Cobb County Police Department

Policy 5.01

CALL AND INCIDENT RESPONSE

Effective Date: October 1, 2019	**Issued By:** Chief C.T. Cox
Rescinds: Policy 5.01 (November 1, 2017)	**Page 1 of 8**
The words "he, his, him," which may appear in this policy, are used generically for clarity and ease of reading. These terms are not meant to imply gender and relate to all employees of the Department.	

The purpose of this policy is to establish general guidelines for the response to calls and incidents by the Cobb County Police Department.

I. POLICY

All officers shall follow the appropriate/applicable procedures on conducting preliminary and follow-up investigative activities and other essential tasks; the protection, collection, and preservation of evidence; and the documentation of activities in criminal investigations and non-criminal activities as established by Department policy/procedures and training.

II. CRIMINAL CASE RESPONSE PROCEDURE

Uniform officers are generally responsible for conducting the preliminary investigations of all assigned or discovered crimes, except in those instances where the presence of a uniform officer would obviously hinder a proper investigation, or specific expertise is required.

A. Initial Response and Preliminary Investigation

The responding officer shall initiate the preliminary investigation and perform tasks as designated below, unless otherwise directed by a superior officer, detective, or other officer specifically assigned to criminal investigations:

1. Be cognizant of suspects and/or vehicles that may be leaving the scene.

2. Provide aid to the injured and/or summon medical assistance if required.

3. Locate and identify victims and witnesses. Request that they remain present at the scene until they can be interviewed.

4. Determine whether an offense has actually been committed and, if so, the exact nature of the offense.

5. Determine the identity of the suspect(s) and effect an arrest if it can be accomplished either at the scene or through immediate pursuit. A decision

to leave the crime scene to arrest or pursue the perpetrator should be made based on weighing the immediate needs of victims and others against the safety of the public if the perpetrator were allowed to escape.

6. Relay all relevant or essential information to other field units, through the Communications Center, such as:

    a. Nature of the incident/crime committed
    b. Description of any perpetrator(s)
    c. Mode of escape and/or direction of flight
    d. Description of any vehicles used by the offender and any accomplices
    e. Use of firearms or other deadly weapons
    f. Any support required at the scene (e.g. – additional units, detectives, supervisory personnel, specialty teams, fire department, DOT, etc.)

7. Protect the crime scene to ensure that evidence is not lost or contaminated. As necessary, and considering the nature and seriousness of the crime, officers should:

    a. Define the boundaries of the crime scene to include all areas that may reasonably be searched for evidence.

        1. Erect crime scene tape, rope, or cordon off, lock, or otherwise secure the immediate crime scene.

        2. Restrict access to defined crime scene perimeters to only those individuals who are directly involved in the investigation.

    b. In the case of homicides or other major crimes:

        1. Responding officers should enter crime scenes only for purposes of aiding victims or others in need of immediate assistance, apprehending perpetrators, or securing the area.

            a. Officers making entry should avoid touching, walking upon, or moving objects, or otherwise altering or contaminating the crime scene.

            b. Crime scenes should be approached in a single defined line in order to avoid destruction of evidence.

        2. The On-Scene Commander shall ensure that the identity of all persons entering the crime scene is recorded.

c. Record any alterations/actions made at the crime scene due to emergency assistance to victims, apprehension of the perpetrator, actions of persons reporting the crime, handling of any items of evidentiary value, etc.

8. Request backup assistance as needed.

9. Observe and note all appropriate conditions and events, including time, temperature, weather conditions, lighting, etc. Note any remarks made by victims, witnesses, bystanders, suspects, etc.

10. Note the license plates of vehicles parked near the crime scene and be aware of suspicious persons on hand at, or near the crime scene.

11. Determine if an investigative unit should be contacted in accordance with Section B below.

12. If the incident meets the criteria for mandatory PIO notification (as stated in Policy 6.03 "Public Information") the Chief of Police, or his designee, will be notified of the incident via the chain of command.

13. Provide superior officers and any other investigative personnel arriving on the scene with complete information concerning the offense and the measures taken thus far by officers and others.

