COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Subject: RECORDS MANAGEMENT	
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I.   **Purpose**

To provide procedures for a comprehensive reporting and records management system. This policy applies to written records as well as computerized versions and the management of both**.**

II.   **Statement of Policy**

It shall be the policy of the Covington Police Department to maintain a Records Unit for the purpose of control, maintenance, security and retrieval of all reports generated by officers and employees of the department. The records management function is a responsibility of the Support Services Division. The Support Services Captain shall conduct an audit and evaluation of the complaint recording and field reporting process, as needed.

A.   The following records shall be maintained in the Records Division:

1.   Accident reports.

2.   Master name index.

3.   Arrest reports/ incident reports.

4.   Fingerprints.

5.   Municipal Court warrants.

6.   Payroll.

B.   The following records will be maintained by the Investigative Division.

1.   Internal affairs reports.

2.   Investigative case files.

3.   Intelligence records.

4.   Informant files.

5. Juvenile investigative files. (Note: this department will not maintain juvenile records. Juvenile records will be forwarded to the Newton County Juvenile Court).

III.   Incident Report Procedures

A.   Incident recorded – each incident or complaint received by telephone at the Communications Center will be promptly recorded. If the call is received from an officer, the dispatcher shall properly record the call on the daily police log. Incidents or calls for service to be recorded include:

1. Citizen's reports of crimes.

2. Citizen's complaints.

3. Citizen's request for service when an:

a. Officer is dispatched.

b. Employee is assigned to investigate.

c. Employee is assigned to take action at a later time.

4. Criminal and non-criminal cases initiated by law enforcement officers.

5. Incidents involving arrests / citations.

B.   Case Numbering System – Each incident, call for service or other police activity shall be recorded on the daily police log maintained by the Communication Center. Each recorded incident is assigned a computer generated case number from the Spillman System. Each case number is unique in that a sequential number is assigned to each case. The case number ties together all the forms and reports related to a particular incident. The first two digits indicate the year the incident occurred and the last six digits indicate the sequential number of the incidents.

C.   Completion of Field Reports - **All reports and other forms should be completed by an officer before the completion of a workday. An extension of one day may be provided upon approval by a supervisor; however, all reports must be completed prior to the officer's off days.** Field reports and other forms will be reviewed by a supervisor before the reports are filed in Records. Supervisors will review the report for neatness, clarity and completeness. Any report that is not approved will be given back to the reporting officer to correct.

D.   Arrest Reports/Fingerprinting/Photographs – An arrest/ booking/report will be completed on every person arrested on the following charges.

1. Any state charge other than a minor traffic violation. (Any charge without a warrant).

2. Driving under the influence.

3. Disorderly conduct.

4.   Any offense defined by GCIC.

Fingerprints will be obtained on every person charged with a fingerprintable offense as defined by GCIC.

Photographs will be taken of every person who is fingerprinted.

IV.   Reports Processing and Distribution

A.   When reports are completed and approved by a supervisor, the reports will be sent to Records, where they are checked for accuracy and for proper filing and storage. If a report is missing, the clerk will notify the appropriate watch commander or supervisor, who will provide information to the clerk of the report status and shall have the report turned in within two days.

B.   Forms to be used in field reporting include, but not limited to:

1.   Incident reports.

2.   State accident reports.

3.   Private property accident reports.

4.   Uniform traffic citations.

5.   CPD warning citations.

6.   Juvenile complaint forms

7.   Vehicle Impound and Inventory forms

8.   Property and Evidence form

9.   Field Interview Card

10.   GCIC acknowledgement form

C.   Distribution of agency records to organizational components and other agencies will be as follows:

1.   Accidents reports – The original copy will be sent to the Georgia Department of Public Safety and a copy will be maintained in departmental files. Copies may be given to parties involved for insurance purposes.

2.   Incident reports – Spillman–generated reports will serve as the primary source of incident reports, however the paper incident reports will be used in the event the Spillman Computer System goes down. Copies of incident reports are routed to CID for review and investigative follow-up, based on solvability factors.

3.   Arrest/booking reports – white copy is maintained in departmental files; yellow copy is maintained by investigation. No copies are to be distributed to any other than law enforcement agencies.

