

GENERAL ORDER



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Title
Traffic Crash Reports

Topic/Number
GO-SPT-401.03

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Distribution
B

Replaces:
GO-SPT-401.03 (Traffic Crash Reports), Effective April 3, 2009
Related to:
CALEA Chapter 61(Traffic)

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I. BACKGROUND

Police agencies are responsible for conducting initial and follow-up traffic crash investigations, preparing the related reports, and taking the proper enforcement action. The purpose of a traffic crash investigation is to determine the cause(s) of a crash in order to assist in developing and guiding traffic enforcement activities that reduce or prevent motor vehicle crashes, property damage, personal injury, and loss of life.

II. POLICY

The policy of the Metropolitan Police Department is to properly investigate traffic crashes and collect the data and information that will assist in developing and guiding traffic enforcement activities and preventing vehicular crashes that result in property damage, injury, and/or death.

III. DEFINITIONS

When used in this directive, the following terms shall have the meaning designated:

1. Member – Sworn employee of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) or MPD Reserve Corps member.
2. Official – Member the rank of Sergeant and above.

3. Traffic Crash Investigation – Process of collecting factual information; identifying and describing persons, roads and motor vehicles involved in a crash; describing crash results in terms of the damage to motor vehicles and roadside objects, injuries to people, marks and residue on the road, and final positions of vehicles and persons; interpreting facts in terms of the behavior of the involved persons; and, when appropriate, specifying the factor, or combination of factors, that caused a crash.
4. Traffic Crash Reporting – Basic data and information collection performed in order to identify and document a traffic crash and the persons, vehicles, time/location, directions of travel, and possible contributing factors, such as a traffic law violation.

IV. REGULATIONS

- A. The Major Crash Unit, Traffic Safety Specialized Enforcement Branch, Special Operations Division, Homeland Security Bureau, shall be responsible for investigating and preparing reports for traffic crashes involving serious personal injury where the victim may die, and for traffic crash deaths that occur within the District of Columbia, provided that the area is not under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Park Police.
- B. The police districts shall investigate all traffic crashes not assigned to the Major Crash Unit.
- C. All persons are permitted to view and/or obtain a copy of any PD Form 10 (Traffic Crash Report) consistent with the procedures detailed in Part V.F of this order.
- D. Members shall refrain from questioning persons requesting a PD Form 10 as to their involvement or non-involvement in the matter.
- E. Members shall refrain from questioning persons as to why they are requesting the PD Form 10 or how they intend to use the report.

V. PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

- A. Traffic Crashes on Highways or Public Space
 1. The MPD shall investigate and prepare reports on traffic crashes that occur on highways and public space in the District of Columbia when:
 - a. A person is killed or injured (regardless of the seriousness of the injury); and/or

- b. An involved motor vehicle sustains body or mechanical damage that renders it inoperable, and the damage requires the vehicle be towed from the scene.

NOTE: Minor damage that renders a motor vehicle temporarily inoperable does not meet the criteria for requiring a report on a PD Form 10. Examples of such damage include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Broken or cracked windshield;
 - (2) One (1) or more flat tires;
 - (3) One (1) or more broken vehicle lights; and/or
 - (4) Body damage that can be temporarily realigned to permit the safe operation of the vehicle.
2. A traffic crash report shall be prepared on a PD Form 10, regardless of the damage, when:
 - a. Damage to a motor vehicle or other property has occurred, and the operator or owner of the damaged vehicle or property is not at the scene of the crash;
 - b. District or Federal Government-owned motor vehicle or property is involved, including a motor vehicle of a governmental corporation, such as the U.S. Postal Service [In this case, a PD Form 101 (Report of Violation of the Traffic Regulations by Operators of Vehicles Owned by the District of Columbia or U.S. Government) shall be prepared in duplicate as outlined in GO-SPT-303.01 (Traffic Enforcement)];
 - c. A public transportation motor vehicle is involved (for example, a bus or taxicab);
 - d. The motor vehicle has been involved in a crime, or a serious traffic violation, such as:
 - (1) Leaving the scene of a crash;
 - (2) Operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or any other intoxicating substance;
 - (3) Reckless driving;
 - (4) Operating a motor vehicle without a permit;

- (5) Operating a motor vehicle after suspension or revocation of a permit; or
- (6) Operating a motor vehicle at a speed in excess of thirty (30) miles per hour above the authorized speed limit;
- e. The investigating member issues a Notice of Infraction (NOI) or arrests one (1) or more motor vehicle operator(s);

NOTE: An NOI shall be issued whenever one of the parties is found to be at fault.

