

DALTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

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I. Policy

It is the policy of the Dalton Police Department to thoroughly investigate all reports of missing persons, giving particular attention to cases involving missing children, persons who may be mentally and / or physically impaired, persons who are incapable of caring for themselves, and children or adults who are either unidentified or unidentifiable to determine if they are classified as missing.

II. Definitions

- A. *CodeRED* – A trademark of Emergency Communications Network and a general concept that refers to using a telephone database, combined with a digital map, to notify community members of emergencies, missing persons, or other information. In this policy, the automated emergency notification system is referred to by its product name, “CodeRED”.
- B. *Critical Missing Adult* – A person eighteen (18) years or older who suffers from diminished mental capacity or medical conditions that are potentially life-threatening if left unattended or untreated. Any adult missing under circumstances which would lead a reasonable person to conclude that there is danger if the person is not located immediately is also considered a critical missing adult.
- C. *Critical Missing Child* – Any child twelve (12) years of age or younger that is missing, a missing child that is in poor physical or questionable mental health, or any missing child where there is an indication of foul play. Any child missing under circumstances which would lead a reasonable person to conclude that there is danger if the child is not located immediately (e.g. a child missing outdoors in extremely harsh weather conditions or who requires medication) is also considered a critical missing child.
- D. *Levi's Call (Georgia's Amber Alert)* – An alert / lookout initiated by law enforcement through a request to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation when a child has been abducted and is believed to be in danger of being harmed by his / her abductor.

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- E. *Mattie's Call* – An alert / lookout initiated by law enforcement for missing disabled adults who are developmentally impaired or who suffer from dementia or some other cognitive impairment.
- F. *Missing Child* – Anyone under the age of eighteen (18) that is being reported as missing from his / her home, school, job, place of recreation, or other usual location.
- G. *Missing Person* – Any person who is absent from or fails to reach his or her home, school, job, place of recreation, or some other location within a reasonable length of time, without a known or apparent reason; or any patient of a hospital, clinic, nursing home, or similar facility that leaves without the permission or knowledge of those in charge.
- H. *Runaway* – Any child who, without just cause and without the consent of his or her parent, guardian, or legal custodian, is absent from his or her home or place of abode for at least 24 hours (O.C.G.A. 15-11-381).
- I. *Unidentified Person* – An adult or child recovered by law enforcement that, due to age, mental capacity, or unwillingness, is unable to provide his / her identity or address.

III. **Reporting and Classification**

- A. Missing person reports involve individuals who voluntarily leave home for personal reasons, disappear for unexplained reasons, or who may be considered at risk. The role of the responding Officer is critical in identifying the circumstances surrounding the missing person and in identifying those cases when an individual may be in jeopardy.
- B. There shall be no waiting period required by the Department for reporting a missing person.
- C. An individual may be declared "missing" when his or her whereabouts are unknown and unexplainable for a period of time that is regarded by knowledgeable parties as highly unusual or suspicious in consideration of the person's behavior patterns, plans, or routines.
- D. Officers should be aware that they may encounter several types of missing child cases, each with their own unique response requirements, including:
 - 1. A non-family abduction in which a child is taken by an unknown individual, through force or persuasion, usually in furtherance of additional victimization
 - 2. A family abduction in which a non-custodial family member flees with a child, usually in direct violation of a court-ordered custody arrangement
 - 3. A runaway child, most often a teenager, who leaves home voluntarily for a variety of reasons