14. Arrange for the collection of evidence.

    a. Evidence may be collected by any officer, detective, investigator, or crime scene technician. Unless exigent circumstances exist, or authorization of a supervisory officer is received, initial responding officers at major crime scenes should not engage in collection of items of potential evidentiary value.

    b. If a detective responds to the scene (e.g. a homicide), the detective will be responsible to arrange for the collection of evidence.

    c. All personnel will follow crime scene processing and evidence collection procedures and principles as established in the Georgia Peace Officers Reference Text, applicable procedures learned through training, and any applicable state or federal statutes.

    d. Officers having questions about the collection and preservation of evidence should consult with a detective or an evidence technician.

15. As appropriate, interview the complainant, victim, witnesses, and suspect. Determine what information is known and obtain written statements if possible.

a. Initial responding officers at major crime scenes where investigative personnel are summoned should only engage in obtaining basic information. Unless directed otherwise, in depth interviews and written statements should be obtained by responding investigators.

b. Contact the E-911 Center for language translation services if required.

16. As appropriate, canvass the neighborhood/area surrounding the crime scene as soon as possible, in order to identify additional witnesses or others who may have some knowledge of the crime.

B. Investigative Assistance

The Department maintains investigative specialists both on-duty, and in an on-call status when not on duty, to provide assistance in the investigation of incidents.

Generally, investigative specialists, will conduct the investigation of any major crime, any incident that is complex in nature, or any incident that would require the uniform officer remain out-of-service for an extended period of time. The responding officer or supervisor should notify the appropriate investigative unit of the following types of incidents:

- All death investigations
- Robbery
- Rape
- Aggravated assault
- Aggravated battery
- Kidnapping
- Criminal damage to property (in which damage exceeds $5,000.00)
- Burglary (in which loss exceeds $5,000.00)
- Child abuse or neglect
- Elder abuse or neglect
- Arson
- Hazardous devices located, or credible threats of a hazardous device
- Fatality traffic crashes
- Information of an evidentiary value resides on a computer or other electronic storage device, and the device is plugged in or turned on.
- VGCSA cases where:
    - Drug Identification is needed.
    - There is any quantity of heroin.
    - Methamphetamine laboratory chemicals/compounds are found.
    - A large quantity of drugs appears to be packaged for shipping/resale.
    - The suspect wants to give credible information concerning other drug suspects/sales.

- More than $500.00 cash is found, or a vehicle is to be seized, in conjunction with possession of four ounces of marijuana or more than 1 gram of (pure) cocaine or other drug.

Based upon the circumstances of the incident, the detective or investigator may or may not assume immediate responsibility for the investigation of the incident. Regardless of whether the detective or investigator responds, the officer will follow any guidance given to him by a detective or investigator.

III. NON-CRIMINAL CASE RESPONSE PROCEDURE

A. Public Assistance

The Department is routinely requested to assist the public in non-criminal cases. The role of the officer in these cases includes, but is not limited to:

- Interviewing complainants and witnesses.
- Locating missing persons.
- Returning found/evidentiary property to the owner, if known/possible.
- Making necessary personal notifications.
- Conducting inspections.
- Documenting civil disputes.
- Investigating deaths, suicides, and overdoses.
- Investigating suspicious activities and injuries.
- Recording information obtained in these activities.

B. Notification of Next of Kin

At times it also becomes necessary for line personnel to notify or assist in the notification of next of kin of deceased, seriously injured, or seriously ill persons. When this occurs the following guidelines should be used:

1. Use good common sense, understanding, and compassion. Make every effort to avoid unnecessary grief on the part of the family.

2. Always attempt to notify in person.

    a. If the person being notified is elderly or has a history of illness, the officer should seek professional help, such as the personal physician or personal pastor of the person(s) being notified.

    b. The officer should not notify a minor but should leave word for the parents to call the police or seek other relatives.

    c. If the next of kin is out of state, the officer will attempt to have the police in that jurisdiction personally notify the next of kin.

3. Every effort should always be made to be helpful and provide as much information as possible.

4. In the event a Department employee is seriously injured or killed, the procedure outlined in Policy 2.09 "Injury and Death Notification" will be followed.

