



SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT
Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania

Policy 1-13

Policy Title: Command Protocol and Communication

Date of Issue: December 1, 2022

Rescinds: None

By Authority of:

Chief of Police

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish command and control procedures during exceptional situations, routine operations, the absence of the Chief of Police, and establish guidelines for notification to the Chief of Police / Township officials after normal duty hours. It also requires personnel to obey a lawful order, and details the procedures for conflicting orders.

II. Policy

It is the policy of the Springfield Township Police Department to achieve effective direction, coordination, and control of all personnel and operations by using clearly defined lines of command authority and communication. It is also the policy of the department to notify the Chief of Police when certain events occur after normal duty hours.

III. Command Responsibility

- A. The Chief of Police has the authority and responsibility for management, direction, planning, staffing, performance, and control of the operation and administration of the department. The responsibility and authority of the Chief of Police is provided for by the resolution of the Springfield Township Board of Commissioners.
- B. All incidents, occurrences, circumstances, and influences affecting the department and its role and responsibilities are the responsibility of the Chief of Police. The Chief of Police is the sole designee, as provided for by the Springfield Township Board of Commissioners, responsible to the citizens of Springfield Township to provide police service.

IV. Chain of Command

- A. As the Chief Executive Officer of the department, the Chief of Police has absolute command authority. An unbroken line of authority extends from the Chief of Police through the officer in command at each level in the department.
 - 1. In the event of a scheduled absence of the Chief of Police, the Chief will designate the Lieutenant to assume overall command of the department until his return. In the event the Chief of Police becomes unavailable and is unable to make such a designation, the Lieutenant will assume command of the department until the return of the Chief or until a person is designated by the Springfield Township Board of Commissioners.
 - 2. Except as provided for in the previous paragraph, the officer with the highest rank available will have the authority of the Chief of Police.
 - 3. In the case of multiple supervisors on the scene, each supervisor is responsible for their assigned divisions or area of responsibility, unless otherwise directed by a higher-ranking officer.

- B. Rank Structure
 - 1. Lines of authority within each component will be based on rank in the following descending order:
 - a. Chief of Police
 - b. Lieutenant
 - c. Sergeant
 - d. Corporal
 - e. Police Officer
 - 2. In the absence of the Chief of Police or a Lieutenant, command of the department will be the responsibility of the Sergeant or Corporal on duty.

- C. Command Protocol
 - 1. In a single operation involving multiple personnel, supervisors appearing on scene will announce they are taking control and assuming command.
 - 2. In situations where a supervisor is not present, the highest ranking officer will always assume command, unless otherwise directed by the Chief of Police, or his designee.
 - 3. All supervisory personnel are accountable for the performance and conduct of employees under their control. This applies to each level of supervision within the department.

V. Obedience of Orders

- A. Each employee and member of the department shall obey any lawful order of a superior or supervisory officer, including any order relayed from a superior or supervisory officer by an employee of the same or lesser rank.
- B. When an order is issued to an employee which is in conflict with any other order issued, the following shall be controlling in resolving the conflict:
 - 1. Any employee who receives an order that conflicts with any previous order or instruction will advise the supervisor or person who issued the second order.
 - 2. Responsibility of countermanding the original order rests with the supervisor or person who issued the second order.
 - 3. In the event neither of the issuing supervisors or persons can be readily advised, the employee will carry out the most recent order and advise a supervisor of the conflict as soon as possible.
- C. Officers and employees shall not obey any order which they know or should know would require them to commit any illegal act. If in doubt as to the legality of the order, officers shall request the issuing officer to clarify the order or to confer with a higher authority.

VI. Communication and Cooperation

In order to encourage, support, and facilitate communications, coordination, and cooperation among all personnel, and all functions of the department, the following mechanisms for information exchange shall be conducted:

- A. Patrol shift briefings will be conducted at the station at the commencement of each shift. Investigators on duty at the time will attempt to attend these briefings.
- B. Platoon meetings may be scheduled at the discretion of the Sergeant.
- C. Command meetings will be scheduled by the Chief of Police with the Lieutenant or other appropriate personnel at the discretion of the Chief or upon request of the Lieutenant.
- D. Staff meetings will be scheduled by the Chief of Police at his discretion. These meetings shall allow for informal dialogue and formal planning essential to efficient operation and administration of the department.
 - 1. A written agenda shall be prepared and distributed.
 - 2. Minutes will be recorded in the form of a memorandum and distributed to all supervisors.

3. Staff meetings shall include: Chief of Police, the Lieutenant, the Sergeants, and invited guests. Corporals may attend when their respective Sergeant is unable to attend.
- E. Department meetings will be scheduled by the Chief of Police at his discretion.
- F. The department's email system will be used to reach individual employees, groups of employees, or all employees in the furtherance of making available the most current and updated information concerning matters of mutual or general interest.
- G. Unless an emergency exists, employees shall check their email, voice mail, and other means of department communication, at the beginning of their shift.

VII. Command Notification

- A. Utilizing the chain of command, the Chief of Police shall be notified in the following situations:
 1. When an officer is seriously injured in the line of duty.
 2. Whenever a weapon is discharged at an officer or by an officer, except when the weapon is fired to put down an animal, or used for training.
 3. Whenever it is necessary for an officer to inflict serious injury on another person.
 4. Whenever a prisoner escapes custody.
 5. Whenever another agency wants to conduct a drug raid in the jurisdiction of the Springfield Township Police Department.
 6. When Township or police property is substantially damaged by acts of vandalism.
 7. Whenever a barricaded subject refuses to comply with a lawful action or arrest by police.
 8. Whenever a disturbance occurs requiring a substantial police response to quell.
 9. Whenever a catastrophe, large fire, flood, explosion, hazmat incident or any large-scale event occurs, such as a plane or train crash, etc.
 10. Whenever the threat of or actual signing of criminal charges are lodged against any police department personnel, whether the incident stems from on-duty or off-duty circumstances.
 11. Whenever a supervisor or senior officer finds it necessary to relieve any personnel from their duties because of conduct or any other reason.
 12. Whenever a fatality occurs in the jurisdiction of the Springfield Township Police.

13. Whenever members of the police department are called to respond to an incident as part of a county team.
 14. Whenever there may be a question as to the agency's liability or an incident occurs which may result in heightened community interest.
- B. It is the responsibility of the on-duty shift supervisor, or senior officer to ensure that the notification is made to the Lieutenant in the circumstances listed above. If for some reason the Lieutenant cannot be reached, notification shall be made directly to the Chief of Police. If unavailable, notification shall be made directly to the Township Manager.