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4. A lost or otherwise missing child, who becomes separated from parents or caretakers under circumstances not indicating the likelihood of an abduction or voluntary absence
 5. A child whose caretaker makes no effort to recover the child who has run away or who has been abandoned or deserted
- E. The Watch Commander shall be notified of missing persons that satisfy one or more of the following criteria:
1. Information that the missing person may be the victim of foul play
 2. Because of age (juvenile or elderly), the person may be unable to properly safeguard or care for himself / herself
 3. The person suffers from diminished mental capacity or medical conditions that are potentially life-threatening if left unattended or untreated
 4. The person is a patient of a hospital, clinic, nursing home, or similar facility and is considered potentially dangerous to himself / herself and / or others
 5. The person has demonstrated the potential for suicide
- F. The Whitfield County 911 Center call-taker shall attempt to obtain as much information as possible regarding the missing person, with special attention to the criteria listed above. The call-taker should obtain a complete physical description, including the clothing the missing person was last seen wearing, and transmit a lookout to all Officers and surrounding agencies.
- G. The missing person incident report shall detail the information learned and actions taken by the responding Officer(s). The responding Officer(s) shall attempt to determine the following information to be included in the incident report:
1. The name, age, gender, race, and physical description of the missing person and the relationship of the reporting party to the missing person
 2. The time, date, and place of last known location and the identity of anyone accompanying the missing person prior to his / her disappearance
 3. Any indications of missing personal belongings, particularly money and other valuables
 4. The extent of any previously conducted searches or attempts to locate the missing person by the reporting party
 5. Whether the missing person has been missing on prior occasions and the degree to which the absence departs from established behavior patterns, habits, or plans
 6. Whether the missing person has been involved recently in domestic incidents, suffered emotional trauma or a life crisis, demonstrated unusual,

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uncharacteristic, or bizarre behavior, is dependent on drugs or alcohol, or has a history of mental illness

7. The current physical condition of the missing person and whether the person is currently on prescription medications
8. Any suggestions of foul play or accident

IV. **Non-critical Missing Child**

A. Responding Officer's Responsibilities

1. Initiate an immediate investigation in an attempt to locate the missing child and relay such information to the Watch Commander.
2. Obtain and document any leads as to the possible location of the missing child (e.g., child's destination, mode of travel, routes, etc.).
3. Obtain the identity and location where the missing child was last seen and the identity of the person who last saw the missing child.
4. Obtain names and telephone numbers of relatives and friends and any other information which may assist in locating the missing child.
5. Provide a lookout with a description of the missing child and any known circumstances to all other Officers and the Whitfield County 911 Center. Request the Whitfield County 911 Center disseminate the lookout to surrounding agencies and to the law enforcement agencies in the jurisdiction of any known or suspected destinations of the missing child.
6. Conduct a check of probable locations of the missing child as indicated by the complainant.
7. Interview the reporting person, parents, siblings, friends, or any other persons who may have knowledge of the whereabouts of the missing child. These interviews may be made by telephone or in person, but all interviews and attempts to interview shall be documented in the report. The Officer should also inquire about and document any recent disciplinary or behavioral issues at home or at school.
8. Obtain a photograph, if possible, of the missing child and attach it to the report in the Report Management System for future use by the assigned Investigator.
9. Have the reporting person complete and sign a Missing Persons Declaration form.
10. Initiate an incident report with a narrative summary of the preliminary investigation and any related actions known to have been taken by others, including an initial physical description of the missing child and clothing description.

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11. The missing child shall be entered into GCIC within one (1) hour of the initial reported incident. If during regular business hours, the Officer may request the entry be made by the Records Section. The signed Missing Person Declaration shall be attached to the GCIC paperwork.

B. Investigator's Responsibilities

1. Ensure the missing child has been entered into GCIC.
2. Contact the complainant and follow-up on the information obtained by the responding Officer.
3. Utilize the missing child's photograph to coordinate press releases and / or social media posts to request assistance from the public in locating the missing child, if needed.
4. Contact the Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS) to request access to any relevant information on the missing child, including whether or not there is an active case, the name of the case worker, previous missing incidents, previous reported abuse cases, and other information which could lead to the whereabouts of the missing child.
5. Contact the missing child's school and inquire about his / her attendance record and any disciplinary issues.
6. Contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) at 1-800-THE-LOST and provide all available information for posting on their website if the child remains unlocated for seven (7) days or more.
7. ~~Request the missing child's medical and / or dental records, when necessary, to ensure the information is entered into GCIC within sixty (60) days.~~ Verify and update the GCIC record for a missing person who is under the age of twenty-one, no later than thirty (30) calendar days after the original entry, with any additional information, including, where available, medical and dental records and a photograph taken during the previous 180 calendar days
8. Periodically contact the reporting party to provide updates on the case and ensure needs are being met.
9. Investigate the case thoroughly to facilitate it being brought to a speedy closure, and complete supplemental reports detailing all actions taken during the investigation.

