



DEPARTMENT NOTICE

23-102

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Report Writing Responsibilities Supervisors, Officers & Police Service Aides (Update to DN 20-134)

The purpose of this notice is to clarify member responsibility as it relates to the preparation and approval of police reports. Preparing factual and thorough incident reports is one of the most important duties of a police officer and PSA. The San Francisco Police Department expects professional incident reports from its members, sworn and non-sworn.

Thorough investigation(s) memorialized in well-prepared incident reports are essential for follow-up investigations and successful prosecution. Officers and PSAs are responsible for preparing incident reports that are complete and accurate when memorializing an incident. A properly completed incident report creates the foundation for any further legal action.

Supervisors are responsible for reviewing incident reports to ensure that all pertinent information is contained in the report. Prior to approving any incident report, supervisors shall review each report thoroughly and take the time to provide training (constructive criticism) whenever possible.

The following is a list of common errors which could undermine officer credibility and potential prosecution:

- Elements of crime not articulated to support charges.
- Reasonable suspicion or probable cause not articulated in narrative.
- Canvassing for witnesses not completed/noted.
- Canvassing for evidence (video) not completed/noted.
- Not including activation/deactivation of BWC.
- Omission of witness contact (follow-up) information.
- All charges not listed.
- Evidence missing/not listed and/or failing to articulate chain of custody for evidence.
- Narrative written in passive voice *i.e.* “*was arrested by me*” as opposed to “*I arrested.*”
- Narrative written in present tense instead of past tense *i.e.* “*Jones tells me that the suspect punches her and flees*” as opposed to “*Jones TOLD me that the suspect had PUNCHED her and then FLED.*”
- Failing to document supervisory oversight or approval of charges.
- Failing to document reason(s) for not adhering to department policy.
- Failing to Mirandize suspects and obtain statements unless directed otherwise in accordance with department policy.
- Failing to use the proper title of the incident or crime classification.
- Failing to obtain and include written statements from all involved officers.

- Failing to ensure all pertinent and available evidence is scanned and digitally attached to the incident report in Crime Data Warehouse, while also ensuring that no sexually explicit material is included.
- Failing to articulate search and seizure consistent with department policy and current laws.
- Failing to spell check and grammar check report.
- Failing to articulate use of force consistent with department policy and current laws.
- Failing to properly identify subjects and document how the identification was made.
- Failing to properly document language spoken by, and interpretation services provided for LEP individuals.

The Use of Force Report Writing Reference can be found in the VRP folder on the desktop under FTFO Materials/Use of Force Checklist.

The Elements of a Narrative Outline card is attached to this notice for your reference.

Members shall adhere to DGO 2.01, *General Rules of Conduct- Written Reports*, which states, “While on duty, members shall make all required written reports of crimes or incidents requiring police attention.”

Supervisors shall adhere to DGO 1.04 (A)(2)(a), *Duties of Sergeants*, which states, “Sergeants shall review their subordinates’ arrests and reports for appropriateness and completeness.”

Lieutenants shall adhere to DGO 1.05 (I)(C) (10), *Duties of Station Personnel*, which states Lieutenants shall, “Review, approve and initial all reports.”

The Airport Bureau personnel are responsible for scanning the evidence and digitally attaching it to the RMS system.

Related Policies:

DGO 5.01, Use of Force and Proper Control of a Person

DGO 5.03, Investigative Detention

DGO 5.06, Citation Release

DGO 6.09, Domestic Violence

DGO 10.11 Body Worn Cameras

DM 26 Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Stalking Manual

WILLIAM SCOTT

Chief of Police

Per DN 20-150, all sworn & non-sworn members shall electronically acknowledge this Department document in PowerDMS. Members whose duties are relevant to this document shall be held responsible for compliance. Any questions regarding this policy should be sent to sfpd.writtendirectives@sfgov.org who will provide additional information.

ELEMENTS OF A NARRATIVE

- I. Officer Arrived at Incident
 - a. Means of dispatch: o.v., radio call, follow-up
 - b. Personnel at the scene
 - c. Type of assignment
 1. Type of call: 459 I/P, Code 33, etc.
 2. Main unit, back-up, canine, etc...
 - d. Type of response: Uniform/Non-uniform, marked vehicle, red lights/siren, etc.
- II. Arrival at Scene
 - a. What observations were made by officer
 - b. Who was present
 - c. What action officer took upon arrival
- III. Information Provided by persons at scene
 - a. Victims and Witnesses' personal data information: verbal statements made, observations by officers other than first responder.
 - b. Written statements: book into evidence, attach copy to report.
 - c. Appearance and demeanor of each witness
 - d. Relationships between suspect and victim, witness
- IV. Elements of each crime listed and described.
- V. Actions taken at crime scene.
 - a. Medical treatment, if provided. By whom: Paramedics/SFFD, name and unit ID.
 - b. Notifications: C.S.I., Special Units, Inspectors. Why notified.
 - c. Evidence collected at scene: Description of item(s), from where, by whom.
 - d. Photographs taken: By whom, disposition of photos.
- VI. Action with Suspect
 - a. Identification of suspect: physical details and exact quotes.
 - b. Action taken regarding suspect: GOA, detained, cited, arrested.
 - c. Statements from suspect, whether or not after Miranda. (who, what, when, where).
 - d. Interview of suspect: MIRANDA given? Consent obtained? (taped, written, signed notes)
 - e. Significant evidence taken from suspect, e.g., clothing, narcotics, weapons, stolen/recovered property. Seized from what place or part of body. By whom. Booked by whom.

- VII. Vehicles Seized
 - a. Who seized vehicle. Reason (if not obvious)
 - b. Disposition of vehicle. (towed, to where)
 - c. Relevant holds: S.T.O.P., Investigations Unit, C.S.I. - prints, lab testing.
 - d. Conditions of vehicle: broken window, ripped out dash, punched ignition, switched plates, etc.
- VIII. Property Booked
 - a. Description of Property. (Number of items)
 - b. Who seized property. Location of seizure.
 - c. Who marked and booked property. How marked.
 - d. Any testing ordered. Describe.
- IX. Follow-up Information Provided
 - a. What information was given. (SFPD 105 form, victim of crime form, oral information, etc.)
 - b. By whom.
 - c. To whom.
- X. Notifications made: Robbery, C.S.I., D.V.R.U., Night Investigations, etc.
 - a. Whom you spoke with. (name and star)
 - b. Fax report to proper Division/Unit.
- XI. Follow-up on Leads
 - a. Did officer follow-up on alibi or information provided by victim or suspect.
 - b. What was done, by whom and outcome of investigation.
- XII. Over all/ Miscellaneous
 - a. Is every person or scene identified and interviewed?
 - b. If not, why?
 - c. If witness is transient or homeless, how will individual be located or contacted?
 - d. If witness leaves the area temporarily or permanently, obtain dates of return. Are non-local addresses provided?