- f. The investigating member determines that a report is required to assist in ensuring that no involved party evades responsibility; and/or
- g. The traffic crash involves an operator who is a diplomat.

B. Traffic Crashes on Private Property

- 1. When a traffic crash occurs on private property, a report shall be prepared on a PD Form 10 when:
 - a. A person is killed or injured (regardless of the seriousness of the injury);
 - b. The traffic crash involves an operator who is a diplomat;
 - c. An MPD vehicle is involved, and an official directs that a PD Form 10 be prepared in accordance with GO-OPS-301.01 (Vehicle Operation and Maintenance); and/or
 - d. One (1) or more of the following charges will be placed on one (1) or more persons as a result of the traffic crash:
 - (1) Unlicensed operator;
 - (2) Operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or any other intoxicating substance; and/or
 - (3) Leaving the scene of a crash.

NOTE: A member shall not place a charge against, or issue an NOI to, any person for a violation other than those listed above.

- 2. In any other case involving a traffic crash on private property, the investigating member shall prepare a PD Form 251 (Incident-Based Event Report) with a classification of "Damage to Property."

C. Responding to and Handling a Traffic Crash Scene

1. Upon arrival at the scene of a traffic crash, the investigating member(s) shall:
 - a. Park his/her motor vehicle so as to not create an additional hazard;
 - b. Check for injuries, secure the scene, and call for medical, fire department/EMS, or other appropriate assistance;
 - c. Guide traffic away from the scene using emergency warning devices (for example, lights, flares, cones);
 - d. Minimize traffic congestion by, for example, removing the vehicles from the roadway, but only when such action does not interfere with the investigation;
 - e. Check the validity (through WALES) of all involved operators' permits, insurance, and registrations cards; and
 - f. When any hazardous material is involved, contact the Office of Unified Communications (OUC) to make the appropriate notifications as described in GO-OPS-802.04 (Hazardous Material Incidents) and also take the appropriate actions required by GO-OPS-802.04.
2. When a PD Form 10 is required, the investigating member(s) shall:
 - a. Primarily use a personal computer (PC) or mobile data terminal (MDT) with MPD Intranet access to enter the report into the automated Traffic Crash Application prior to the end of his/her tour of duty;
 - b. In extraordinary circumstances, when no computer with MPD Intranet access is available, be permitted to handprint all information, except his/her signature, legibly, in black ink, on a paper copy of the PD Form 10 prior to the end of his/her tour of duty;
 - c. Use additional PD Forms 10 when more than four (4) vehicles are involved;
 - d. Conduct follow-up by:
 - (1) Locating the drivers and witnesses;

- (2) Interviewing all involved drivers and witnesses, recording all pertinent statements; and
 - (3) Taking statements using, as appropriate, a PD Form 119 (Complainant/Witness Statement) or PD Form 118 (Defendant/Suspect Statement);
- e. Record any additional information that describes the circumstances of the crash, any distraction to involved person(s), and the insurance of both the vehicle and owner;
- f. Complete a full diagram of the event, to include the location of the impact, direction of travel for all vehicles, and location of any traffic control signs and signals;
- g. Always record the striking vehicle as Vehicle #1 in the narrative, regardless of which motor vehicle operator is at fault;
- h. Record information on all witnesses to the crash on the traffic crash report, except that:
 - (1) For a witness who has left the scene before information about the accident has been obtained, the member shall attempt to contact the witness by telephone, e-mail, or other means; and
 - (2) For a witness who has left the scene and cannot be reached, the member shall record this fact in the narrative of the report;
- i. Inspect each involved motor vehicle's brakes, steering wheel, and lights for proper functioning, and, if any of this equipment appears to be defective, and/or when any of the involved parties states that any such equipment is defective:
 - (1) During normal business hours, immediately have the motor vehicle towed to the D.C. Motor Vehicle Inspection Station located at 1001 Half Street S.W. for examination; or
 - (2) When the D.C. Motor Vehicle Inspection Station is closed, impound the motor vehicle in accordance with GO-SPT-303.03 (Tow Crane Operation and Enforcement) and present the vehicle to the D.C. Motor Vehicle Inspection Station for examination the next business day;

NOTE: Any defects discovered during the inspection shall be noted on the PD Form 10. If further explanation is necessary, the narrative section of the PD Form 10 shall be used.

