

MISSION AND GENERAL POLICY STATEMENTS OF THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK POLICE

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INTRODUCTION

The Prince George's County Division of the Maryland-National Capital Park Police is the law enforcement arm of the Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation, whose role is to protect and secure the properties and activities of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and its visitors. The responsibility of the Park Police is to provide assistance to the public during their visit, and to gain their cooperation and compliance with all rules, regulations and laws.

The term "law enforcement" is difficult to define because it encompasses many perceptions as to the services provided or expected, both by the law enforcement community and the public-at-large. The perplexing problem of definition has been generated by the changing police role that has developed over the years because of society's uncertain demands. In view of the increased responsibilities of the Park Police in the park system, it is essential that each officer understand the objectives, mission and general policies of the Maryland-National Capital Park Police, Prince George's County Division.

DIVISION OBJECTIVES

- A. To protect the park resources.
- B. To deploy officers in sufficient numbers to maintain a sense of order in Prince George's County parks.
- C. To prevent, detect and deter criminal activity within Prince George's County parks.
- D. To enforce applicable laws and regulations in Prince George's County parks.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Park Police Division is to provide professional park police services for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission in partnership with the community and other divisions of the Commission in order to provide a safe and secure environment, protect life and property, and identify and apprehend violators.

GENERAL POLICY STATEMENTS

Policy consists of the desire of the community, police ethics (principles and values) and the mandate of the laws that guide the performance of a Park Police officer. Policy is not a statement of what must be done in a particular situation rather it is a means by which management sets forth guiding principles for its officers to follow toward achieving the mission of the Division. Further, the mission and general policy statements of the Division are articulated to inform the public of the principles that will be adhered to by its officers in their performance of the public safety function.

The following general policy statements regarding organization, management, law enforcement, discretion, use of force and the code of ethics are provided to assist Park Police officers in performing their mission.

I. ORGANIZATION

The structure of the Division requires sound organizational control and a utilization of effective management principles. Lines of authority, chain-of-command, unity of command, and the essential principles for an operative organizational structure are all critical to the success of a police organization. Maintaining a continual review of these principles is an integral organizational function.

Each Area of Operation of the Division has the responsibility to adhere to the principles of the organization. To deviate from or circumvent such principles would weaken the total organizational effectiveness, resulting in the loss of cohesive law enforcement services.

II. MANAGEMENT

Considering the organizational goals and mission, all command and supervisory personnel are responsible for adhering to and utilizing Park Police guidelines, directives and policies as effectively and as efficiently as possible. As part of this responsibility, they have an obligation to direct the officers toward the achievement of the Division's mission. Equally important is the responsibility to maintain an effective liaison with other law enforcement organizations and appropriate units of the criminal justice system.

Command personnel are responsible for the performance of all officers and employees under their command. Although authority and function may be delegated to subordinates, command personnel cannot delegate their own responsibility. They are accountable for failures or inadequacies of subordinates. Command personnel are responsible for motivating their subordinates to operate in compliance with park policies and procedures at optimum effectiveness and efficiency.

Supervisors direct the work of others. Success is measured by the performance of subordinates rather than a supervisor's personal production. A supervisor is a leader, evaluator and instructor of their subordinates. They must inform superiors of the accomplishments, short comings and productivity of their subordinates. Supervisors must be concerned for the welfare of their subordinates and be responsible for supporting them in their proper actions. This support does not include protection from the consequences of misconduct when a mistake is made; this will not be concealed or denied. Errors are to be corrected, an effort made to discover the cause and steps taken to preclude its recurrence.

A supervisor is a part of management and is therefore expected to act on behalf of management. They will inform superiors of matters that concern their subordinates and keep subordinates informed of Park Police policies and the reasons for these policies. They control rumors by informing subordinates of the facts.

III. LAW ENFORCEMENT

Crime is a commission or omission of an act prohibited and punished by law. Whenever the Park Police believe a crime has been committed or is about to be committed, it is their responsibility and obligation to prevent, suppress, investigate or solve the crime in accordance with their authority.

Every person is entitled to basic constitutional rights that are not to be violated. Officers must respect the rights of all persons and avoid provocative speech or actions. Once an arrest has taken place it is the obligation of the arresting officer and all supervisory personnel to ensure that post-arrest procedures and prosecutorial steps are followed in accordance with existing law and constitutional safeguards. To fail in this effort is itself a violation of law and of the principles of the law enforcement profession.

The legally mandated authority vested in each sworn officer is derived from the Maryland Land Use Code § 17-302 (2018), as well as from any Mutual Aid Agreements entered into by the Commission with other jurisdictions.

Active patrol by uniformed officers is one of the most useful available resources for crime prevention. To be effective, this resource must be deployed in relation to crime patterns and crime analysis.

