

DALTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Subject Report Writing		
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I. Policy

The **policy of the** Dalton Police Department **is to** prepares written and computerized reports in order to better manage the Department, document events, and support the criminal justice process through effective communications.

II. Procedures

A. Reports

1. Reports shall be initiated, maintained, and safeguarded in appropriate form for the following situations:
 - a.1. Citizen complaints
 - b.2. Citizen reports of crime
 - c.3. Follow-up investigations
 - d.4. Incidents involving arrests, citations, or summons
 - e.5. Criminal and non-criminal cases initiated by Officers
 - f.6. Motor vehicle crash investigations
 - g.7. Incidents resulting in an employee being dispatched or assigned
2. In some instances, the Department uses standard forms for the purpose of aiding **Officers and all** employees in preparing written communications. However, the failure to have a proper form does not relieve the **Officer or** employee of the responsibility of producing the report. When in doubt, and no standardized form or report is available, a blank sheet of paper or a computer-based format of documentation **will shall** be used.

B. Report Preparation

Reports prepared by **all** employees **shall: and Officers of the Dalton Police Department:**

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1. Contain correct information based on accurate notes.
2. **Are Be** brief and explicit, including relevant information regarding the elements of the crime.
3. Clearly communicate ideas.
4. When applicable, answer the following questions:
 - a. **Who** was involved?

All persons involved are identified by their role as suspects, victims, witnesses, etc. Obtain first, middle, last names, possible aliases, home and work address, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and race.
 - b. **What** happened?

Exactly what type of offense was committed **and** what means of transportation, tools, or equipment was apparently used? What was the actor's modus operandi? For example, did the actor use direct attack, or were his / her tactics more indirect or crafty?
 - c. **When** did it occur?

Record the crime discovery time and the time the crime is likely to have occurred. Also, indicate the time witnesses and victims are contacted and arrests made.
 - d. **Where** did it happen?

Location is to be as exact as possible. If unable to obtain an address, record the nearest intersection or permanent landmark. Look for evidence that the crime could have started somewhere else and ended up at the reported location.
 - e. **Why** did this incident occur?

Was the apparent motive or purpose of the crime revenge, monetary or personal gain, thrill, drug-related, accidental, etc.?
 - f. **How** did it happen?

Based on reasonable observations at the scene and information provided by witnesses, explain how entry was made, how property was obtained, or how the suspect chose and approached the victim.
5. Avoid inappropriate language, such as slang or jargon, unless quoting a suspect, witness, or victim.

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6. Avoid using radio codes, numerical designations, or other terms particular to law enforcement in report narratives.
7. ~~Are~~ Be printed or written legibly.
8. ~~Are~~ Be objective and unbiased, recording information whether positive or negative.
9. Contain correct grammar and spelling.
10. Place events in chronological order.
11. Utilize the Department data entry standards (see Appendix A).

C. Report Style

Good reports, even technical reports, contain a lot of facts, but should be easy to read and understand. Remember, ~~the~~ reports ~~you write~~ written today will be seen by a jury tomorrow, and ~~you will be judged by the way you write, what you say, and the way it is stated~~ the employee that wrote the report will be judged on how it is written, what is said, and how it is stated.

1. Write ~~the way you talk~~ in a normal conversational style. Add details ~~the~~ in a way ~~you~~ that reflects how people speak. Avoid writing "Unit 16 approached the door and spoke to Suspect #2." Instead use, "I walked to the door and spoke with Mr. Doe."
2. Write in the first person singular. Use I or me, not Officer Johnson.
3. Write in the past tense if it happened in the past, not "Approaching the car I see the gun in the back seat." Instead, "I walked along the driver's side of the car and saw the gun in the back seat."
4. Reference a dictionary and / or a thesaurus as needed. Using the right word to describe ~~your~~ the meaning is important.
5. Use everyday words, and avoid unfamiliar wording.
6. Avoid using police jargon.
7. Be very careful about using the word 'suspect.' Are they really suspects or simply individuals? If a suspect's name is available, use it in the report.
8. Lastly, read over ~~your~~ and proofread the report when ~~you are~~ finished. Ask ~~yourself~~, "Would a regular citizen clearly understand this report?" If the answer is no, a jury will not understand it either. **Redo it!**

