



Somerville Police Department 		TYPE: GENERAL ORDER		POLICY NUMBER: 126	
		Subject: Incident Reporting Guidelines			
		Issuing Authority: Charles Femino Chief of Police		Signature:  Effective Date: December 7, 2020	
		Number of Pages: Page 1 of 13			
Accreditation Standards (6th Edition)		<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revised <input type="checkbox"/> Amended			
Revision & Reissued Dates:	02/10/2015	11/22/2019			

Purpose

This policy has been designed to establish the guidelines to be used by the appropriate department personnel in determining when to complete reports and the procedures for how reports will be recorded, reviewed, filed, and disseminated.

The department's Incident Reporting System is designed to accomplish a number of objectives that go far beyond simply documenting an incident, event, activity, or investigation. The report formats have been designed to assist officers during the course of their investigations, and to serve as a reminder as to the type of information that should be obtained and incorporated into a report. The report formats have also been designed to facilitate the department in the proper dissemination of information between the different operational components of the department.

Policy

It is the responsibility of each and every officer to be thoroughly familiar with the procedures established within this directive as it relates to the initiation, completion, submission, review and dissemination of the various reports that will be used by this department. It is the policy of this department that:

- A. Reports will be completed on those incidents, events, activities, and investigations as directed by this set of guidelines.
- B. Reports will not be released to the press or the public by any individual of the department, unless the report has been approved for release after having been reviewed by the Public Information Officer or his/her designee, in accordance with established law and departmental procedures. Reports requested by the District Attorney's Office or other local, state or federal law enforcement agencies shall be provided unless a specific exception is placed on the record by a Command level (lieutenant or above) officer of this department.

- C. It is imperative that officers strive to obtain pertinent information from all parties involved in an incident to ensure proper documentation and a complete, impartial accounting of what transpired.

Definitions

Incident: For purposes of this set of guidelines, an incident is defined as any event that requires law enforcement action, documentation, or dispatching of agency personnel in response to citizens' request for law enforcement services or at the request of department personnel. This includes any incident, whether criminal or non-criminal, which involves a police response to the scene, an investigation, or the preparation of an oral or written report.

CAD - Computer Aided Dispatch Numbering System: The CAD system is the starting point for police generated calls for service that are tracked through a sequential numbering system. In certain instances, the computer generated CAD number will serve as the only record for a call for service that does not lead to a report.

NIBRS - National Incident Based Reporting System: The NIBRS system is an incident-based reporting system for crimes known to police. For each crime incident coming to the attention of law enforcement, a variety of data are collected about the incident. These data include the nature and types of specific offenses in the incident, characteristics of the victim(s) and offender(s), types and value of property stolen and recovered, and characteristics of persons arrested in connection with a crime incident.

Supplemental Report: The Supplemental Report serves as the follow-up report to any situation where an officer takes action with regard to an incident which has been previously documented on an Incident Report form.

QED: A web based law enforcement application used for the capturing, managing, and analyzing of information about crimes and other non-crime incidents.

MNI - Master Names Index: The MNI is used to provide the department with a concise and accurate listing of everyone with whom department personnel have come into contact with. The master names system assigns a unique number to each person or business entered into the QED system.

ShotSpotter: Gun fire location, alert and analysis system intended to enhance the Somerville Police Department's ability to respond effectively to and investigate violent crime involving gunfire. The SST system uses audio sensors placed strategically throughout the city to help identify the location of gunshots. SST incidents may be replayed to hear the actual audio component of the incident, aid in the collection of evidence at crime scenes, and aid in the investigation and prosecution of crimes.

Procedure

1. Incident Numbering System

The department maintains a computer-generated (CAD) incident numbering system. A unique incident number is generated and assigned to document calls for service, officer initiated activity, investigations, directed enforcement activity, administrative functions, and other police activities. The incident number is the foundation for all police record keeping activity. The incident number is linked to arrests, citations, court property, evidence, accidents, and other records management functions within the records management system.

2. Assigning CAD Numbers

The initiation of a CAD number is a function of the appropriate assigned personnel. The appropriate assigned personnel will create a CAD number in response to police calls for service, police operational activities (e.g., directed patrol activity, motor vehicle stops, and other officer initiated activities), or administrative activities. CAD numbers shall be created for the following types of situations:

A. Citizen initiated reports or calls for service, to include the following:

- 1.** Citizen reports of crimes.
- 2.** Citizen request for service or assistance.
- 3.** Calls for service whenever a public safety employee is dispatched or assigned.