- j. Request a member of the Crime Scene Examination to respond to the scene to take measurements and photographs when:
- (1) A fatality has occurred;
 - (2) A serious (life threatening) personal injury has occurred;
 - (3) A hit-and-run incident resulting in personal injury or substantial property damage has occurred;
 - (4) D.C. or Federal Government property is involved;
 - (5) Alcohol or any other intoxicating substance is involved; and/or
 - (6) The investigating member considers such additional evidence essential;

- k. Take appropriate enforcement action when there is sufficient evidence of one (1) or more traffic law violations;

NOTE: Warning NOIs shall not be issued in a traffic crash case.

- l. In a traffic crash case involving a driver leaving the scene of the crash:
- (1) If the crash is recent, broadcast a description, when available, of the motor vehicle and operator;
 - (2) Check the scene for evidence;
 - (3) Collect all physical evidence from the scene and record the description of the physical evidence in the narrative section of the PD Form 10; and
 - (4) Prepare all PD Forms relevant to the investigation [e.g., PD Forms 10, 81 (Property Report) and 252 (Supplement Report)] for additional information after the original report has been taken];

- m. When an injured person is transported from the traffic crash scene to a hospital for treatment:

- (1) Arrange to interview the individual, in person;

- (2) Interview the treating physician to develop additional facts relating to the crash and the extent of the individual's injuries; and
 - (3) Immediately notify the Telecommunications Section, Information Technology Division, if the victim is admitted to the hospital;
 - n. Record supplemental and follow-up information, relating to an original traffic crash report on a PD Form 252 (Supplement Report);
 - o. Before the end of his/her tour of duty, submit the completed report to his/her immediate supervisor for review and approval (regardless of where the crash took place), respond to any comments made by the supervisor, and re-submit any corrected report; and
 - p. By the end of his/her tour of duty, log in to the automated Traffic Crash Application to correct any rejected reports, or consult with the District Manager to do the same if he/she does not have access to a computer with MPD Intranet access.
3. If a traffic crash report is not required, and the permit and registration of each operator has cleared through WALES (Washington Area Law Enforcement System), the investigating member(s) shall:
 - a. Inform each operator that the MPD is not required to prepare a traffic crash report;
 - b. Give each operator a PD Form 10-C (Notice to Motorist);
 - c. Refrain from making any comments about the crash (e.g., regarding who appears to be at fault or the appropriateness of the issuance of an NOI);
 - d. Ensure the involved parties exchange accurate information when involved in an accident with property damage estimated at less than two hundred fifty dollars (\$250);
 - e. Ensure each involved vehicle is moved by the owner or operator;
 - f. Provide any reasonable assistance to ensure that the passage of other traffic shall not be obstructed; and
 - g. Return to service using the disposition of "No Report" and stating the action that was taken.

4. When handling property of obvious or significant value on a traffic crash scene, the investigating member(s) shall:
 - a. Ensure that the property is secured;
 - b. When appropriate, accompany the owner of the property to the hospital, if the owner is transported by ambulance; and
 - c. Take into custody items of value that are too large or bulky, or cannot otherwise accompany the owner to the hospital, transport the property to the hi/her assigned element, where the property shall be packaged, labeled, logged and properly accounted for in accordance with GO-SPT-601.01 (Handling Property).

