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Cobb County Police Department

Policy 1.04

CHAIN OF COMMAND

Effective Date: January 12, 2013	
Rescinds: Policy 1.04 (June 10, 2009)	
Related Orders: None	
Issued By: Chief J.R. Houser	**Page 1 of 3**
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 chain of command is based upon the concept that management, supervision and staff must communicate in order to be effective. All Police Department personnel will observe the chain of command as set forth in this policy.

I. AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

A. Each supervisor of the Department is accountable for the performance of the employees assigned to his command.

B. Each employee of the Department is vested with the authority to make a decision to accomplish the assigned task. Each member, in whom delegated authority is vested, is accountable for the use of such delegated authority, as well as the failure to use it.

II. CHAIN OF COMMAND

A. The chain of command, according to rank, shall be as follows:

1. Sergeant
2. Lieutenant
3. Captain
4. Major
5. Deputy Chief
6. Chief

Above the rank of Chief the chain of command continues to the Department of Public Safety through the Director, when authorized or required.

B. If a person is assigned to a special unit or function which does not have all ranks of the chain of command, he would be expected to utilize those ranks which are assigned to the unit. For example, if a unit is commanded by a Lieutenant, but has no Sergeant in the chain of command, the Lieutenant would be the first in the chain.

III. CHAIN OF COMMAND INVOLVING MORE THAN ONE SECTION

In police incidents, there are often occasions when personnel of different Bureaus or Units of the Department are at a scene. When situations such as these arise, the highest ranking officer assuming responsibility of the incident will be in charge of the incident. However, the ranking official may defer authority to the Bureau or Unit with primary responsibility of the specific incident to be in command (i.e., at the scene of a homicide, the ranking Detective; at a traffic fatality scene, ranking S.T.E.P. Officer, etc.). This highest ranking officer, even if deferring authority to a lower ranking officer, shall always be responsible and accountable for the supervision of the incident.

In the event two or more Department members of the same rank are present at an incident, the member having primary responsibility of the scene will be in charge of the incident. (e.g. if the on-duty supervisor (Sergeant) and the S.T.E.P. supervisor (Sergeant) are present at a traffic fatality scene, the S.T.E.P. supervisor will be in charge.)

IV. ISSUES OUTSIDE THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

If an employee in one chain of command needs to formally communicate a matter of administration or operations to an employee in a different chain of command, the matter should go to the highest level necessary in one chain before transfer to another chain. For example, when an employee has a formal complaint against an employee in another precinct, he should forward it through his chain to his precinct commander, who will forward the issue to the appropriate precinct commander.

V. CIRCUMVENTING THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

Circumstances may arise which make it necessary to alter the traditional chain of command (e.g. – illegal, immoral, or improper conduct by a superior officer; matters which, if reported through the proper chain of command, might hold the reporting employee up to ridicule, retaliation, or other such actions; emergency situations, crime scenes, etc.).

A. Should it become necessary or appropriate to alter the chain of command and proceed past a specific person, the employee will notify his immediate supervisor as soon as possible, if appropriate. A higher member of the chain of command may relieve the employee of that responsibility.

B. Employees should not circumvent the chain of command by falsely disguising any operational or official issues directly impacting the Department as a “personal matter” or matter of urgency. Employees must realize that efficient operation is paramount and personal lives are often impacted by the work schedules and events inherent in the law enforcement profession. Issues regarding work schedules, assignments, equipment problems, etc., should be addressed to the immediate supervisor and handled by the chain of command.

C. Employees of the Department should not construe this policy to mean that they are prohibited from greeting or otherwise engaging in causal conversation any superior officer in this Department or any official outside this Department.

VI. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

A. Written communication shall be directed up the chain of command using the following example:

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chief

FROM: Officer

THRU: Deputy Chief
Major
Captain
Lieutenant
Sergeant

SUBJECT: Transfer

DATE: January 1, 2000

B. Written communication using this format must actually be sent through each level specified in the memorandum. It is not permissible to send the original to the "TO" with copies to persons in the "THRU" line. Copies may be sent to persons outside the chain of command who have a need for the information.

C. Any person in the "THRU" line, with valid cause, has the option to refuse to forward the communication on through the chain of command. Such action would dictate returning the memorandum to the sender with an explanation of why it is not being forwarded through the chain of command. This explanation must be written.

D. Written correspondence should be addressed to the person responsible for taking action on the subject. Not all correspondence needs to go to the Chief of Police.