V. Critical Missing Child

A. Responding Officer's Responsibilities

1. Upon receiving a report of a critical missing child, the Whitfield County 911 Center shall notify the Watch Commander and request a Supervisor respond with the dispatched Officer(s).

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2. CID shall be notified of all critical missing child cases, and an Investigator shall respond with Officers to the scene if the initial search does not result in the child being located.
3. In addition to the steps listed for non-critical missing child cases, the following steps shall be performed by Officers responding to critical missing child cases:
 - a. When approaching the scene, activate the patrol vehicle's in-car camera system to record vehicles, people, and anything else of note for later investigative review.
 - b. Confirm the child is in fact missing:
 - (1) When a small child is involved, there should always be a physical search, especially of the home and immediate area where the child lives or was last seen.
 - (2) The search should start at the last known location and expand outward. This search should be made even if the parent or guardian has already conducted a search.
 - (3) Officers and Investigators should understand that small children might hide and refuse to answer when their names are called.
 - c. An Officer should go to the child's home or other place of disappearance and remain in that area with relatives to protect it as a potential crime scene until properly relieved. If assistance with this task is needed, request an additional Officer(s).
 - d. Verify the child's custody status.
 - e. Identify the child's zone of safety for his or her age and developmental stage.
 - f. Identify the circumstances of the disappearance, and, based on the available information, make an initial determination of the type of incident, whether non-family abduction, family abduction, runaway, lost, injured, or otherwise missing.
 - g. Obtain detailed descriptions, photographs, and / or videos of the missing child, abductor, and any vehicles used, if applicable.
 - h. Provide the Whitfield County 911 Center with detailed description information for a lookout to be given to all Officers and surrounding agencies. Continue to provide the dispatcher with developing information, if any, to update the lookout.
 - i. Officers and Investigators shall interview all parties located at the scene, and ensure the identifying information of each person is

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properly recorded. To aid in the process, if possible, take pictures or record video images of everyone present.

- (1) Note the name, address, home and cellular numbers of each person, and determine each person's relationship to the child.
 - (2) Document information each person may have about the child's disappearance, and determine when and where each person last saw the child.
 - (3) Ask each person what he / she thinks happened to the child.
 - (4) Obtain the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the child's friends, associates, and other relatives and friends of the family.
- j. Conduct an immediate, thorough search of the missing child's home, even if the child was reported missing from a different location. Obtain valid consent prior to conducting searches.
- k. An Officer or Investigator shall remain at the scene to protect the scene and area of the child's home (including the child's personal articles such as hairbrush, diary, photographs, and items with the child's fingerprints, footprints, and/or teeth impressions) so evidence is not destroyed during or after the initial search and to help ensure items which could help in the search for and or to identify the child are preserved. Determine if any of the child's personal items are missing. If possible, photograph or video record the area.
- l. Evaluate the contents and appearance of the child's room and / or residence. Inquire if the child has access to the internet and evaluate its role in the disappearance. Ascertain if the child has a cellular telephone or other electronic communications device.
- m. Extend the search to surrounding areas, including looking inside and around vehicles and other places of concealment.
- n. Treat areas of interest as potential crime scenes and secure for crime scene processing.
- o. Determine if surveillance or security cameras in the vicinity may have captured information about the child's disappearance.
- p. Interview other family members, friends, associates of the child, and friends of the family to determine when each last saw the child and what they think happened to the child.
- q. Have the complainant sign a completed Missing Person Declaration form, and ensure information regarding the missing child is entered

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into GCIC Missing Person Files within one (1) hour of the initial reported incident.