D. Incident Reports

1. Incident reports are documented electronically through the Department's Records Management System (**RMS**) and are designed to:

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- a.1. Provide a means whereby Officers can conduct and record a preliminary investigation of a criminal offense.
 - b.2. Provide complete and accurate information for follow-up investigation and prosecution.
 - c.3. Provide ~~patrol~~ Officers and Investigators with certain decision-making points that enable them to identify follow-up investigative needs.
 - d.4. Improve control of the report flow process within the Department, thereby improving report access and statistical recording.
 - e.5. Aid other Officers in the collection of crime data, patterns, suspect information, and the determination of the modus operandi, etc.
- 2. Incident reports ~~should shall~~ be completed for all criminal acts and suspected acts ~~occurring within the jurisdiction of the Department~~. These reports clearly and concisely report elements of the crime by answering critical who, what, when, where, how, and why questions.
- 3. Incident reports may be completed by phone when victims are outside the jurisdiction of the Dalton Police Department, the distance is too great for them to respond to the City of Dalton, or there is no physical evidence to collect.
- 4. Incident reports ~~will shall~~ also be completed for incidents when property is found but the owner cannot be determined; when the Officer spends a substantial amount of time on a call for service; where the Officer feels an incident report needs to be completed; or when a citizen requests a report be initiated.

E. Accident Reports

- 1. Roadway Collisions
 - a. Roadway refers to that portion of the highway improved, designed, or ordinarily used for vehicular traffic, exclusive of the berm or shoulder.
 - b. All collisions occurring on the roadway, when the damage exceeds \$500 or a driver requests a report, shall be reported on the Georgia Uniform Motor Vehicle Accident Report (DMVS 523). Officers shall use the ~~electronic version of this form~~ [Georgia Electronic Accident Reporting System \(GEARS\)](#) for reporting roadway collisions.
 - c. ~~If there is insufficient space on the report for injuries, witnesses, or remarks, a Continuation Sheet (DMVS 523C) shall be used.~~
 - c.d. All roadway collisions shall be reported according to the Georgia

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Uniform Vehicle Accident Report Instruction Guide.

2. Private Property Collisions

- a. Private Property refers to any property that is not owned or leased by any government that the public may or may not have access to. Examples include driveways, privately owned streets, shopping center parking lots, and other private parking areas.
- b. Officers ~~will shall~~ report private property collisions ~~in the GEARs system on a "Private Property Accident Report Form"~~ for hit and run collisions, collisions when an offense(s) has occurred in which charges can be made, damage to public or private property, public vehicles, collisions involving extensive damage, or in unusual and complicated collisions. ~~Officers shall use the electronic version of this form for reporting.~~
- c. In other collisions occurring on private property, the Officer should distribute and explain the Personal Report of an Accident form.

F. Report Submission

Reports ~~should shall~~ be completed in a timely manner, either during or shortly after the shift on which the incident / accident was reported. Officers shall ~~turn in~~ submit the reports electronically through the Department's ~~records management system~~ RMS or to their Supervisor for evaluation, approval, and further action by the Department. Officers shall receive Supervisory approval if a report cannot be completed and more time is needed.

G. Non-Custody Booking

The non-custody booking ~~will shall~~ be completed every time an Officer takes physical custody of a suspect or fugitive and shall be submitted electronically through the Department's ~~records management system~~ RMS. The non-custody booking includes ~~sex~~ gender, race, date of birth, age, home address, specific charges, and case number.

H. Supplementary Reports

Supplementary reports are used when additional information is discovered through an investigation. The Officer who discovers this new data is responsible for the supplementary report. The updated portion is attached to the original report with the corresponding case number electronically through the Department's ~~records management system~~ RMS. These supplemental reports ~~will shall~~ contain the same level of detail as contained in the original report, but as observed by the Officer completing each supplemental report. The Officer completing the supplemental report shall include his / her name in the narrative to indicate who is writing the supplemental.