4. Juvenile Complaint Forms – The completed Juvenile Complaint Form and the original petitions are forwarded to the Juvenile Court of Newton County. A copy may be maintained by the case officer on his/her diskette. A copy of the Juvenile Complaint Form will be maintained by CID when a criminal investigative file has been opened on the juvenile.

V. **Open Records, Records Accessibility and Reproduction**

A. Citizens can get a copy of an accident report or incident report 24 hours per day, seven days a week by coming to the Customer Service window and providing the Customer Service Representative with a case number.

B. Only authorized personnel have access to Spillman Records Management software on a 24/7 basis.

C. Under Georgia Open Records Act, any person is entitled to review a police report of an incident with the exclusion of the following information.

1. Records specifically required by the federal government to be kept confidential.

2. Medical or veterinary records and similar files, the disclosure of which would be an invasion of personal privacy.

3. Law enforcement or prosecution records that would involve the disclosure of a confidential source, disclose confidential investigative or prosecution material which would endanger the life or physical safety of any person or persons, or disclose the existence of a confidential surveillance or investigation. (NOTE: stalking and/or domestic violence reports are not open).

4. Records of law enforcement, prosecution or regulatory agencies in any pending investigation or prosecution of criminal or unlawful activity, other than initial police arrest reports and initial incident reports.

5. Names of juveniles, unless the juvenile is to be tried as an adult and release of juvenile information is authorized by a superior court judge.

6. Active Internal Affairs reports.

7. Criminal history files.

8. Informant files.

D. Personnel Records of Law Enforcement

1. Personnel records of law enforcement employees are generally subject to public disclosure, after redacting social security number, month and day of birth, financial information, insurance/medical information.

2. Additionally, for sworn law enforcement officers' home address, home telephone number, identification of immediate family or dependents shall be redacted from the record.

3. Medical records of law enforcement officers are not open records. Also, veterinary records of police K-9s are not open records.

E.   Open records requests do not have to be made in writing. The keeper of the records should log the request and attempt to obtain such requests in writing to eliminate any dispute as to what was requested or when the request was made.

F.   Reproduction Cost.

   1.   Accident reports $3.00

   2.   Incident reports $3.00

   3.   Other documents $3.00

   4.   Mailed reports $4.00

   5.   Criminal histories $20.00

G.   Report Control / Maintenance / Retrieval.

It is the responsibility of the on–duty patrol supervisor to maintain control over the completion of field reports. Reports are to be entered on the computer and turned over to the Records Clerk, where they are properly filed and the data entered on the Spillman System. Incidents and accidents reports are filed sequentially by month and will be maintained in a file. Retrieval of hard copies of the records may be done only by the Clerk, the Support Services Captain, or his designee. Records information is available twenty-four hours a day through the Spillman System. All criminal history information for local arrests contained in the Spillman database shall be considered confidential information. Retrieval and release of the information shall be done only by the Support Services personnel designated to do so as set forth in this policy. All network database information will be accessed only by security access codes provided to all personnel.

H.   Disposition Forms – Disposition forms that are received from the Newton County Superior Court will be filed in the offender's criminal history file. Disposition on all city offenses will be properly recorded in the Municipal Court docket book.

I.   Master Name Index –The master name index includes the name and ID numbers of all persons arrested for crimes occurring within the city limits, except for juveniles. When a subject is arrested and booked, his name and date of birth will be checked against the master name index. If it is found that the person has a prior ID number, this number will be assigned. If the subject has no prior arrest, a number will be assigned only after a thorough check of the master name index. This number will appear on all reports, correspondence and other documents concerning this person. The Spillman System also maintains access to the master name index.

VI.   Forms Management

The Support Services Captain or designee shall be responsible for departmental form development as related to the records management function. Requirement for new or revised forms will be reviewed by the Chief of Police for approval. New forms will be scrutinized for:

A.   Suitability, content and need.

B.   Possible duplication.

C.   Cost of reproduction.

D.   Reproduction method.

VII.   Computer Network Management

The Chief of Police or his designee shall conduct an annual audit of the Covington Police Department Computer Network and Records Management System.