- r. Complete and submit all required paperwork prior to the Officer ending his / her tour of duty.

B. Investigator's Responsibilities

In addition to the steps listed for non-critical missing child cases, the following steps shall be performed by the Investigator responding to critical missing child cases:

1. Obtain a briefing from the first responding Officer and other on-scene personnel. Verify the accuracy of all descriptive information and other details developed during the preliminary investigation.
2. Initiate and / or assist with a neighborhood canvass using all available resources.
3. Obtain a brief, recent history of family dynamics.
4. Evaluate conflicting information offered by witnesses and other individuals, if any, for additional follow-up.
5. Collect articles of the child's clothing for scent tracking purposes.
6. Review and evaluate all available information collected and evidence identified. Coordinate the processing of crime scenes with other Investigators.

(Steps 1-6 should be initiated within the first hour of the Investigator's arrival)

7. Secure the child's latest medical and dental records.
8. Contact Dalton Public Works and private garbage collection companies to request they segregate garbage and dumping containers from key investigative areas in cases where it is suspected there may be imminent danger to the missing child.
9. Determine what additional resources and specialized services are required.
10. Conduct a criminal history check on all principal suspects and participants in the investigation.
11. Ensure details of the case have been reported to National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).
12. Prepare and update lookouts for local law enforcement agencies, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI), and other appropriate agencies.

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13. Coordinate the receipt of tips and leads from the public.
14. Implement the Leads Management System to prioritize leads and ensure each one is reviewed and followed up.

C. Supervisor's Responsibilities

1. Obtain a briefing from the first responding Officer and other personnel at the scene.
2. Initiate the Incident Command System (ICS), and establish a command post away from the child's residence or other place of disappearance.
3. Remain on the scene of all critical missing child incidents until the child is either located, ICS is deactivated, or until relieved.
4. Coordinate with the Whitfield County 911 Center to activate the CodeRED system in accordance with policy GO06-6.7, Automated Emergency Notification System.
5. Decide if circumstances of the child's disappearance meet the protocol in place for activation of Levi's Call. Before Levi's Call can be activated, the following alert criteria must be met:
 - a. Law enforcement officials have a reasonable belief that an abduction has occurred.
 - b. Law enforcement officials believe that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death.
 - c. Enough descriptive information exists about the victim and the abductor for law enforcement to issue a Levi's Call.
 - d. The victim of the abduction is a child age 17 years or younger.
 - e. The child's name and other critical data elements - including the child abduction (CA) and AMBER Alert (AA) flags - have been entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system.
6. Determine the need for additional Officers, Investigators, or members of other area public safety agencies, such as Dalton Fire Department, Whitfield County Sheriff's Office, etc. Whitfield County Emergency Management Agency can assist in coordinating additional personnel and resources.
7. Determine if additional assistance is necessary from:
 - a. The GBI / CART Team (Child Abduction Response Team)
 - b. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

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- c. Specialized units (e.g., tracking dogs)
 - d. Department Chaplains, Victim Advocate, etc.
 - e. NCMEC's Project ALERT / Team Adam
- 8. Confirm all the required resources, equipment, and assistance necessary to conduct an efficient investigation have been requested, and expedite their availability.
 - 9. Brief all additional responding units with the status of the investigation, and ensure coordination and cooperation among all public safety personnel involved in the investigation and search efforts.
 - 10. Verify that all required notifications of Command Staff are made.
 - 11. Assist with coordinating press releases and social media posts, if necessary.