B. Department initiated activities:

- 1.** Criminal and non-criminal cases that are initiated by members of the department.
- 2.** Incidents involving arrests, citations, summons, and other law enforcement activities.
- 3.** Situations when members of the department want to identify activity they may be engaged in, which will also capture the time of such engagement and any information relative to that activity or situation.
- 4.** Process service (i.e., arrest warrants, restraining orders, execution of involuntary hospitalization orders, other court orders, etc.)
- 5.** Notifications or well-being checks.
- 6.** Prisoner transports and other forms of conveyances.
- 7.** Directed enforcement activities (both assigned and officer initiated.)
- 8.** Equipment failures or damage.
- 9.** Citizen and business contacts; community meetings.

- C. Any other incident or situation where documentation is prudent or directed by a supervisor.

3. Information Contained in a CAD Entry

Whenever a CAD entry is created, it is critical for the individual initiating the CAD entry to take detailed information and properly classify the information. The following information, at a minimum, should be captured as part of the CAD entry.

- A. All CAD entries will be classified as to the type of call for service or police related activity. If at any point, it has been determined the nature of the call has changed, it is the responsibility of the E 911 operator to make the appropriate changes to the CAD entry.
- B. All CAD entries will capture the exact location of the call for service or police related activity. This is to ensure keying to the nearest geo-codable address.
- C. The police personnel who are assigned to respond to the incident.
- D. The time when the CAD entry was first created, the time when police personnel are assigned or engaged in the activity, the time when police personnel arrive at the location, and the time when police personnel clear from the incident.
- E. All CAD entries will include the information that is captured by the call-taker and the information that was provided to police personnel by the dispatcher.
- F. All CAD entries will capture the information that is conveyed via police radio transmissions and/or telephone communications.
- G. All CAD entries will capture how the situation was resolved or closed out. This should include the information that police officers are communicating back to the E 911 personnel and, for more detailed information, those entries which are made by the officers in the CAD notes.
- H. Any information pertaining to property that may be taken into police custody, including stolen/found/recovered property, and evidence will be documented in the report and/or associated state or department forms.
- I. Information pertaining to the identity of individuals or vehicles related to the incident.
- J. CAD entries related to sick person calls shall include the individuals name, date of birth, sex and address whenever possible.
- K. Any and all additional information that is required by policy or order

4. Incidents Requiring Additional Reports

Many police responses require more than just a CAD entry due to the nature of the incident, or because a report is required by statute or departmental policy. In some situations, preparing an additional report is simply a good and sound practice, often relying upon the judgment of a police officer and/or his/her supervisor. Nothing in this Policy prohibits officers or superior officers from completing supplemental reports when, in the officer's or superior officer's judgment, they believe they should, despite that the supplemental report might not be required by this Policy.

A. Reports required by statute include (but are not limited to):

- 1. Preliminary or Supplemental NIBRS Reports** documenting reported criminal activity or non-warrant arrest submitted in QED as required by state and federal reporting guidelines; see Section 5 for requirements on content.
- 2. Motor Vehicle Crash Reports** documenting traffic incidents, as required by RMV reporting guidelines. It should be noted, if motor vehicle operation can be attributed to effecting or influencing the operation of another, resulting in an injury or crash, a crash report shall be required even if physical contact between the two involved parties did not occur (i.e. a motor vehicle taking a right turn forcing a cyclist travelling on the right side to take evasive action resulting in the cyclist crashing).
- 3. Incident-specific statutorily required reports, including but not limited to:**
 - a. Domestic Violence**
 - b. Identity Theft**
 - c. Child Abuse and Neglect**
 - d. Elder Abuse and Neglect**
 - e. Stolen/Recovered Motor Vehicles/Plates**
 - f. Involuntary Hospitalization (Section 12).**
 - g. Missing Persons Report**

B. Mandatory reports required by the department include (but are not limited to):

- 1. Somerville Death Investigation reports** documenting an officer's response to any death scene, filed in QED. See Section 5 for guidelines on content.
- 2. Incident-specific department required reports, including but not limited to:**