D. Critical Injury/Fatality Traffic Crash Investigations

1. Upon arrival, members shall notify the Major Crash Unit of all crashes that involve serious personal injury where the person may die and/or where there has been a fatality.
2. The first unit on the scene shall, absent exigent circumstances, attempt to preserve or freeze the crime scene in its original condition.
3. Once injuries have been assessed and medical aid rendered to the victim(s), the responding members, until the arrival of the Major Crash Unit, shall:
 - a. Secure the scene;
 - b. Limit the access to the scene to essential D.C Fire and Emergency Services Department and MPD personnel;
 - c. Not move, or permit to be moved, any vehicle or property (for example, shoes, hats, and glasses) from its final resting place;
 - d. Not touch any items on the scene;
 - e. Rope off as much of the traffic crash area as necessary to preserve the entire scene;

NOTE: A traffic crash scene generally encompasses a large area prior to and after a collision and is not limited to the point of impact.

- f. Not permit member(s) of the D.C. Fire and Emergency Services Department to wash down any secured area, unless there is a potential for a hazardous condition;

- g. If it is raining or snowing, make sure that all skid marks are measured immediately;
 - h. Locate, separate, and document, by obtaining brief statements from, all witnesses;
 - i. Record the names of each injured person and the name of the hospital to which he/she is transported;
 - j. In a case where a motor vehicle operator/suspect is transported to the hospital, ensure that a member accompanies the operator/suspect to ensure that he/she does not leave the hospital without being identified and/or tested for blood alcohol content; and
 - k. Request that an official respond to the scene.
4. The Major Crash Unit is responsible for:
- a. Investigating and preparing the required reports; and
 - b. Upon establishing probable cause to make an arrest, the arrest and booking of any suspect involved in a crash resulting in a fatality.
 - (1) The arresting officer shall, without delay, discuss the charge with the Assistant United States Attorney assigned to the Grand Jury Branch, Superior Court, who shall recommend the amount of bond.
 - (2) After completing the investigation, if it is determined by members of the Major Crash Unit that the facts in the case do not sustain a charge of manslaughter, all facts in the case shall be presented to the Chief, Criminal Division, United States Attorney's Office, Superior Court (or his/her senior assistant), for a determination of prosecution.
 - (3) In the event of prosecution, the suspect shall be notified to surrender at the office of the Major Crash Unit, and immediately charged, photographed, and fingerprinted.
- E. Traffic Crashes Involving an MPD Motor Vehicle
- 1. A member of at least one (1) rank/level above the member involved in the crash shall respond to the scene to investigate and prepare the PD Form 10 and PD Form 43 (Report of Damage To or Loss of DC Government Property). The Bureau Head shall designate the member

who will investigate and obtain reports from officials at the rank of Captain and above (and civilian equivalents) who are involved in a crash.

2. The investigating member shall take appropriate action when there is sufficient evidence of traffic law violations(s).
 3. A member of the public shall not be issued an NOI solely because he/she is involved in a crash with a government vehicle.
 4. A government employee shall not be issued an NOI in a crash when an NOI would not have been issued in a crash involving two members of the public.
 5. A member of the Crime Scene Examination Section shall be requested to respond to the scene to take measurements, to include the point of impact, distance traveled after impact, and any other significant points, for recording on the related PD Form 10.
 6. Upon completing the investigation, the investigating member shall prepare and forward to the Commanding Official of the element to which the involved vehicle is assigned:
 - a. Completed PD Form 10;
 - b. Completed CC Form 3 (Government of the District of Columbia Vehicle Crash Report);
 - c. Copy of the investigator's field notes; and
 - d. Copy of the statements taken.
- F. Procedures for Processing Requests for Copies of Traffic Crash Reports
1. Processing Requests Received Within Twenty-One (21) Days of an Accident
 - a. Element, In Person, Over-the-Counter Requests
 - (1) All persons are permitted to view and/or obtain a copy of any PD Form 10 provided they read and sign a PD Form 10-A [Request for the PD 10 (Traffic Accident Report)] affirming their eligibility to receive the PD Form 10.
 - (2) A fee of \$3.00 shall be collected from all persons requesting a copy of a PD Form 10. The fee shall be paid for by cash or money order.

- (3) Prior to viewing or receiving a copy of a PD Form 10, members shall:
 - (a) Obtain government-issued photographic identification, such as a driver's license, passport, Green Card (Permanent Resident Card), or military identification;

NOTE: Government-issued photo identification is required. Other forms of identification shall not be accepted.