VI. **Non-critical Missing Adult**

A. Responding Officer's Responsibilities

- 1. Interview the reporting party to gather information on the missing adult, to include age, race, gender, height, weight, hair, clothing description, vehicle description, mental and medical conditions, and any other specific information that relates to foul play.
- 2. Initiate a preliminary investigation in an attempt to locate the missing adult.
- 3. Obtain and document any leads as to the possible location of the missing adult (e.g., destination, mode of travel, routes, etc.).
- 4. Determine when, where, and by whom the missing adult was last seen, identify the circumstances of the disappearance, and interview the individuals who last had contact with the person.
- 5. Obtain names and telephone numbers of relatives and friends and any other information which may assist in locating the missing adult.
- 6. Provide a lookout with a description of the missing adult and any known circumstances to all other Officers and the Whitfield County 911 Center. Request the Whitfield County 911 Center disseminate the lookout to surrounding agencies and to the law enforcement agencies in the jurisdiction of any known or suspected destinations of the missing adult.
- 7. Check with the Whitfield County Sheriff's Office, Hamilton Medical Center, and homeless shelters to determine if the person is located there.
- 8. Interview family members, friends, or any other persons who may have knowledge of the whereabouts of the missing adult. These interviews may

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be made by telephone or in person, but all interviews and attempts to interview shall be documented in the report.

9. Obtain a photograph, if possible, of the missing adult and attach it to the report in the Report Management System for future use by the assigned Investigator.
10. Have the reporting person sign a completed Missing Persons Declaration form.
11. Complete an incident report detailing the preliminary investigation and any related actions known to have been taken by others, including a physical description of the missing adult and clothing description.
12. The missing adult shall be entered into GCIC within one (1) hour of the initial reported incident. If during regular business hours, the Officer may request the entry be made by the Records Section. The signed Missing Person Declaration shall be attached to the GCIC paperwork.

B. Investigator's Responsibilities

1. Ensure the missing adult has been entered into GCIC.
2. Contact the complainant and follow-up on the information obtained by the responding Officer.
3. Utilize the missing adult's photograph to coordinate press releases and social media posts to request assistance from the public in locating the missing adult, if needed.
4. Contact the missing adult's place of employment and / or school, if applicable, and inquire about his / her attendance record and any disciplinary issues.
5. Verify and update the GCIC record for a missing person who is under the age of twenty-one, no later than thirty (30) calendar days after the original entry, with any additional information, including, where available, medical and dental records and a photograph taken during the previous 180 calendar days
- ~~5-6.~~ Check credit card, debit card, and / or bank activity, if possible.
- ~~6-7.~~ Obtain cell phone records, if circumstances dictate.
- ~~7-8.~~ Periodically contact the reporting party to provide updates on the case and ensure needs are being met.
- ~~8-9.~~ Investigate the case thoroughly to facilitate it being brought to a speedy closure, and complete supplemental reports detailing all actions taken during the investigation.

VII. Critical Missing Adult

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A. Responding Officer's Responsibilities

1. Upon receiving a report of a critical missing adult, the Whitfield County 911 Center shall notify the Watch Commander and request a Supervisor also respond with the dispatched Officer.
2. CID shall be notified of all critical missing adult cases, and an Investigator shall respond with Officers to the scene if the initial search does not result in the adult being located.
3. In addition to the steps listed for non-critical missing adult cases, the following steps shall be performed by Officers responding to critical missing adult cases:
 - a. Provide the Whitfield County 911 Center with detailed description information for a lookout to be given to all Officers and surrounding agencies. Continue to provide the dispatcher with developing information, if any, to update the lookout.
 - b. Treat areas of interest as potential crime scenes and secure for crime scene processing.
 - c. Determine if surveillance or security cameras in the vicinity may have captured information about the person's disappearance;
 - d. The missing adult shall be entered into GCIC Missing Person Files within one (1) hour of the initial reported incident. If during regular business hours, the Officer may request the entry be made by the Records Section. The signed Missing Person Declaration shall be attached to the GCIC paperwork.
 - e. Complete and submit all required paperwork prior to the Officer ending his / her tour of duty.

B. Investigator's Responsibilities

In addition to the steps listed for non-critical missing adult cases, the following steps shall be performed by the Investigator responding to critical missing adult cases:

1. Obtain a briefing from the first responding Officer and other on-scene personnel. Verify the accuracy of all descriptive information and other details developed during the preliminary investigation.
2. Initiate and / or assist with a neighborhood canvass using all available resources.
3. Obtain a brief, recent history of family dynamics.