- a. **Use of force: When an officer files a Use of Force Report in accordance with Policy 124 – Use of Force**
 1. The use of force selected or indicated in the Use of Force Report must be articulated in detail in the NIBRIS report.
 2. All officers on scene must file a report documenting their actions and observations. The primary officer will file the base NIBRIS report and all other officers will file a supplemental report.
 - b. Use of Narcan (Naloxone)
3. Incident where SPD officers working outside the city in official capacity and they take someone into custody or assist other officers take someone into custody.
 - a. All officers involved or witness to an incident must file a report documenting their actions and observations. The primary officer will file the base NIBRIS report and all other officers will file a supplemental report.
 1. File a use of force, when appropriate (see [Policy 124 – Use of Force](#)). The use of force selected or indicated in the Use of Force Report must be articulated in detail in the NIBRIS report.
 4. **Incident involving disorderly, disturbing the peace, or resisting arrest.**
 - a. All officers on scene must file a report documenting their actions and observations. The primary officer will file the base NIBRIS report and all other officers will file a supplemental report.
 5. **Incident involving assault and battery on a police officer.**
 - a. All officers on scene must file a report documenting their actions and observations. The primary officer will file the base NIBRIS report and all other officers will file a supplemental report.
 6. **Whenever an individual is injured as a result of police interaction, all officers on scene will file a report documenting their actions and observations.**
 - a. All officers involved or who are a witness to the incident must file a report documenting their actions and observations. The primary officer will file the base NIBRIS report and all other officers will file a supplemental report.
 7. Officers dispatched to either a “shots fired” or “ShotSpotter” alert call must file a detailed report. The primary officer will file the base NIBRIS report. All other officers who responded will file a supplemental report based on their observations, actions they took to include areas searched and witnesses interviewed.

8. Protective Custody for Alcohol Consumption, 111B (see [Policy 301 Protective Custody.](#))

- a. A detailed report of the reason necessary to take an individual into protective custody.
- b. The location of the PC must be notated, e.g. residence, facility, police
- c. If the person is released to another location other than the Department, notate the name of the person taking custody or the name of the institution.

9. Protective Custody for Drugs, 111E

- a. A detailed report of the reason necessary to take an individual into protective custody.
- b. Notate the name of the institution where the person was PC.

10. Incident involving taking a mentally ill person into custody, MGL Chapter 123, Section 12 petition, otherwise known as “Pink Paper”. [See Policy 100 Responding to the Mentally Ill.](#)

- a. A detailed report documenting the officer’s response to any section 12 petition, including police initiated section 12.

C. Additional reports required by the department include (but are not limited to):

1. Somerville Police Investigation reports, filed in QED. A Somerville Police Investigation report may be required by Policy or Order (e.g., when responding to an overdose) or recommended by department practice. See Section 5 for guidelines on content.
2. Field Interview/Observation Reports, documenting observations of, or encounters with, suspicious individuals or known offenders, filed in QED Agency Documents. See Section 5 for guidelines on content.
3. Property/Evidence forms, filed any time an officer takes possession of stolen, found, recovered, contraband, or evidentiary property.

D. Some guidelines for when to file a non-statutory report are as follows:

1. When documenting reported criminal activity to be forwarded to another agency.

2. When documenting an incident that requires future action by the officer, department or other agency (e.g., DCF).
3. When documenting an encounter or interaction between citizens that the officer believes will result in subsequent interactions with the department.
4. When documenting suspicious activity or criminal intelligence that may resolve ongoing crime patterns or to benefit future investigations.
5. When the officer believes that the encounter or officer actions taken may result in future complaints or legal action against the officer, department or City.
6. When in doubt about filing an additional report, the officer should always consult with his/her direct supervisor.

5. Information Required in NIBRS Reports

All NIBRS reports require basic information, not only to document the “**who, what, where, when, and why**” of an incident, but also to facilitate the retrieval of the record for future use. In most cases, this information has a specific field in the report; it should not be found solely in the narrative.

A. The following information is required unless unavailable:

1. The exact location of the incident. The location should reflect where the incident occurred, not where it was reported. The location should consist of a street name and number, an intersection, or a geo-coded location (e.g., a bike path section) listed in QED.
 - a. When taking reports that involve incidents where no crime has occurred in Somerville, classify the report solely as a Somerville Police Investigation. It can then be forwarded to the appropriate agency.
2. The date and time when the incident occurred, which may not be when the crime was reported. If the time occurred is a time frame, provide a best estimate of the narrowest time frame where the incident could have occurred. This should be done for all reports, even vandalism, car breaks and/or motor vehicle thefts.
3. The names of any principal parties involved in the incident (the reporting party, defendants, suspects, victims, witnesses and other involved parties). All persons should be entered in the Persons tab, connecting their MNI to said incident. If an individual is named in your narrative, an MNI entry must be entered for that individual. Officers should strive to avoid multiple MNI entries for the same individual by performing an MNI search to determine if the individual already exists in the department’s database. Officers should obtain the following information on each person if possible:

Incident Reporting Guidelines	Page 9 of 13	126
-------------------------------	--------------	-----

- a. Full formal name (first, middle/initial, last).
 - b. Address, or last known address if the individual claims to be homeless (located through the RMV or BOP).
 - c. The individual's date of birth.
 - d. The individual's gender and race. This information is necessary for outside reporting and may be used in future investigations.
 - e. Home, work and mobile telephone numbers. This information is important for officers conducting follow-up investigations.
 - f. The e-mail address of the victims and witnesses. This information is important for officers conducting follow-up investigations.
 - g. Any known aliases or "street names." Include how the alias was learned in the narrative and then add it as an alias in the individual's MNI.
 - h. If an individual has already been entered into the MNI, all required information should be updated to the most current information available before continuing.
4. The officer should attempt to capture all the circumstances surrounding the incident. When the incident involves criminal offenses, the "elements of the crime" should be clearly laid out in the narrative.
 5. Any motor vehicles and/or property listed in the narrative section of the NIBRIS should also be included in the motor vehicle and/or property tabs. Any information relating to a motor vehicle involved in the incident must be entered, regardless of how much information the officer has.
 6. Include as much information as possible/practicable regarding the offender's M.O. (e.g., for a housebreak include the point of entry (POE), POE in relation to the street, whether force was used, and any additional oddities or pertinent info.) This information assists in the identification of crime patterns and series.
 7. The report should reflect all actions taken by the officers, their investigative findings, and any observations made in the course of responding to or investigating the incident. This should include whatever information, advice, or direction was given to the individuals encountered in the investigation.
 8. Include any and all actions taken in response to the incident (e.g. placement in a shelter, filing a 51A or Section 12, etc.).

9. If the incident was not fully resolved at the time of the investigation, the officer should indicate what other follow up investigation needs to be taken and whether the appropriate parties were notified.

6. Information to be Excluded from Reports

There are certain circumstances in which an officer should omit information from the report. This is usually either for the protection of the victim or is specifically required or permitted by law. These specific circumstances include but are not limited to the following:

- A. Officers shall not include the address or location of any domestic violence or rape crisis center in the report. This is extremely important in protecting the victim or witnesses from exposure to further attack or retaliation. Officers should also not include in their reports those locations when the victim or witness has been relocated and where there remains the risk of retaliation (e.g., retaliatory gang violence, intimidation of a witness, or when it is believed that the victim/witness is still in danger).
- B. Under Massachusetts law, the location and street address of all domestic violence victims' programs, and rape crisis centers, shall be absolutely confidential and shall not be required to be revealed in any criminal or civil proceedings. Under this statute, the following definitions apply:
 1. "Domestic violence victims' program," any refuge, shelter, office, safe home, institution, or center established for the purpose of offering assistance to victims of abuse through crisis intervention, medical, legal or support counseling.
 2. "Rape crisis center," any office institution or center offering assistance to victims of sexual assault and the families of such victims through crisis intervention, medical and legal counseling.
- C. Exclude CORI information whenever appropriate.

7. Report Writing Format

The following are some general guidelines that officers should observe when writing the report narrative to avoid confusion on the part of the reader.

- A. Make sure that all of the information pertaining to principal parties named in the report has been properly attached to the MNI, and the information in the MNI is complete and accurate.
- B. Make sure that all information pertaining to motor vehicles and property have been properly attached to the header section of the report.
- C. Reports will be written in the first person ("I," "me").

