



Sheridan Police Department
Policies and Procedures
14.2 Replaces 303.2
Chapter 14 – Records
Section 2 – Reporting

Date: January 8, 2018
Revised: 01/12/2022, 05/13/2022

Signature:

Written reports provide documentation of police activity and an accurate flow of information that is essential to the department's operation. Officers have an ethical responsibility to report the complete and accurate truth. Report uses include: preparation of charging documents, refreshing memory for courtroom testimony, statistical analysis and planning, crime reporting, and conducting follow-up investigations.

14.2.1 General Information

- A. Every assignment shall be completed in its entirety and the actions taken and information received shall be documented.
- B. Employees will complete all required reports and forms in a truthful, accurate, legible manner.
 - 1. No employee shall knowingly make any false, fraudulent or misleading statement in any report prepared or produced by this department.
 - 2. No employee shall knowingly exclude any information which by its omission would be misleading or fraudulent. Further, no pertinent information shall be omitted with the intent of avoiding follow-up investigation.
- C. Employees will not communicate, relay or release any official department information to any person which would in any way hamper or compromise the department's operations or investigations.
- D. No employee shall advise, counsel, order, or otherwise dissuade any other employee from making a lawful or proper report, whether on criminal or disciplinary matters.
- E. Employees of the department shall not remove any official records of the department, except as authorized by the chief of police or under due process of law.
- F. All reports will be completed in a timely manner. Officers should complete and submit reports prior to the end of their assigned shift. Officers shall, at a minimum, complete a narrative synopsis and case summary, arrest reports and affidavits, property reports and the involvement section prior to the end of the shift. Any exceptions must be approved by the shift supervisor.
- G. All crash reports will be completed prior to the end of work cycle before going on scheduled days off. Any exceptions must be approved by the shift supervisor.

14.2.2 Initiating an Incident Report

- A. Official records shall be prepared and maintained to document every reported police activity, whether originated by a citizen or department member.
- B. Employees shall prepare documentation for the following categories of incidents, if they were alleged to occur in Sheridan:
 - 1. Reports of crimes;

2. Complaints of non-criminal activities requiring police action;
 3. When assistance (except clerical information) is rendered to another law enforcement or related agency (i.e. probation and parole, emergency medical services, or fire department);
 4. Cases initiated by department personnel;
 5. Incidents involving arrests, citations, or summonses;
 6. Incidents of a suspicious nature;
 7. Any other incidents as directed by a supervisor.
- C. This documentation of police activity may be in the form of a completed incident report, citation, or computer aided dispatch entry.
- D. A supervisor should be consulted when there is doubt about the necessity of a written report.
- E. Case numbering is computer generated and runs sequentially from the start of the calendar year based on when the call is received. Each number is unique.
- F. All reports and records maintained to document police activity will contain, at a minimum, the following information - if accessible:
1. Date and time of initial reporting;
 2. Name of parties involved (complainant, victim, suspect, or witness);
 3. Nature of the incident;
 4. Nature, date, and time of action taken by personnel;
 5. Case status.

14.2.3 Incident Reports

- A. All reports shall be completed electronically using the Spillman system.
- B. All additional documents and forms will be attached to a cover sheet and placed in the designated basket for scanning and attachment to the case.
- C. Reports will be completed in the following report protocol writing standards:
1. Fields on the face page will be reviewed for accuracy and completeness.
 2. Involvements - Files created according to set Spillman Standards for each table need to be tied to case reports. This is done in this section:
 - A. Name Files:
 1. Name files must be attached when a person is mentioned in the narrative section. The name file of a business or organization must be attached if the business or organization is the owner of damaged property or the victim of a crime. The name file of liquor license holders should also be attached to cases where the establishment is the location of a criminal offense, the serving location, or otherwise connected to an incident which should be known by the licensing authority. The following information is needed for Name Files:
 - a. Name: Last, First, Middle;
 - b. Complete current address, including apartment/unit number, city, state and zip code.
 - c. Phone number(s)
 - d. Date of birth
 - e. Race, gender and ethnicity