Each officer has the responsibility to prevent those crimes that are preventable by police action. It is the patrol officer's responsibility to conduct preliminary investigations of a crime, effect an immediate arrest if possible, and obtain all available information that will assist in the detection and apprehension of the offender.

To be effective in decreasing the number of crimes, law enforcement officers must be selective as to time, place and relative importance of the crime. They must direct their efforts towards those crimes that are easily prevented by patrol.

Park Police officers must act quickly and decisively with regard to major crimes and serious law enforcement problems. A delay in effecting an arrest or taking decisive action is warranted only in the absence of sufficient personnel to restore order or stabilize the situation.

The responsibility for enforcing traffic laws and regulations is shared by all uniformed personnel. The primary objectives of traffic enforcement are: to save lives, to prevent accidents and to expedite the flow of traffic. Attention should be directed towards the enforcement of those laws that, when violated, cause the greatest number of accidents, particularly at those times and places where most traffic violations occur. For minor violations, an officer may warn a violator, if in the officer's judgment the warning would be as effective as a citation.

IV. DISCRETION

Law enforcement operations consist of many diverse activities that are directed toward the attainment of agency objectives. Activities such as patrolling, conducting field interviews and issuing traffic citations are not objectives in themselves, rather they are methods of achieving the ultimate goal of preventing and deterring crime, arresting criminal offenders and preventing traffic accidents.

Decisions in law enforcement operations frequently must be made in an instant and the lives of officers and others may depend on the quality of these decisions. Officers are confronted in stressful situations with both criminal and non-criminal behavior and they must base their conduct and actions in each instance upon the facts of the situation as they reasonably appear, relying on experience, training and judgment to guide them toward morally justified and lawful decisions and actions. The use of warnings, referrals to other agencies and other deterrents may be used when dealing with minor offenses when, in the judgment of the officer, justice would best be served.

What is reasonable in terms of appropriate police action or what constitutes probable cause varies with each situation and different facts may justify a variety of possible actions on the part of an officer including: investigation, detention, arrest or no action at all. The requirement that legal justification always be present imposes a limitation on an officer's actions. In every case, officers must act reasonably and within the limits of their authority.

V. USE OF FORCE

Officers will use only that degree of force that is reasonable and necessary to overcome actual resistance, effect an arrest or to defend themselves or others from bodily harm.

VI. PERSONNEL

Each employee plays an important role in the Park Police Division; therefore, it is incumbent upon the Park Police Division to recruit the most qualified individuals available. The Park Police Division has a responsibility to the employee to develop a personnel program that meets the needs of its members with regards to employment, guidance and proper placement, within the limitations of the organization and budgetary constraints.

Training is a continual process. Its purpose is to improve the employee's performance that, in turn, makes the Park Police more effective. Every supervisor shares in the responsibility for training their subordinates. In addition, it is Park Police policy to encourage employees to pursue educational goals that will improve their job ability and professionalization of the public safety service.

Discipline and punishment are not synonymous. Any employee who voluntarily abides by all rules, regulations and orders is a well-disciplined employee; however, violations require disciplinary action. In determining disciplinary action, all circumstances must be considered.

Complaints against employees will be investigated thoroughly and objectively. Throughout this investigation, the rights of both the employees and citizens will be protected.

A systematic review ensures that adopted policies and procedures are properly implemented. This procedure provides a method by which management identifies organizational problems and review, for appropriate remedial action, to ensure mission accomplishment.

VII. CODE OF ETHICS

All officers of the Prince George's County Division will abide by the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics as published by the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

“As a law enforcement officer, my fundamental duty is to serve humankind; to safeguard lives and property, to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation and the peaceful against violence or disorder; and to respect the constitutional rights of all people to liberty, equality and justice.

I will keep my private life unsullied as an example to all; maintain courageous calm in the face of danger, scorn or ridicule; develop self-restraint; and be constantly mindful of the welfare of others. Honest in thought and deed in both my personal and official life, I will be exemplary in obeying the laws of the land and the regulations of my department. Whatever I see or hear of a confidential nature, or that is confided to me in my official capacity will be kept ever secret, unless revelation is necessary in the performance of my duty.

I will never act officiously or permit personal feelings, prejudices, animosities or friendships to influence my decisions. With no compromise for crime and with relentless prosecution of criminals, I will enforce the law courteously and appropriately without fear or favor, malice or ill will, never employing unnecessary force or violence and never accepting gratuities.

I recognize the badge of my office as a symbol of public faith and I accept it as a public trust to be held so long as I am true to the ethics of police service. I will constantly strive to achieve these objectives and ideals, dedicating myself before God to my chosen profession... law enforcement.”