- D.** Start with the date, time and explanation of how you became involved.
- E.** Use active voice, which shows the subject as an actor (i.e., “I arrested the subject,” as opposed to “The subject was arrested by Officer Smith.”)
- F.** Use past tense for incidents or actions that have already occurred.
- G.** Use short, clear, concise words.
- H.** Use first and last names to ensure that the report positively identifies the correct person.
- I.** Use words that have clear meaning and leave little chance of being misinterpreted.
- J.** Check for spelling and grammatical errors.
- K.** Minimize the use of abbreviations.
- L.** Use proper names and titles, especially when referring to other officers or other officials who may be involved in the incident.
- M.** Do not use radio call signs and police jargon (do not use SP, RP, and other short-hand references when referring to individuals.)
- N.** Make sure quotes are correct and accurate (quotes denote what someone said verbatim). If paraphrasing something that was said, it should be clearly noted as opposed to enclosing what was said in quotes.
- O.** Officers should not include personal opinions. A report is to be free of any judgments, suppositions, guesses, or speculation on the part of the reporting officer.
- P.** Make sure that all supplemental reports have been completed at the time when the incident report is completed (i.e., Stolen/Recovered MV form, Child Abuse and Neglect form, Elder Abuse and Neglect form, Use of Force Report form, etc.)
- Q.** Supplemental reports should not repeat the whole sequence of events. The writer should report his/her actions and observations during the course of the incident.

8. Completing Reports

An incident report should be completed immediately following the initial encounter when the details are fresh in the officer’s mind. This however, is not always practicable. Any delays in the submission of a report must first be approved by a supervisory officer, and the supervisory officer should establish the timeline as to when the report will be completed.

- A.** Generally: Officers should make every effort to complete the report prior to the end of the officer’s tour of duty. If a complete report is not possible due to an investigation, a

preliminary report should be submitted by the end of the officer's tour of duty and a supplemental report can be generated as the investigation progresses.

- B. Arrests:** An arrest report must accompany the application for criminal complaint to the court and is required at arraignment. Arrest reports should be completed following an arrest, but must be completed prior to arraignment.
- C. Criminal Complaint:** An application for criminal complaint or Clerk Magistrate Hearing, shall include a copy of the report and any other supporting documentation.

9. Review and Routing of Procedures for NIBRS Reports

- A. Responsibilities of Submitting Officers -** Once officers have completed a NIBRS report, they will contact their respective commander and provide the file numbers of the reports to be reviewed and approved. In the case of officers assigned to other operational units within the department, they will refer their completed NIBRS reports to the attention of the duty supervisor for review and approval. If the NIBRS report is completed at the end of an officer's shift, the report shall be provided to the on-duty supervisor at the time the report is completed.
 - 1. If the report is a result of a non-warrant arrest, the officer will not be relieved of duty until the report has been reviewed a supervisor.
 - 2. If the report does not involve an arrest, an officer shall complete the report before the end of his/her next shift.
 - 3. If the report does not validate, it is the officer's responsibility to contact MIS or Records to correct this as soon as possible, in no case, greater than 72 hours.
- B. Responsibilities of Reviewing Supervisors -** Upon being notified that a report is ready for review, the reviewing supervisor should review the report as soon as practicable. Once the report has been reviewed, the reviewing supervisor will notify the submitting officer whether the report has been approved or is in need of further information. A supervisor will not "sign-off" on a report until he/she is satisfied that the report has been properly completed. The review process should take the following factors into consideration.
 - 1. The report has been accurately and completely filled out (all of the required fields have been filled in.)
 - 2. The information of all principal parties named in the report has been properly attached to the MNI. The information associated with a person has been listed.
 - 3. The information for any motor vehicles and/or property involved in the incident has been properly entered in the appropriate fields within the NIBRS.

Incident Reporting Guidelines	Page 13 of 13	126
-------------------------------	---------------	-----

4. The report is free of obvious errors or omissions. There are no spelling and/or grammatical errors, the report makes sense, and is it readable.
5. If the investigation requires any follow-up action, the report clearly indicates what action needs to be taken.
6. The submitting officer has taken the investigation to its logical conclusion. If not, the report should be returned to the officer for the appropriate follow up action.
7. The report has all of the required information.
8. When the incident involves a crime or an arrest, the report contains all of the elements of the crime, and whether the defendant given his/her rights. When required, the report documents that the victim was notified of his/her rights.
9. The nature of the incident been properly classified.
10. The disposition or status of the investigation has been noted.
11. All of the supplemental reports associated with the incident report have been completed properly.
12. A reviewing supervisor may not change the factual content of a report, however, the supervisor should make recommendations as to information that should be included, that has been omitted, or is viewed as a critical or necessary element to the completeness of the report.
13. If the report is not acceptable or does not meet the established standards, it is to be returned to the submitting officer to be corrected immediately.
14. If the report is deemed to be complete, the reviewing supervisor will close out the report by identifying him/herself as the reviewing supervisor, and advise the submitting officer that the report has been approved

10. Records Function

After the report has been reviewed and approved, the completed report shall be forwarded to the records function for filing and processing.