- f. Height and weight
 - g. Alias or nicknames.
- 2. Name files are tied to cases in involvements and the relationship to the incident report is noted. The following are the preferred relationships to be used:
 - a. Offender
 - b. Suspect
 - c. Victim
 - d. Driver
 - e. Passenger
 - f. Witness
 - g. Owner
 - h. Location
 - i. Serving Bar
 - j. Mentioned
 - k. Contact
 - l. Subject
 - m. Parent
- 3. When dispatch enters a complainant that name file is automatically tied to the case. If that person is later contacted by an officer and determined to have a further relationship to the incident, that name file shall be attached again and that relationship stated so as to make the relationship clear. For example, a man calls in and reports vandalism to a vehicle. He will be listed as a complaint and then a second time as a victim.
- 4. If the name file represents a juvenile, this fact should be listed in the relationship field by adding a slash and juvenile to the end of the given relationship field (Victim/Juvenile).
- 5. Business/Government name files should be used for all DFS employees, school employees, law enforcement employees etc only if the person's involvement is pertaining to their profession.
- 6. Related Incident Reports
 - a. Other reports shall be listed in the involvements when two separate cases are tied together or the other report is mentioned in the narrative.
 - b. Incident reports shall be listed as mentioned in the relationship field.

D. Property

- 1. Property files shall be attached for lost property, stolen items, damaged or vandalized items, seized drugs, seized paraphernalia and seized counterfeit currency/documents. Property files shall not be attached for items that are solely evidence. All known information and an estimated value should be entered in the property file.
- 2. For file management purposes; property file numbers will not be attached/entered into the evidence file.

3. Property files of multiple items should be consolidated by item type. Seized drugs from the same suspect, same drug type and same means of measurement will be consolidated to one entry. Damaged property will be consolidated in the same manner by victim and type (tools, merchandise for sale, etc.)
4. Property relationship in involvements shall be listed as:
 - a. Stolen
 - b. Damaged
 - c. Seized
 - d. Lost
 - e. Recovered
5. When vehicles are damaged as part of a criminal or malicious act the vehicle will be listed as “Damaged Vehicle” , and the specific damaged part (i.e. door, fender, headlight, etc...) will be entered as “Damaged Property.”
6. When property is damaged by Law Enforcement (i.e. making entry to check welfare) the property will be entered into the property table for documentation purposes.

E. Vehicle

1. Vehicle files shall be attached for crash reports, traffic offenses, property damage, theft from vehicle or any incident where the vehicle is relevant to the case and its identification should be clear and easily understood.
2. Vehicles shall be listed as:
 - a. Vehicle
 - b. Stolen
 - c. Damaged
 - d. Recovered
 - e. Suspect Vehicle
 - f. Victim Vehicle

14.2.4 Report Content and Writing Protocol

A. General Rules

1. Narratives will be written in the past tense
2. Narratives will be written from the first-person perspective
3. Narratives will be written with an emphasis on being concise and clear.
4. Narratives should be written with end users in mind and so convey the needed information: for other officers to understand what happened to take future action and be knowledgeable of the incident, for prosecutors to prove the elements of the crime and prepare for trial, for the public and press to understand and see what actions officers took and why.