I. Field Interview Reports (FIRs)

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Field Interview Reports are used ~~when Officers to~~ to document a suspicious persons or vehicles ~~he/she~~ Officers come into contact with, to possibly be used at a later time for investigative purposes. ~~A Field Interview Reports FIRs will shall~~ be submitted electronically through the Department's ~~records management system~~ RMS by the originating Officer / Investigator during ~~their~~ his / her tour of duty.

J. File Maintenance

The ~~Dalton Police~~ Department maintains a comprehensive **electronic** report filing system. Reports are filed and indexed **electronically in the RMS** as data is received and approved by Supervisors.

K. Confidentiality of Records

1. Law enforcement records contain critical and potentially life-threatening information. Such mundane information as complainant's address, location and phone number; trial and appearance dates; potential witness lists; and status of a case, if released into the wrong hands, can cost an Officer or resident ~~their~~ his / her life. All report information released by the ~~Dalton Police~~ Department **will shall** be done in accordance with the rules pertaining to the Georgia Open Records Act.
2. Police reports and files are reported, collected, and disseminated on a need-to-know basis. Just because ~~an Officer or employee~~ a person is an employee of the Department does not mean that he or she needs or should know vital information about an open case or a case pending for trial. As a result:
 - a.1. Case information **will shall** not be discussed or released outside of those Officers and employees having a strict need to know.
 - b.2. An Officer or employee ~~will shall~~ not release to non-law enforcement personnel case information until after verification of a need-to-know is established.

This policy supersedes any previous policies issued.

BY ORDER OF

CHIEF OF POLICE

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APPENDIX A

Dalton Police Department Data Entry Standards

All Dalton Police Department personnel shall use the standards and procedures set forth in this document for data entry to enhance accuracy and minimize the duplication of records and data in the system.

All entries made into the system ~~will~~ shall be made in Upper Case format.

Name Entry Standard

All names shall be entered with as much information as possible (e.g. Last, First, Middle, and Name Suffix). Full Legal Name, if known, shall be used at all times. Abbreviated versions or nicknames shall be listed as an alias to the real name. If parts of the name or other fields are unknown, leave the field blank. Do not enter UNK or NMN in any name field. Middle Initials are permitted, but do not use punctuation. No punctuation is to be used in the name fields except for hyphens and only under special circumstances.

<i>Example:</i>	<i>Last</i>	<i>First</i>	<i>Middle</i>
Correct	SMITH	RONALD	THOMAS
Correct	SMITH	RONALD	T
Incorrect	SMITH	RON	
Incorrect	SMITH	RONALD	T.

Name suffixes

Name suffixes shall not be entered in the last name field. This information will be entered in the suffix name field which is located directly after the middle name field.

Titles

Titles, such as Doctor, Professor, Officer, Deputy, etc., shall not be entered in a name field. The suffix field may be used for titles. Abbreviations for titles are acceptable without the use of punctuation. Examples: MD, PHD, OFF, DEP

If the individual has both a professional title and suffix, the suffix shall be placed in the suffix field and the professional title in the comments field.

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Multiple Surnames

If the legal name is hyphenated, enter the hyphenated name into the data field. The hyphen shall be placed between the two last names. Variations of the name can be added as aliases.

Example:

Correct Entry:

Real Name Screen	RODRIGUEZ-VASQUEZ	JOSE	ANGEL
1 ST Alias	RODRIGUEZ	JOSE	ANGEL
2 ND Alias	VASQUEZ	JOSE	ANGEL
Incorrect Entry	RODRIGUEZVASQUEZ	JOSE	ANGEL
Incorrect Entry	RODRIGUEZ GONZALES	JOSE	ANGEL

Correct Entry:

Real Name Screen	SIMPSON-FIELDS	SHARON	A
1 ST Alias	SIMPSON	SHARON	A
2 ND Alias	FIELDS	SHARON	A
Incorrect Entry	SIMPSONFIELDS	SHARON	A
Incorrect Entry	SIMPSON FIELDS	SHARON	A

Names with Apostrophes

Names with apostrophes shall be entered with no apostrophe and no space between the letters. The name shall be entered as a single word.

(OBRIEN and ONEIL should be used instead of O'BRIEN and O'NEIL.)

