

INCIDENT REPORTING

POLICY & PROCEDURE NO. 4.31	ISSUE DATE: 02/02/16
	EFFECTIVE DATE: 02/02/16
MASSACHUSETTS POLICE ACCREDITATION STANDARDS REFERENCED: 1.2.5a;82.1.4; 82.2.1; 82.2.2; 82.2.3; 82.3.2	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 Microsystems-Crimetrack.

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 numbering system is sequential.
3. 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. For more information, see the department policy on **Communications**. 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)]

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- b. Employee Initiated:
 - 1) Criminal and non-criminal cases initiated by law enforcement employees [82.2.2(d)]
 - 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)][1.2.5a]
 - a. Arrests;
 - b. Motor vehicle crash **[Where the damage to any one vehicle exceeds \$1000 or if there is injury to any person.]**;
 - c. Crimes;
 - d. Incidents where, in the opinion of the officer or supervisor, a written report is necessary; and

e. Statutorily Required Reports:

- 1) Domestic Violence;¹
- 2) Identity Theft;²
- 3) Child Abuse and Neglect;³ and
- 4) Elder Abuse and Neglect.⁴

This list is not exhaustive and a report shall be filed for any incident of significant importance.

2. REPORTING FORMS: Employees have the following electronic reporting formats at their disposal to facilitate incident reporting: [82.2.1(b)]

a. Department Incident Report

- 1) This is a general purpose form to assist employees with obtaining necessary information for preparing a written incident report as well as incident screening for investigative follow-up.
- 2) This form should be used for most incidents.

b. Department Incident, Narrative Supplement :

- 1) This is a supplement to the Incident Report . It provides employees the opportunity for additional narratives and notes.
- 2) This form should be used when necessary to supplement the Incident Reporting Form.

c. RMV Motor Vehicle Crash Report Form

- 1) This form is designed, printed, and distributed by the Registry of Motor Vehicles.
- 2) This form should be completed for all motor vehicle crash investigations; and

d. Environmental Police Boating and Recreational Vehicle Accident Form: This form is provided by the Environmental Police for reporting investigations of all crashes involving boats and recreational vehicles.

e. Other forms; MV Exchange of Information form, Field, Interview, Observation form, Victim/Witness statement, Affidavits, Juvenile Court forms.

3. 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
4. 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.
 - 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.

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 reporting officer.
2. SUBMITTING NIBRS: On the first business day following the last day of each month, Crime Analyst 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" on the "Upload Files" page of the Massachusetts Crime Reporting Unit Web Site (www.ucrstats.com).
3. QUALITY CONTROL
 - a. The NIBRS submitting software will check each entry for errors and establish a NIBRS error log. Crime Analyst 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). They are obtainable by clicking on the “Error Log” tab, selecting the reporting agency and clicking “search.” Crime Analyst 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).
- 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).

¹ M.G.L. c. 209A, § 6.

² M.G.L. c. 266, §37E.

³ M.G.L. c. 119, §51A.

⁴ M.G.L. c. 19A, §15(a).