

## **DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER 04-07**

OFFICE of the CHIEF OF POLICE  
REPLACES: General Order 99-75  
SOP 501.53.00

DATE: March 31, 2004

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### **MISSING PERSONS**

#### **I. PURPOSE.**

To establish departmental guidelines governing reporting and investigative procedures in regard to missing adult persons.

#### **II. DEFINITIONS.**

At Risk Persons – Any person who is physically or mentally challenged and who poses a risk to themselves or others, e.g. mental disorders, suicidal, Alzheimer’s disease, or diabetics.

Critical Missing - A missing person who may have been the victim of foul play or suffers from a physical or mental disability.

Missing Person - A person who is absent from the location(s) where they may be expected to be found.

#### **III. REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION CRITERIA.**

The specific criteria surrounding the initial report of an adult missing person shall dictate the reporting and investigative procedure to be followed. Based on available information at the time initial contact is made, officers shall select one of two basic options:

##### **A. Immediate Departmental Action**

Officers shall initiate a report and immediate investigative action when any of the following criteria exists:

1. Disability – An adult person who is missing and suffers from proven physical or mental disability (to include senility), thereby subjecting himself/herself, or others, to personal and immediate danger.
2. Endangerment – An adult person who is missing and is in the company of another person under circumstances which would lead a reasonable person to believe that his/her physical safety is in danger.
3. Involuntary – An adult person who is missing under circumstances which indicate that the disappearance is the result of foul play (abduction, kidnapping).

#### B. Twenty-four Hour Waiting Period

In cases where the circumstances surrounding a disappearance do not meet the above criteria, the responding officer will complete a Memorandum Report which will be held for a twenty-four period. At the end of this time, the complainant shall be re-contacted to determine if the adult has returned. If the missing adult has not returned within the twenty-four hours, or if at any time during the waiting period additional information of a suspicious nature is received, a formal Incident Report shall be completed and an immediate investigation launched into the disappearance.

### IV. REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES.

Sworn members of this command shall respond, document, and investigate (as necessary) those reports of adult missing persons tendered to this department. The reporting and investigative process connected with such cases will be conducted in accordance with the following operational guidelines:

#### A. Descriptive Information

The initial reporting officer shall obtain as much descriptive information in regard to the missing person as possible. This shall include, physical description, clothing description, vehicle description (if any), friends and/or potential traveling companions, favorite haunts, and possible destinations.

In addition, the reporting officer will obtain a recent photograph of the missing person (if one is available) and attach same to the police report.

## B. Documentation Procedures

Contingent upon the circumstances, missing persons shall be documented by either an Incident Report or Memorandum Report. However, the latter may result in the initiation of an Incident Report if the missing subject covered by the report does not return home with the allotted time frame.

As with all reports, same shall be approved by the on-duty supervisor and submitted to the Administrative Division for processing. A copy of each missing persons report shall be systematically forwarded to the Criminal Investigations Division.

## C. Dissemination of Information

Subsequent to each missing persons complaint, descriptive information shall (except where circumstances dictate otherwise) be broadcast to all on-duty patrol units via radio. In specific cases this information may also be broadcast to surrounding law enforcement agencies and disseminated to the news media.

Information in regard to the missing person will be disseminated at roll calls and criminal exchange meetings, and should a patrol information notice be prepared (particularly one which contains a photograph of the missing person), the notice shall be disseminated as widely as possible.

Should a missing persons case be deemed involuntarily or a result of foul play, Federal investigative agencies such as the FBI will be notified as necessary.

Utilizing information obtained from the original Incident Report, records personnel shall enter all pertinent data in regard to missing persons into the REJIS data system. Once the transaction has been accepted, the information will then be automatically relayed to the MULES AND NCIC computer networks

## D. Follow-up Contact

The officer and/or detective responsible to conduct a follow-up investigation into a missing persons case shall re-contact the reporting party to obtain any supplemental information which may be available. Additional contacts will then be made on a periodic basis until the case has been resolved.

## E. Investigation and Search

Searches for missing persons will be conducted by field personnel as warranted (e.g. Alzheimer's victim, etc.), utilizing all available personnel and necessary outside resources. Such searches will be initiated following approval of the command staff, which shall direct and coordinate search related activities. Otherwise, missing person reports shall be forwarded to the Criminal Investigation Division for follow-up investigative purposes.

As part of this process, CID personnel will be responsible to:

1. Ensure that an Incident Report has been prepared and entered into REJIS.
2. Re-contact the reporting party to obtain any additional information. This may include personal descriptor information, jewelry information, and medical data (to include physicians, dentists, and opticians). It will be the responsibility of the reporting party to provide this department with the most complete information possible.
3. The detective assigned to the case shall review the data and complete a supplemental report. Additional computer entries will then be submitted to NCIC in accordance to established NCIC procedures.
4. Information will be disseminated as appropriate, and the detective assigned to the case shall conduct a follow-up investigation.

## F. Recovery/Return of Missing Subject

In the event a missing person returns home or is located, the reporting/investigating officer shall document the event by either a Supplemental Report or a notation on the original Memorandum Report. All REJIS, MULES, and/or NCIC computer entries shall be cancelled, and information concerning the recovery/return will be disseminated at roll call and elsewhere.

Should a recovered missing adult suffer from obvious exposure, mistreatment, physical abuse, or other visible injury, the individual should be conveyed to a hospital for examination and treatment.

The family of the missing individual shall be apprised of the locate.

Recovered adults who have been missing under questionable circumstances, or who have been missing over twenty-four (24) hours, (even those of diminished mental capacity) should be questioned as to their whereabouts and companions during the time they were gone from their residence. This questioning should be conducted with extreme care and sensitivity.

V. MAJOR DISASTERS.

Should a missing persons complaint be received in the immediate aftermath of a major disaster, an assessment shall be made to determine if the manpower is readily available to investigate the complaint. In the event department personnel are available to pursue the case, the investigative procedures outlined above shall be followed.

Should manpower be totally committed to other disaster-related tasks, the communications unit will compile a list of persons known, or believed, to be missing. Under such circumstances, it shall be the responsibility of the reporting party to provide a written description of the missing individual(s) and any other pertinent information.

Communications will maintain and update this list, to include checking same against casualty rosters, until such time as the situation warrants the release of sworn personnel to initiate a proper investigation. However, in those instances where a missing person is confirmed as a casualty, dispatch personnel shall contact the complainant by telephone (if possible) and apprise them of their family member's and/or friend's status.

BY ORDER OF:

THOMAS J. BYRNE  
Chief of Police

TJB:dld

CALEA Reference: 41.2.6