

# INCIDENT REPORTING

POLICY & PROCEDURE NO. <b>2.01</b>	ISSUE DATE: <b>July 27, 2015</b>
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MASSACHUSETTS POLICE ACCREDITATION STANDARDS REFERENCED:	REVISION DATE: _____

## I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

One major function of criminal justice agencies is documentation. Police agencies have become very effective at documenting incidents and events, and the demand for documentation by the legislature, courts and citizens continues to increase.

In order to provide organization to the origin, filing and retrieval of documentation, this department has obtained a computerized records management system which assigns a unique identification number to incidents and events logged by the communications staff. This numbering system allows for the orderly filing and quick retrieval, both electronically and manually, of reports and other documents and items associated with those reports.

Additionally, our crime statistics are shared with the state and federal governments through National Incident Based Reporting (NIBRS). Crime statistics are compiled, along with statistics from other criminal justice agencies, to produce reports of crime trends. The data is published by the state and federal governments.

## II. POLICY

It is the policy of this department that:

1. Reports of incidents shall be documented pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws; and

2. Employees shall file reports to document incidents, events and activities as directed by this policy.

### III. **DEFINITIONS**

- A. Incident: An event that requires law enforcement action, documentation, or dispatching of agency personnel in response to citizens' requests for law enforcement services. This includes any incident, whether criminal or non-criminal, which involves a response to the scene, an investigation or the preparation of an oral or written report.
- B. NIBRS: National Incident Based Reporting – an electronic submission of crime statistics, which was formerly known as Uniform Crime Reports (UCRs).
- C. RMS: Records Management System – this department's records management software.

### IV. **PROCEDURES**

#### A. ***Incident Numbering System [82.2.3]***

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

#### B. ***Assigning Incident Numbers – Log Entries***

1. Incident logging is a function of communications (dispatch). Communications personnel will create incident entries in response to police operations or administrative activity. Incident log records shall be created for the following types of situations:
  - a. Citizen Initiated:
    - 1) Citizen Reports of Crimes [82.2.2(a)]
    - 2) Citizen Complaints [82.2.2(b)]
    - 3) Calls for service where a public safety employee is dispatched or assigned [82.2.2(c)]
  - b. Employee Initiated:
    - 1) Criminal and non-criminal cases initiated by law enforcement employees [82.2.2(d)]

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- 2) Incidents involving Arrests, Citations, and Summonses [82.2.2(e)]
  - c. Directed:
    - 1) Process Service (i.e., arrest warrants, restraining orders, etc.)
    - 2) Notifications
    - 3) Prisoner Transports
  - d. Administrative:
    - 1) Fingerprinting
    - 2) Asset forfeitures
    - 3) Equipment failures or damage
  - e. Other incidents where documentation is prudent, requested by an employee, or directed by a supervisor.
2. In logging incidents, the incident entry shall include, at the minimum, the information listed as follows. For more information on logging incidents, see the department policy on **Communications**.
    - a. Service calls and crimes by type [82.3.2(a)]
    - b. Service calls and crimes by location [82.3.2(b)]
    - c. Property, including stolen, found, recovered, and evidence [82.3.2(c)]

### **C. Written Reports**

1. REPORTS: Some incidents require written reports because, by their nature, they need to be documented, or a report for an incident may be required by statute. In some cases, providing written documentation is just a good public service. Police employees of this agency shall prepare a written incident report for all incidents: [82.2.1(a)]
  - a. Arrests;
  - b. Motor vehicle crashes
  - c. Crimes;
  - d. Any incident that results in the search of a vehicle or building;
  - e. Incidents where, in the opinion of the officer, a written report is necessary; and
  - f. Statutorily Required Reports:
    - 1) Domestic Violence;<sup>1</sup>
    - 2) Identity Theft;<sup>2</sup>

- 3) Child Abuse and Neglect;<sup>3</sup> and
  - 4) Elder Abuse and Neglect.<sup>4</sup>
2. REQUIRED INFORMATION: All reports require basic information, not only to document the “who, what, where, when and why” of an incident, but also to facilitate retrieving the record. Required information should be included in the report whenever possible: [82.2.1(c)]
- a. Date
  - b. Time
  - c. Complainant, victims, witnesses:
    - 1) Names
    - 2) Addresses
    - 3) Age, gender, and race (required for NIBRS reporting)
    - 4) Home and work telephone numbers
  - d. Location of the incident
  - e. A description of what happened
  - f. Reporting employee’s observations
3. REPORT WRITING: The following are some general guidelines that employees should follow when writing the report narrative to avoid confusion on the part of the reader:
- a. Reports should be written in the first person (“I,” “me”).
  - b. Write in chronological order.
  - c. Start with date, time and explanation of how you became involved.
  - d. Use active voice, which shows the subject as the actor. (i.e., “*Officer Smith arrested the subject,*” as opposed to “*The subject was arrested by Officer Smith.*”).
  - e. Use past tense for incidents or actions that have already occurred.
  - f. Use short, clear, concise words.
  - g. Use first and last names to ensure that the report positively identifies the correct person.
  - h. Use words that have clear meaning and leave little chance of being misinterpreted.
  - i. Check for spelling.
  - j. Minimize the use of abbreviations.