B. Face Page Completion

1. Incident Number

- A. This field contains a system generated reference number. The field should not be modified.
- 2. Nature
 - A. The nature is used by those reading reports to create a context for the information contained within the report. Further, the nature is used by as a reference point in mapping software used by the Department as well as a reference point for involvement records and data summaries. The nature is first chosen by the dispatcher or call taker who entered the call in the system. When completing the report, officers should consider the nature as the title of the case and modify it if it does not accurately reflect the content of the case. For example, when responding to a suspicious person call, officers locate the subject and during the interaction cite the subject for possession of marijuana. The case title should be modified from “Suspicious Person” to “Drug/Poss.” The one exception to this would be DUI-REDDI natures, which should remain, regardless of the outcome of the investigation.
- 3. Case Number
 - A. The case number should be left blank. Spillman Software includes this field for agencies that use a separate case number for tracking purposes, such as detectives working a string of arsons. The Sheridan Police Department does not create case numbers and so this field should not be used. In the past, connected incident report numbers have been placed in this field. That is inaccurate as those are incident and not case numbers. Additionally, other connected cases can and should be added to the involvements screen of the report. Adding incidents to the involvement screen allows users to click directly to the related case, instead of copying a number and then re-entering it in another field on a search screen.
- 4. Image
 - A. This field should be blank
- 5. Address
 - A. The address shows the location of the incident. This field is initially entered by a dispatcher or call taker. When completed the incident report, officers should look at the address entered and ensure it is accurate, if not, officers should modify it. Other than traffic crashes, which might have an address of occurrence that is an intersection, the address should be a block number and a street or a specific street address. If the address needs to be clarified, such as an apartment number, this information must be added after a semicolon that separates the additional information from the main address.
- 6. Area
 - A. The area field is generally automatically filled based on the geocode for the entered street address. Officers should review the area field and see that it matches the correct address divisions in the designated PO area. If the location is outside of the

City of Sheridan, the area field will not be relevant and most likely should be left blank.

7. City, State, Zip

- A. Officers should ensure that these fields are accurate and that they correspond with the location shown in the address field.

8. Contact

- A. Dispatchers and call takers use this field to indicate a point of contact for responding officers. When completing the report, generally there is no need for officers to fill or modify this field.

9. Complainant

- A. This field links to a name file. The listed file should reflect the person or entity that reported the incident. If the caller wishes to remain “anonymous”, the complainant field shall be left blank. No businesses or on duty officers will be entered as the complainant. In these instances, the field should be left blank. The business shall be entered into involvements.

10. Offense

- A. Officers should enter the relevant offenses. Listing the most serious offense first. The officer should list every violation that they observed during an incident.

11. Observed

- A. Officers should enter a code in this field; generally, it will match the first listed code in the offense section.

12. Circumstances

- A. This field is included to aid the department in incident tracking. Officers must list a location or LT code first in this field. Every incident must include this code. Other codes must be included depending on the details of the incident. These codes are: Alcohol use adult or juvenile must be included if applicable. Arrest-Custodial must be included whenever an incident includes a custodial arrest. Arrest-Non-custodial must be included when a citation is issued, this includes traffic citations. Drug Use Adult and Drug Use Juvenile must be included if applicable. The file code must be included if any documents have been scanned and attached to the case. Juvenile involvement must be included if a juvenile is named in the report. Alcohol and Tobacco Sting codes should be used if a sting operation generated the incident. The JAMAR code should be used if the incident documents a traffic study using the JAMAR device. The Veripic code must be used if pictures have been added to the Veripic system in connection with the incident. DEER shall be used on all calls involving deer in the City Limits.

13. Responding Officers

- A. This field records Officers involved with the incident. This field will generally be auto-filled based on the CAD entries made in communications. Officers should check to make sure that all assisting officers are entered.

