

Germantown Police Department

Policies and Procedures

Number: 1-27
Effective Date: January 1, 2003
Subject: Principles of Command
Previous Revisions:

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to specify the principles underlying command functions, including unity of command, and to designate the order of succession to command.

II. POLICY

Supervisors exercise authority in the interest of the Germantown Police Department. Therefore, it is the policy of the Germantown Police Department that those persons who are assigned to positions of command will carry out their duties in ways which are most conducive to attaining the Department's mission, goals and objectives. The principle of Unity of Command is employed so that an employee receives orders from only one superior at any given time. To ensure Unity of Command and to maintain efficient management of the Germantown Police Department, clearly defined lines of authority establish a structural relationship between each employee and the Chief of Police.

III. DISCUSSION

The Department embraces and utilizes the principles of Unity of Command. It is recognized, however, that policing is dynamic and constantly changing. One of the basic missions of the Department is to provide police services with integrity and a spirit of excellence. It is for this purpose that, from time to time, the Department will explore, implement, and evaluate innovative approaches to supervision, management and organization within various components. These approaches may have variations from the traditional Unity of Command principles, and these areas will be assessed for their efficiency and effectiveness.

IV. DEFINITIONS

Chain of Command: Chain of Command is a series of positions, each of which is directly commanded by the one immediately above it. Although a Department member may have numerous subordinates, he/she has only one immediate supervisor.

V. GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY

Direct supervisors and subordinates will keep each other informed of their activities. Additionally, Department members will keep themselves aware of their relative position in the organization, to whom they are accountable, and who is accountable to them.

VI. TABLE OF ORGANIZATION AND CHAIN OF COMMAND FOR THE DEPARTMENT

The Chain of Command of the Department will be as follows: Chief of Police, Deputy Chief, Inspector, Captain, Lieutenant, Sergeant, Senior Police Officer, Police Officer or line worker.

VII. AUTHORITY AND ORDER OF SUCCESSION

The Chief of Police will appoint an Acting Chief of Police to serve during the Chief's absence. During the period of appointment, the Acting Chief has the same powers and authority as the Chief of Police and performs the duties of the Chief of Police. If no specific Acting Chief of Police is named, the following order of succession will apply:

- A. Deputy Chief
- B. Inspector – Uniform Patrol

VIII. AUTHORITY WITHIN THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

Sound management practice demands that each commander or supervisor issue specific orders only to immediately subordinate personnel. The subordinate then issues orders in the same manner, until the point of implementation is reached. Due to overlapping shifts and days off patterns, field supervisors will be considered as operationally responsible for directing subordinates, even though they may not be administratively responsible for those subordinates.

When a deviation from the normal practice is believed justified, a higher authority in that chain of command may issue direct orders. However, when such action is necessary, all intermediates in the chain of command will be informed.

IX. AUTHORITY OUTSIDE THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

Command personnel will attempt to limit their orders to an echelon that immediately follows within their chain of command. If orders conflict, a senior member outside a subordinate's chain of command may issue an order, but will notify the subordinate's supervisor if the new order alters or interferes with previous orders or functions of the subordinate.

X. ASSIGNMENT TO COMMAND

The Chief of Police has final authority to assign personnel to particular command positions and shall ensure that positions are filled by employees holding the appropriate classifications and ranks.

Among the criteria for determining assignments are levels of experience, extent of training, past performance, and ability to perform the duties required. The Chief of Police may make a temporary appointment to an acting position of command, in the best interest of the Department, but such special assignments shall yield to the regular assignment procedure as soon as practicable.

XI. TRANSFER OF COMMAND

Upon assuming a new assignment and continually thereafter, a Command Officer should critically evaluate all aspects of the command. Newly assigned Command Officers should review existing policies, procedures and programs to determine if the need for which they were enacted remains unchanged.

Upon change of command, the Commanding Officer being replaced has a duty to lend full assistance in making the command transition as smooth and orderly as possible. Orientation of a new Command Officer should include any problems of the command and assistance in maintaining useful community and professional contacts.

XII. COMMAND FUNCTIONS

Commanding Officers of all echelons will take all reasonable steps to complete their assignments. As some assignments are ongoing or long term, commanders will make frequent progress reports on them to their superiors, either orally or in writing, as the superior may prefer. Command Officers will help their subordinates achieve goals by furnishing direction and coordination for their work. Command Officers will take positive steps to create and maintain high morale and a spirit of service among subordinates.

XIII. DIRECTING AND CONTROLLING COMPONENTS

Commanding Officers may develop rules or Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) for directing and controlling specific functions of their Divisions, subject to the approval of the Deputy Chief and/or the Chief of Police. When approved, these rules will apply only to the employees of that particular component. In an emergency, special orders deviating from the rules may be issued, lasting only for the duration of the emergency.

XIV. DELEGATION TO SUBORDINATES

Unless specific orders prohibit it, Command Officers of any echelon may delegate any duty assigned to them to their subordinates, but retain responsibility for ensuring that the duties are properly performed. They may accept any available aid from other components of the Department in the discharge of their duties. Department personnel assigned to positions of command retain the position's responsibility until relieved of it by higher authority.

XV. ABSENCE OF COMMANDING OFFICER

In the absence of the Commanding Officer of any component of the Department, the senior member of the next lower echelon within the component will assume command, unless an alternate has been designated by the Commanding Officer or by a higher authority in the direct chain of command, or unless higher authority has indicated that the position should remain temporarily vacant.

XVI. ASSUMPTION OF COMMAND BY HIGHER AUTHORITY

Components of the Department are ordinarily commanded by an employee who has been assigned by the Chief of Police to take actual charge of the unit. However, the Commanding Officer of each higher echelon, within the direct chain of command, may assume command of the component if it is believed necessary to do so. The Chief of Police and all subordinates affected by this action shall be notified immediately.

XVII. MULTI-UNIT OR MULTI-DIVISION ASSIGNMENTS

When responsibility for an assignment is entirely within a single unit, but requires assistance of components from other units, divisions or sections, a Command Officer attached to the responsible component and present for duty will have authority over an officer of the same rank detailed from another component.

XVIII. CHAIN OF COMMAND DURING EMERGENCIES

Command of all Police personnel assigned to the scene of an emergency will be assumed by employees in the regular command structure of the Department: (i.e., Patrolman, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, Inspector, Deputy Chief, Chief). In situations lacking the regular command structure, the ranking officer will supervise until the arrival of any personnel activating the chain of command.

Any officer assuming command at the scene of an emergency will inform the person being relieved of the superior officer's intent to assume command, and will then notify Communications that command has been assumed.

XIX. SENIORITY AS A FACTOR OF COMMAND

When two or more officers of equal rank are working together on the same assignment or detail, and an emergency arises requiring a command decision, the senior officer will assume command if no one has been assigned command by competent authority. Seniority will be determined first by rank and second by continuous service in that rank. Seniority will not be used to determine command, except in an emergency.

XX. REVIEW PROCESS

An annual review of this policy shall be conducted to determine if it should be revised, cancelled or continued in its present form.

This order shall remain in effect until revoked or superseded by competent authority.