A.   The audit will address the following areas, at a minimum:

        1.   Verification of all passwords;

        2.   Verification of all access codes;

        3.   Report of access violations.

B.   The Captain of Support Services Division shall, at the request of the Chief of Police or Internal Affairs Investigator, request that a check of access times be reviewed when it is believed there has been a violation of this policy. This request may be made at any time.

C.   The introduction of outside computer software by police department personnel shall be forbidden. This includes, but not limited to, training, word processing, or any type of game(s) for the purpose of amusement. If an employee wishes to introduce new software that may allow the department, division, shift or unit to function better, the software must be submitted to the Captain of Support Services for review by the Information Systems Specialist. Only the approval of new software by the Chief of Police shall be allowed for use on all departmental computers.

D.   The introduction of computer disks or other storage media that might contain computer viruses is an ongoing concern. It is recognized that with the complexity of the Covington Police Department's network there will be a need for the transfer of data from computers outside of this agency. Therefore, it is up to each individual employee to take the responsibility to make sure they are introducing only "clean" disks or other storage media to the network. All material downloaded from the internet or from computers or networks that do not belong to the City must be scanned for viruses prior to being placed onto the computer system. Repeated failure by an employee to take the necessary precautions may lead to disciplinary action.

E.   The IT Specialist shall control all network and database storage maintenance on a day-to-day basis. A contracted outside company shall serve as a back-up for the IT Specialist.

F.   The IT Specialist, along with the contracted outside company, shall monitor the backup and retrieval of all information stored in the database and the long-term storage of such data. It is understood that in many instances this process is automated and will be checked on periodically.

        1.   Tape drive backup shall be done at the Spillman database server located at Covington/Newton County 911 Center where backup tapes will be stored. Taped backup is done each day automatically.

2. The server located at the police department also automatically backs up all data each day.

3. The R-File Manager Digital Imaging System located in Records will be backed up weekly by use of a tape backup system.

4. Back-up of individual employee's workstations or laptops will be the responsibility of that employee to ensure that data located exclusively on their hard drive is backed up as needed.

VIII. Mobile Computers (Laptops)

A. The department shall use Dell Latitude Laptops as the standard issue mobile data computers.

B. All computers are given a unique name that identifies it and allows access to the Network. Access to the mobile computer's configuration settings is limited to the IT Specialist only, who are responsible for the initial configuration and installation of all mobile computers.

C. The mobile computer's network configurations can not be modified to allow unauthorized introduction of software programs or other files, or modified to allow manipulation of or alteration of any current program.

D. All mobile computers are password protected.

E. The mobile connection to the network is accomplished by using a Broadband Access air card running thorough a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to create a secure socket layer between the mobile computer and the network that provides additional security.

F. The laptops in the patrol vehicles' connection to the network is accomplished by using a device called the Rocket, which encompasses the broadband access card, which then connects to the Radio IP software. The Radio IP software is a secure connection between 911 and our network.

G. Guidelines for use:

1. Officers who have successfully completed the required testing will be authorized to receive and disseminate information via GCIC/NCIC and will be allowed to perform checks for vehicle registrations, driver's license, and warrants.

2. Employees will not remove the laptop from the police vehicle. Only a supervisor or the IT Specialist is authorized to remove a laptop from a police vehicle for any reason.

IX. Customer Service Representatives

A. The department shall hire and maintain a staff of civilian employees to serve as Customer Service Representatives (CSRs).

B. Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) shall be responsible for handling the front desk and the window where citizens come for copies of reports, to pay fines, for information and questions to be answered, etc.

C. At 5:00 p.m. each workday and on weekends, all City of Covington phones are transferred to the police department. The CSRs are responsible for answering the after-hours phone, taking complaints from citizens about problems with utilities, cutoffs due to non-payments, dispatching employees from utilities to handle emergencies, etc.

D. When the CSR receives emergency phone calls from citizens, they shall immediately forward the call to the 911 Center for dispatching.

X. Uniform Crime Reporting

The Administrative Assistant assigned to Support Services shall be responsible for collecting and submitting UCR data to GCIC on a monthly basis.

This SOP supersedes any SOP previously issued.

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Stacey L. Cotton
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Chief of Police