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- k. Use proper names and titles.
  - l. Do not use radio call signs and police jargon.
  - m. Make sure quotes are correct and accurate.
  - n. Employees should not include opinions.
  - o. Addendums by employees to a primary employee's report should not repeat the whole sequence of events. The writer should report his/her actions and observations.
4. **COMPLETING REPORTS:** Ideally, an incident report should be completed immediately following the incident when the details are fresh in the employee's mind. This, however, is not always practical. [82.2.1(d)]
- a. **Generally:** Employees should make an effort to complete the report prior to the end of the shift, but, in all cases, a report must be submitted prior to the end of the employee's work week, or within four days. If a complete report is not possible due to an investigation, a preliminary report should be submitted within these time parameters and a supplemental addendum added as the investigation progresses.
  - b. **Arrests:** An arrest report must accompany the charging instrument (application for complaint or criminal citation) and Statement of Facts form to court and is required at arraignment. Arrest reports should be completed following an arrest, but must be completed prior to arraignment.
  - c. **Criminal Complaint, Application for Summons or Clerk Magistrate Hearing, and Citations:** A police report and Statement of Facts Form must accompany these charging instruments to court.
5. **SUBMITTING, PROCESSING AND SUPERVISORY REVIEW**  
[82.2.1(E)]
- a. **Reporting Employee**
    - 1) Upon completing a report, the employee must submit the report to his/her shift supervisor. If time does not permit the employee's supervisor to review the report (a late arrest, end of shift, supervisor vacation, sickness, etc.), the report may be submitted to another supervisor.
    - 2) A report returned by a supervisor shall be reviewed and corrected by the employee, and resubmitted.
    - 3) If an employee disagrees with a supervisor's suggested corrections, the employee should meet with the supervisor and discuss the points at issue.

- 4) If the matter is not resolved, it should be brought to the attention of the next step in the chain of command.
- b. Supervisor
- 1) A supervisor need not submit his/her own reports to another supervisor for review. However, any supervisor's report may, at the discretion of that supervisor or upon the direction of a superior, be reviewed by another supervisor.
  - 2) A supervisor shall review the employee's report. The supervisor should review the report for:
    - a) Spelling and grammar;
    - b) Required information;
    - c) Crime elements, defendant and victim rights, and proper department procedure; and
    - d) Readability.
  - 3) A supervisor may not change the factual content of another employee's report.
  - 4) If the report is acceptable as submitted, the report shall be forwarded to the records function.
  - 5) Errors, omissions, or other issues detected should be brought to the employee's attention to correct or address. When the issues have been addressed, the report shall be resubmitted for review by a supervisor.
  - 6) If a supervisor is on leave (sick, vacation, injured, etc.) for a work cycle or more, another supervisor will be charged with reviewing the report.
- c. Records Function: Upon completion of the review process, the completed report shall be forwarded to the records function for filing and processing. For further information, see the department policy **Records Management**.

#### ***D. National Incident Based Reporting [82.1.4]***

1. COLLECTING CRIMINAL DATA: NIBRS data is inputted in the incident reporting process. For each incident, NIBRS data will be inputted by the Sergeant in Charge of NIBRS.
2. SUBMITTING NIBRS: On the first business day following the last day of each month, the Sergeant in Charge of NIBRS shall process NIBRS data for the previous month using the NIBRS submission software in the RMS software package. The NIBRS data shall be "zipped" using Winzip software and uploaded to the "Upload Utility"

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on the “Upload Files” page of the Massachusetts Crime Reporting Unit Web Site ([www.ucrstats.com](http://www.ucrstats.com)).

### 3. QUALITY CONTROL

- a. The NIBRS submitting software will check each entry for errors and establish a NIBRS error log. **The Sergeant in Charge of NIBRS** shall correct the errors listed on the error log, which will be collected for submission at the next submission period.
- b. Each month, NIBRS errors identified by the Massachusetts Crime Reporting Unit are posted on their website ([www.ucrstats.com](http://www.ucrstats.com)). They are obtainable by clicking on the “Error Log” tab, selecting the reporting agency and clicking “search.” **Sergeant in Charge of NIBRS** shall check this site for errors each month and make the necessary corrections in RMS. The corrected entries will be re-submitted during the next NIBRS submission.

### 4. ACCESSING CRIME STATISTICS REPORTS

- a. A compilation of state NIBRS reports is available at the Massachusetts Crime Reporting Unit ([www.ucrstats.com](http://www.ucrstats.com)).
- b. National crime statistics are published by the FBI as “Crime in the USA,” and in other publications available on the FBI web site ([www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov)).

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<sup>1</sup> M.G.L. c. 209A, §6.

<sup>2</sup> M.G.L. c. 266, §37E.

<sup>3</sup> M.G.L. c. 119, §51A.

<sup>4</sup> M.G.L. c. 19A, §15(a).

