each case that is referred to their unit to determine whether further follow-up investigation by detective or patrol officers is justified. Cases returned to the initiating officer or assigned to a detective for further follow-up investigation will remain in open status until completed.

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Each unit supervisor is responsible for tracking investigator assignments, and ensuring that cases are closed in an appropriate manner.

343.7.3 DISPOSITIONS - GENERAL

The Department complies with National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) guidelines in reporting the incidence and disposition of cases. There are two general types of case dispositions: Case Clearances and Case Suspensions. Case clearances involve those cases cleared by arrest, cleared exceptional, and cleared unfounded. Case suspensions involve those cases closed by suspension

- A. **Cleared by Arrest:** An offense is cleared by arrest or solved for crime reporting purposes when at least one person is arrested, charged with the commission of the offense, and presented to the prosecuting authorities for prosecution.
- B. **Cleared Exceptional:** An offense is cleared exceptional when the investigation establishes the identity of the person responsible for the commission of the crime, but that person is not arrested, charged or prosecuted for that offense. In order to qualify for an exceptional clearance, the following questions must be answered "Yes":
 - 1. Has the investigation definitely established the identity of the offender?
 - 2. Is there enough information to support an arrest, charge and turn the suspect over to the court for prosecution?
 - 3. Are there circumstances beyond police control that prevent the prosecuting authority from prosecuting the offender?
- C. **Clear Unfounded:** A case may be cleared unfounded if the investigation reveals that the reported offense did not occur, or the investigation fails to develop sufficient elements to support the allegation that a crime has been committed.
- D. **Case Suspensions:** Cases are suspended when investigative leads have been exhausted and there remains no reasonable means by which to clear the case.

343.8 ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTING

The purpose of this section is to provide for systematic delivery of management information to the Chief of Police and each Division Commander. These Reports will consist of the following:

- A. **Daily Report:** CRESA routinely transmits a daily activity log.
- B. **Annual Report:** Selected monthly statistics and unit activity reports will be compiled into an annual, yearend report to be submitted to the Chief of Police. Such information will be made available to the public upon request.
- C. **Periodic Reports:** Reports on a variety of subjects are requested from employees on an individual basis throughout the year. The topics, responsible parties, and timeline for completion will be designated by the supervisor making the request.