14. Responsible Officer
 - A. The officer completing the report and who is responsible for the content should be listed here. Again, this field will typically be auto-filled.
15. Agency
 - A. Should read “SPD.”
16. Received By
 - A. Here should be listed the name of the person who initially received the call for the department. Typically, this field will already be completed and will list a dispatcher. Officers should not need to edit this field.
17. Last Radio Log
 - A. This field auto-fills from CAD. The time listed here is the last entry in the radio log connected to this case.
18. How Received
 - A. This field should be changed in dispatch to reflect how calls are received. Officers shall review this field to ensure its accuracy.
19. Clearance
 - A. Officers need to enter the most accurate clearance code. Codes consist of a letter and a number. The letters used are A for a custodial arrest. C for criminal citation issued. I for a traffic citation issued. R for a report completed, but no arrests or citations issued. R should be used for all non-criminal reports. The number represents a class of crime or report. It is similar to the case title. Officers should choose the number that is most appropriate based on the designations of the numbers found in the drop down menu. Examples of a correct code are A53 for custodial arrest on a DWUI incident. R15 for an assault case sent to a prosecutor for review.
20. When Reported
 - A. This field is auto-filled based on information provided by dispatch.
21. Occurred Between
 - A. These two fields bracket the timeframe for when the incident most likely transpired. Officers should check to ensure the times are accurate.
- C. Narrative Protocol:
 1. The report protocol format below is to be used on all incident reports, except Dog at Large Warning reports, which have a different template. No sections of the report protocol should be left blank. If the section does not apply to the current incident report officers should write “n/a.” The fields should be completed on the line of the title item and responses should be tabbed over to align vertically. If completion of the field requires the listing of several items, these items should be organized in a numbered list, with each item on a new line.
 2. The Synopsis will include at a minimum one sentence that briefly describes the origination of the call, and a second sentence as to what action was taken. If a custodial arrest is made

the name, age, and City / State of the offender will be in the synopsis along with charges. The names of juveniles, involuntary mental holds, or those arrested for sexual assault and domestic violence, will not be listed in the synopsis.

3. Officers shall complete a case synopsis prior to the end of their shift.

D. Narrative Guidelines

1. When first mentioned in the narrative, a person will be referenced by their first and last name, subsequent uses shall use the first initial and last name (i.e. J. Doe).
2. When officers or other law enforcement or official personnel are mentioned they will be referenced by title and last name
3. When a narrative involves several people with the same last name the narrative will identify persons by both first and last name.
4. Pronouns should be used sparingly, if at all, and in most cases persons should be referenced by name.
5. Officers will not state personal opinions in their reports. They may state how they reasonably believe a crime was committed (or other conclusion), based on available facts and circumstances.
6. Certain significant events expose officers and the department to heightened liability. Reporting on those events requires the same increased care as was used to perform the task being reported on.
 - A. Accuracy, clarity and thoroughness are important
 - B. Sufficient preparation and time should be devoted to the report
7. Time/Location
 - A. Dates will be written in a six digit format, e.g. 01/01/15
 - B. Times will be written using the 24 hour clock, e.g. 1525 hrs
 - C. Addresses will be written with the complete number and street, e.g. 140 Gladstone St
 - D. It will be clear when events occurred, and when officers learned of events
8. Case Summary
 - A. Narratives that are complex, involve multiple interviews, investigations over a period of time, or are greater than a few paragraphs in length shall include a brief summary at the beginning of the narrative. This summary should be included in all but the most routine of case reports. Officers shall include in the summary a brief explanation or outline of knowledge gained and actions taken. The summary should provide the reader with the framework of the entire report.
9. Headers
 - A. Major portions of the narrative will be labeled with headers in all CAPS. For example:
 1. CASE SUMMARY
 2. INTRODUCTION
 3. SCENE SUMMARY
 4. WITNESS (JOHN DOE) STATEMENT

- 5. EVIDENCE SEIZED
- 6. SUSPECT (JOHN DAVID) STATEMENT
- B. Sub Headers will be used for further organization and clarification when needed.

For example:

- 1. SCENE SUMMARY
 - a. FRONT YARD
 - b. LIVING ROOM
- C. The use of headers will not be mandated for short reports. In general if a report is around 4 paragraphs in length and addresses a single issue, at a singular time, and has only two or three involvements, headers need not be used. If the report can be read and understood in a short brief reading, headers will not be mandated. When in doubt, headers should be used to organize the report

10. Introduction

- A. The first paragraph of a narrative will be brief and explain how the Officer came to be involved in the case. This paragraph should establish the date, time, and nature of how the police department became involved in the incident. For example:
 - 1. “On 1/1/1988 I was dispatched to 1234 Abc Street in reference to the report of a domestic dispute. I arrived on scene at 1432 hrs., along with Officer Smith.”
 - 2. “On 1/1/1988 at approximately 2300 hrs. I was driving southbound at the 1900 block of South Sheridan Avenue when I observed a white pickup driving in front of me suddenly turn to the right and onto the sidewalk. I saw both right side tires go onto the sidewalk. I initiated a traffic stop.”