Compound Names

Compound names shall be entered without spaces. For example, DE LA ROSA shall be entered as DELAROSA, ST. MARIE shall be entered as STMARIE, and VAN HOOSER as VANHOOSER. No punctuation is permitted with compound names.

Alias Entry Standard

A separate alias name record shall be created for any name other than the person's legal name. The alias entry shall only contain data in the name field, DOB field, and the SSN field.

An alias should only be entered when the entry person can absolutely state that the name in question refers to the same individual.

Business Name Entry Standard

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Enter the name of a business in the last name field only. The word "The" shall be eliminated at the start of the business name for entry into the system. Omit corporate designations, such as INC, CO, and punctuation. Hyphens and ampersands (&) shall be used if they are part of the official name of the business.

Example:

Correct Entry:

Last: HOUSE OF PAIN

First:

Mid:

Incorrect Entry:

Last: THE HOUSE OF PAIN

First:

Mid:

Incorrect Entry:

Last: HOUSE OF

First: PAIN

Mid:

The ampersand (&) shall not be used to replace the "and" in business names, but may be used if the ampersand is a valid part of a business name. If used, the ampersand (&) shall have a space on either side of the ampersand character.

Example:

Correct Entry:

Last: BB & T

First:

Mid:

Incorrect Entry:

Last: BB&T

First:

Mid:

Business names that are numbers shall be entered as numbers. For example, HIGHWAY 5 CONSTRUCTION, 7-11, ABC 123, are all acceptable methods of entry.

Doctors, Dentists, and Attorneys (the business, not the individual) **will shall** be entered completely in the last name field. These names should not have any character inserted into the data field.

MARK H LEOPOLD DDS
GARY R DONATH MD

Address Entry Standard

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Whenever possible, obtain a street address for all names that are entered into the system. A mailing address is the next best option. If both addresses are to be entered, the street address shall be entered into the address field and mailing address shall be added to the comments field. If the mailing address is a post office box, the designated abbreviation is PO BOX 123.

Standards for address entry into the system are based on the U.S. Postal Services Standardized Addressing Guidelines.

Address Parts

Addresses shall be in this order: House Number, direction, street name, and street type.

Examples: 1505 W WALNUT AVE
2759 N CEDAR ST

APT, ROOM, SUITE, BUILDING shall not be entered into the address. Simply replace the designation with a semicolon (;) and include the numerical value.

A semi-colon (;) shall be added after the street type for additional identifiers to the address, such as building number, apartment number, etc.

Examples: 1505 W WALNUT AVE; 123
2759 N CEDAR ST; B

Street Names

All street names **will shall** be listed with complete names. No abbreviations shall be used. WAL is not an acceptable for WALNUT AVE.

All numbered streets shall use the numeric symbol. FIRST ST is not acceptable for 1ST ST. FIFTH AVE is not acceptable for 5TH AVE.

Fractional Addresses

Enter all fractional addresses as a fraction. (1/2, 2/3)

Intersections

Use an ampersand (&) to indicate an intersection such as HWY 52 & AIRPORT RD

City Names

No abbreviations should be used for city names. DAL is not acceptable for DALTON.

Street Extensions

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The following abbreviations are to be used:

Alley	ALY	Avenue	AVE
Boulevard	BLVD	Circle	CIR
Cliff	CLF	Court	CT
Crossing	XING	Drive	DR
Extension	EXT	Grove	GRV
Heights*	HTS	Highway	HWY
Lane	LN	Loop*	LOOP
Mountain**	MTN	Park	PARK
Parkway	PKWY	Place	PL
Point	PT	Post Office Box	PO BOX
Ridge**	RDG	Road	RD
State Route*	SR	Street	ST
Terrace	TER	Trail	TRL
Way	WAY		

* This extension is not currently used for roads within the city of Dalton.

**These extensions are not used in the city of Dalton; however, they may be found spelled out as part of a street name.

The geobase roads table adheres to USPS standards for street extensions. Please consult https://pe.usps.com/text/pub28/28apc_002.htm for help with finding the proper extension when entering an out of town or new address.

North	N	Northeast	NE
East	E	Northwest	NW
South	S	Southeast	SE
West	W	Southwest	SW

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