- (b) Obtain two (2) photocopies of the identification provided;
- (c) Instruct the requestor to read the eligibility requirements listed on the PD Form 10-A;
- (d) Complete boxes one (1) through four (4) of the PD Form 10-A;
- (e) Verify that the requestor prints and signs his/her name in box five (5);

NOTE: The requestor must print and sign his/her name.

- (f) Print their badge/CAD number and name and sign their name in box six (6);
 - (g) Issue the #3 Pink Copy to the requestor; and
 - (h) Attach one (1) photocopy of the requestor's identification to the #2 Yellow Copy and submit the paperwork to the element Administrative Office.
 - (i) The PD Form 10-A, with yellow copy attached, shall be filed by month, and within month, by the date of the accident.
 - (ii) The forms shall be retained for ninety (90) days, then destroyed.
- (4) If it is necessary to void a PD Form 10-A, the processing member shall write "VOID" across the form and destroy all copies.
 - (5) Element personnel shall complete a daily transmittal, attaching the #1 White Copy and second photocopy of

the requestor's identification, for submission to the Records Branch.

- (a) The Records Branch shall serve as the central repository for the PD Forms 10-A (white copies).
- (b) Each PD Form 10-A shall be retained for three (3) years after the date of the motor vehicle accident.

b. Records Branch, In Person, Over-the-Counter Requests

- (1) Applicants shall report to the Records Branch, Public Documents Section, between the hours of 0900 and 1700, to request a PD Form 10-A.
- (2) Members shall follow the procedures established in Part F.1.a above, except that a transmittal does not have to be prepared for submission to the Records Branch.

c. Mailed requests shall be made to the Manager, Records Branch, Public Documents Section, Mail-In Correspondence Unit, 300 Indiana Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

- (1) The Records Branch will provide the writer a copy of the PD Form 10-A.
- (2) For mailed returns, a notarized signature, copy of the requestor's Government-issued photo identification, and a money order will be required to be submitted along with the completed PD Form 10-A.

2. Processing Requests received more than Twenty-One (21) Days after an Accident

a. Element, In-Person, Over-the-Counter Requests

- (1) All persons are permitted to view and/or obtain a copy of any PD Form 10.
- (2) A fee of \$3.00 shall be collected from all persons requesting a copy of a PD Form 10. The fee shall be paid for by cash or money order.

b. Records Department, In Person, Over-the-Counter Requests

- (1) All persons are permitted to view and/or obtain a copy of any PD Form 10.

- (2) A fee of \$3.00 shall be collected from all persons requesting a copy of a PD Form 10. The fee shall be paid for by cash or money order.
- (3) Applicants shall report to the Records Branch, Public Documents Section, between the hours of 0900 and 1700.
- (4) Applicants paying in cash/money order shall:
 - (a) Be directed for payment to the Central Cashiers Office; and
 - (b) Upon validation of the paid receipt, be advised to return to the Records Branch, Public Documents Section, to exhibit the paid receipt in order to receive his/her copy of the PD Form 10.

c. Mail Requests

- (1) Mail requests shall be submitted to the Manager, Records Branch, Public Documents Section, Mail-in-Correspondence Unit, 300 Indiana Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.
- (2) Payments shall be submitted to the supervisor handling the related request in the Records Branch, Public Documents Section and be processed immediately by a member of the Mail-in-Correspondence Unit.
- (3) Mail requests, accompanied by a payment, received on a Saturday, Sunday, or holiday, and processed by the Records Branch, Public Documents Section, Mail-In Correspondence Unit, shall be secured until the following workday for deposit with the D.C. Treasurer.

G. Duties and Responsibilities

1. Office of Unified Communication communications operators, in the case of a traffic crash, shall:
 - a. Ensure that a brief description is entered into CAD regarding whether a report was taken;
 - b. If a report is required, voice the Central Complaint Number assigned to the incident or offense; and