11. Interview

- A. Every effort should be made to ensure interviews are recorded. Depending on the importance of the case, length of the interview, and likelihood of a trial, having the interview transcribed should be considered. The narrative will state if a recording and transcript exist.
- B. In order to make concise reports, and provide those reading reports an easy method to reference statements, interviews will be written out making it clear who is giving the statement, followed by a line-by-line summary of their statements. This format is encouraged to be used in documenting all interviews, and shall be used when the interview is recorded and part of a case used for prosecution or potential prosecution. For example:
 - 1. On 1/1/1988 at 2300 hrs. I spoke to John Doe in the police department lobby. I explained to John Doe that he was free to leave anytime he wanted and thanked him for choosing to come talk to me. See attached recording and written transcript of interview for full detail. John Doe told me essentially the following:
 - 2. He has lived with Jane Doe at 123 Abc Street for 3 years.

3. They have a 3 year old child together that lives with them.
4. He does remember the incident two nights ago (12/30/1987) when he and Jane Doe got into a fight.
5. He had been drinking alcohol throughout the day.
6. He believed he was “tipsy” but not drunk.
7. He remembers Jane Doe was upset over him not preparing their child’s dinner.
8. After watching Walker Texas Ranger on T.V. (1800 - 1900 hrs.) he had tried to go to bed.
9. Jane Doe stood in the doorway to their bedroom and told him he could not enter the bedroom.
10. This made him feel “angry”.
11. He remembers pushing her out of the way with his right hand.
12. He claims he does not remember her falling on the ground.
13. He said he does not remember seeing her nose bleed.
14. After moving her out of his way he went to his bed and went to sleep.

12. Alternatives to Full Narratives

- A. In limited situations, a complete recording of information will be done in another form and can be referenced in the narrative. Full report protocol will be adhered to; however, instead of writing the narrative the officer may simply write, “See attached XXXXXX.”
- B. Routine cases of DWUI, and State Reportable Traffic Accidents would be the most common incidents where a full narrative would be redundant. A full narrative may still be necessary depending on the complexity of the case. Supervisor approval shall be required to complete reports in another format or template.

13. Referenced Material

- A. Any time a document, file, or recording is part of the S.P.D. file, it should be noted in the report when referenced. For example:
 1. The suspicious check was printed with blurred ink and showed an account number of ABC123 (see attached copy of check).
 2. The house where 5 year old Billy Doe lived was unkempt. Garbage was on the floor, moldy food was on the kitchen table, and animal feces was on the furniture (see attached pictures of residence).

14.2.5 Report Routing and Review

- A. After completing a report the officer will submit it through workflow for supervisor approval.
 1. If the report is of a serious nature, and is required for immediate court or investigative purposes, the reporting officer shall notify his supervisor when submitting the case for approval.

2. If a report is of a serious nature and is needed prior to the officer reviewing it, a draft copy may be used for investigative purposes, press releases, and to transfer information to related agencies. The administrative bureau staff will contact the supervisor on duty to review the report prior to releasing the information outside the department.
- B. Prior to the end of shift, the shift supervisor will ensure all reports in the supervisor's workflow are reviewed for completeness and accuracy and approved or returned for corrections.
 1. A supervisor will review every report submitted by an employee to determine that the preliminary investigation is satisfactory and that the narrative is clear and all-inclusive.
 2. A supervisor will ensure that all required reports are submitted.
- C. All case synopsis are reviewed by the captain or lieutenant and evaluated for content, classification, and case investigation.
- D. The shift supervisor shall review report attachments making certain that all information is neat, legible, accurate and complete.