C. Terrorism Intelligence/Information

The Department recognizes the need to quickly assess terrorism-related intelligence and direct that information to one or more organizations best suited to analyze and evaluate such information.

1. Liaison with Other Agencies

   a. The Department participates in the regional Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The JTTF serves as liaison with other organizations for the exchange of terrorism-related information.

   b. The Department participates in the MCS Intelligence Unit, a county-wide joint task force, which gathers and investigates terrorism related information/intelligence.

2. Suspected Terrorism Contacts

   a. Officers who make contact with a subject who is suspected of terrorism-related activities will contact an MCS Intelligence Agent before releasing the individual. The MCS Agent will determine if it is necessary to respond to the scene for further investigation.

   b. A thorough vehicle search and inventory is desirable on any vehicle suspected of being involved in terrorism-related activity. Department policy regarding vehicle searches applies.

   c. Officers will document all terrorism-related information/ intelligence (whether encountered or reported by the public) on an incident report. The incident report will be forwarded to the MCS Intelligence Unit for follow-up investigation.

IV. INCIDENT REPORTING

Officers conducting preliminary and follow-up investigations shall complete appropriate reports in accordance with Department policy.

A. Initial Report

The initial report documents an incident/event, leading up to the point where the

officer determines that further investigation is required. The initial report generally consists of all activities completed by the initial responding officer and any back-up officers until they leave the scene, or an investigator responds to the scene and assumes responsibility for the investigation. All of the initial report is released under the open records law (50-18-72 et seq). Trying to protect information by putting it under a supplemental or officer narrative does not protect it from release. Release is judged by the content of the narratives.

Generally, an incident report should be completed when one or more of the following has occurred:

- Citizen reports of crimes, to include any lead information/intelligence pertaining to suspected criminal activity
- Citizen complaints/reports of noncriminal activity
- Incidents resulting in an employee being dispatched or assigned where information should be documented for future reference
- Criminal and noncriminal cases initiated by law enforcement employees
- Incidents involving arrests and juvenile complaint forms

Do not make reference to any supplemental reports (i.e. - "see supplemental") in the initial report.

B. Investigative Follow-up/Supplemental Reports

Investigative follow-up/supplemental reports are used to add other pertinent information to a report. An incident may contain none or many investigative follow-up/supplemental reports. The following personnel will complete a supplemental report documenting their actions.

- Back-up officers who take action at the scene of an incident
- Personnel who take action after they leave the scene of an incident
- Investigators who respond to the scene of an incident and assume responsibility for the investigation
- Personnel conducting follow-up activities.

C. Accuracy and Thoroughness of Reports

Personnel should consider accuracy and thoroughness of utmost importance when submitting an incident/supplemental report. The report should contain sufficient information to provide a thorough recording of details and should provide the reader with a clear understanding of what actually occurred. Information which should be included in a report includes, but is not limited to:

1. A chronological order of events, to include the answers to the following questions: who, what, where, when, why and how.

2. The elements of any crime committed.

3. How the crime was discovered and reported; and the relationship of reporting individuals to victims or others involved.

4. Physical evidence discovered and the names of the officers responsible for evidence collection.

5. Complete information about the complainant, victims, witnesses, suspects, and arrestees (name, address, telephone number(s), etc.).

6. Results of interviews/interrogations.

7. Any relevant weather or situational conditions at the scene.

8. The identity of individuals who made any diagrams, sketches, photographs, audio/video recordings, etc. at the scene.

Officers who process a crime/traffic crash scene shall complete an incident/supplemental report containing the details of the activities conducted.

D. Report Classification

Reports will be classified in one of the following categories:

1. **Active:** requires further investigation.
2. **Unfounded:** investigation reveals that the reported incident never occurred.
3. **Cleared by Arrest:** subject is in custody or a warrant has been issued.
4. **Ex-Cleared:** a case is exceptionally cleared if:
   a. No criminal offense was committed (i.e. – natural death, construction accident, etc.).
   b. The offense perpetrator is known, but the officer is not going to prosecute, and the victim is advised on procedures for obtaining a warrant.
   c. The victim states that no further action is wanted.
   d. If the offense perpetrator is known and a decision is made to refer the case to another service organization (i.e. – runaway, fraud, etc.).