- c. If the CAD System is temporarily out of service, complete a PD Form 258-B (Radio Event Card).
 2. Supervisory Personnel
 - a. The investigating officer's immediate supervisor shall collect, receive, and approve or reject, with comments, traffic crash reports prior to the expiration of the investigating officer's tour of duty.
 - (1) If the report has been submitted through the automated Traffic Crash Application, the immediate supervisor will approve or return the traffic crash report for correction with comments online during this same time period.
 - (2) The involved member shall be notified by radio or other means of communication when a correction is needed on his/her traffic crash report.
 - b. In a traffic crash involving an MPD motor vehicle, an official from the involved member's assigned element shall:
 - (1) Respond to supervise the scene;
 - (2) Complete all of the paperwork related to the traffic crash, except for the PD Form 10, which shall be completed by an official assigned to the element in which the traffic crash occurred;
 - (3) Prepare recommendations for the element Commanding Official; and
 - (4) Handle the traffic crash investigation consistent with General Order GO-SPT-401.02 [Crash Review Board (CRB)].
3. The District Manager, prior to the end of his/her tour of duty, shall:
 - a. Log in to the automated Traffic Crash Application, review any report that has been rejected by the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Section, and notify the investigating member of the change(s) that need to be made;
 - b. Ensure that all changes are made and the corrected report(s) resubmitted to the UCR Section within twenty-four (24) hours;
 - c. In a case involving damage to a vehicle or other property where the owner/operator of the damaged vehicle or property is not

present at the scene, and the investigating officer is unable to contact either party, notify the owner/operator and enter the person's name and date and time notified in the narrative section of the PD Form 10;

- d. Upon request, provide a copy of the PD Form 10 to the investigating officer(s), for court purposes; and
- e. Ensure that copies of MPD-approved traffic crash reports are made available in PDF format as required by this general order.

NOTE: Only the specific PD Form 10 requested shall be made available, not the entire crash file.

- 4. The Manager, Records Branch, shall ensure:
 - a. Receipts for fees are collected and copies of the receipts maintained for reconciliation purposes with the Office of the D.C. Treasurer in accordance with this general order; and
 - b. Requests for copies of PD Form 10s are processed consistent with this general order.
- 5. The UCR Section, Crime Data Quality Branch, Research and Analytical Services Division, Strategic Services Bureau shall:
 - a. Enter all PD Form 10 paper reports into the automated Traffic Crash Application;
 - b. Review all PD Form 10 paper and online reports for accuracy and completeness;
 - c. Approve all PD Form 10 reports or reject them for correction with comments, returning rejected reports back to the appropriate element; and
 - d. Print out the approved PD Form 10 and forward to the Records Branch, Public Documents Section.
- 6. The Director, UCR Section, Crime Data Quality Branch, Research and Analytical Services Division, Strategic Services Bureau, shall ensure:
 - a. All personnel are trained in the reviewing procedures for the PD Form 10;
 - b. All PD Forms 10 are reviewed and entered within thirty-six (36) hours of receipt from the reporting element; and

- c. Notify all affected element commanders if reports rejected for correction are not returned within twenty-four (24) hours.

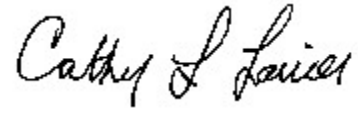
V. CROSS REFERENCES

A. Directives

1. GO-OPS-301.01 (Vehicle Operation and Maintenance)
2. GO-SPT-303.01 (Traffic Enforcement)
3. GO-SPT-303.03 (Tow Crane Operation and Enforcement)
4. GO-SPT-401.02 [Crash Review Board (CRB)]
5. GO-SPT-601.01 (Handling Property)
6. GO-OPS-802.04 (Hazardous Material Incidents)

B. Forms

1. CC Form 3 (Government of the District of Columbia Vehicle Crash Report)
2. PD Form 10 (Traffic Crash Report)
3. PD Form 10-A [Request for the PD 10 (Traffic Accident Report)]
4. PD Form 10-C (Note to Motorist)
5. PD Form 43 (Report of Damage To or Loss of DC Government Property)
6. PD Form 81 (Property Report)
7. PD Form 101 (Report of Violation of the Traffic Regulations by Operators of Vehicles Owned by the District of Columbia or U.S. Government)
8. PD Form 118 (Defendant/Suspect Statement)
9. PD Form 119 (Complainant/Witness Statement)
10. PD Form 251 (Incident-Based Event Report)
11. PD Form 252 (Supplement Report)
12. PD Form 258-B (Radio Event Card)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy L. Lanier". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cathy L. Lanier
Chief of Police

CLL:PH:JGW:MOC