14.2.6 Supplemental Reports

- A. When supplemental action is taken at another time or by another officer it will be detailed in a supplemental report. The supplement will be referenced and summarized in the narrative so the reader of the report will know what happened while reading the primary narrative. For example:
 1. JANE DOE SECOND INTERVIEW:

On 1/1/2023 Officer Jones interviewed Jane Doe again. Jane Doe told Officer Jones essentially the same story she had told me the night of the incident; however, also admitted she (Jane Doe) had been drinking that night. See Officer Jones supplement for full detail.
 2. EVIDENCE:

After I arrested John Doe, Officer Smith applied for and was granted a search warrant for Doe's residence. Smith found approximately 4 grams of methamphetamine and different drug paraphernalia in the house. See Officer Smith's supplement for full detail.
- B. Any case investigation that is not documented in the original report will be documented using a supplemental report, such as interviews with the suspect which are conducted after the original report is taken. The supplement synopsis should include the sequence number of the supplement and the officer's name.
- C. Officers should provide a short summary of previous events so the supplemental narrative can be understood in the correct context.
- D. Supplements should include the date and time the supplement was completed.
- E. Officers must indicate the case status. If the report is closed, the appropriate method must be indicated.
- F. All supplements will be submitted through workflow for supervisor approval. Upon approval, the supervisor will forward the supplement to records.

14.2.7 Case Disposition

- A. Officers should indicate the status of incident reports using the standard case closure methods listed below:
1. Cleared by Arrest - when one or more persons are physically arrested or served with a charging document.
 2. Cleared by Exception – In certain situations, elements beyond law enforcement’s control prevent the arrest and formal charging of the offender. When this occurs, the case can be cleared exceptionally. The following four conditions must be met in order to clear an offense by exceptional means. The officer must have:
 - A. Identified the offender;
 - B. Gathered enough evidence to support an arrest, make a charge, and turn over the offender to the court for prosecution;
 - C. Identified the offender’s exact location so that the suspect could be taken into custody immediately; and
 - D. Encountered a circumstance outside the control of law enforcement that prohibits the department from arresting, charging, and prosecuting the offender.
- Examples of exceptional clearances include, but are not limited to, the death of the offender (suicide or justifiably killed by police or citizen); the victim’s refusal to cooperate with the prosecution; and the denial of extradition because the offender committed a crime in another jurisdiction and is being prosecuted for that offense.
3. Cleared Suspended - when a crime has been established but all logical leads are exhausted and the case has not resulted in a final disposition.
 4. Cleared Unfounded - when the investigation has determined that no crime has been committed.
 5. Warrant/Case Inactive - when a warrant or charging document is issued, however, the suspect(s) have not been physically arrested or served, and the case is not being actively worked.
- B. An explanation of the closure is required for each case. For example:
1. “No evidence, suspects, or witnesses have been identified. This case is closed administratively.”
 2. “With the arrest of Smith, this case is closed by arrest.”
 3. “No information to establish a crime has been found. This case is closed as unfounded.

14.2.8 Report Abbreviations

- A. Abbreviations may be confusing and should be avoided except in cases where lack of space requires it (on some forms) or the abbreviation is common and well known.

14.2.9 Arrest Affidavits

- A. In rare cases an arrest affidavit will contain sufficient information that can be “cut and pasted” into a narrative; however, generally the affidavit and report should serve two different purposes and should therefore be written differently. In general it will be discouraged for Officers to write over simplified report narratives, or overly complicated affidavits.
1. Should make it clear who the offender is.
 2. Who the victim is.

3. What law was broke
4. What the elements to that law are - how they were met
5. Injuries or damages caused.
6. Emphasis on probable cause, not necessarily proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt
7. Affidavits should allow Courts and Prosecutors to have a quick reference to pertinent facts
8. In cases of misdemeanor arrests, the reason an arrest was made in lieu of a citation.