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4. Evaluate conflicting information offered by witnesses and other individuals, if any, for additional follow-up.
5. Collect articles of the adult's clothing for scent tracking purposes.
6. Review and evaluate all available information collected and evidence identified. Coordinate the processing of crime scenes with other Investigators.
7. Determine what additional resources and specialized services are required.
8. Prepare and update lookouts for local law enforcement agencies, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI), and other appropriate agencies.
9. Coordinate the receipt of tips and leads from the public.
10. Implement the Leads Management System to prioritize leads and ensure each one is reviewed and followed up on.

C. Supervisor's Responsibilities

1. Obtain a briefing from the first responding Officer and other personnel at the scene.
2. Initiate the Incident Command System (ICS), and establish a command post.
3. Remain on the scene of all critical missing adult incidents until the person is either located, ICS is deactivated, or until relieved.
4. Coordinate with the Whitfield County 911 Center to activate the CodeRED system in accordance with policy GO06-6.7, Automated Emergency Notification System.
5. Decide if circumstances of the adult's disappearance meet the protocol in place for activation of Mattie's Call. Before Mattie's Call can be activated, the following alert criteria must be met:
 - a. Law enforcement officials believe a disabled person is missing and is in immediate danger of serious bodily injury or death.
 - b. Through its own investigation, the law enforcement agency verifies the disappearance and eliminates alternative explanations for the disabled person's disappearance.
 - c. Sufficient information is available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the disabled person.
 - d. The missing disabled person is entered into NCIC / GCIC.

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- e. The law enforcement agency must issue a statewide broadcast to law enforcement / 911 centers and contact local media regarding the missing person.
6. Determine the need for additional Officers, Investigators, or members of other area public safety agencies, such as Dalton Fire Department, Whitfield County Sheriff's Office, etc. Whitfield County Emergency Management Agency can assist in coordinating additional personnel and resources.
7. Confirm all the required resources, equipment, and assistance necessary to conduct an efficient investigation have been requested, and expedite their availability.
8. Brief all additional responding units with the status of the investigation, and ensure coordination and cooperation among all public safety personnel involved in the investigation and search efforts.
9. Verify that all required notifications of Command Staff are made.
10. Assist with coordinating press releases and social media posts, if needed.

VII. **Unidentified Persons**

- A. Upon receiving a report of an unidentified person, the responding Officer shall initiate an immediate investigation in an attempt to identify the person and notify the Watch Commander.
- B. The investigation shall include the following steps:
 1. Provide a detailed description of the person to the Whitfield County 911 Center for a lookout to be given to all Officers and surrounding agencies.
 2. Identify the reporting party that located the unidentified person, and determine the place where the person was located.
 3. Conduct a neighborhood canvas to try to identify the person or where the person lives.
 4. Take a photograph of the person to be used for press releases or social media posts.
 5. Obtain medical treatment for any observed injuries or medical conditions.
 6. If an unidentified child's caretaker cannot be located, notify DFACS. For an adult, notify Adult Protective Services (APS).
 7. Enter the unidentified person into GCIC within one (1) hour of the initial incident being reported.

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8. Complete an incident report detailing the information gathered and investigative steps taken. Submit a copy of the incident report to DFACS / APS.

IX. **Post-case Closure**

- A. When a missing person is located during the preliminary investigation, the responding Officer shall be responsible for ensuring the immediate removal of the person from GCIC. If the missing person is located during a follow-up investigation, the Officer or Investigator conducting the follow-up shall be responsible for ensuring the immediate removal of the person from GCIC.
- B. If Levi's Call or Mattie's Call was activated and the person is located, the assigned Investigator shall be responsible for ensuring the notification of the local media and the GBI and updating any social media posts.
- C. The assigned Investigator shall attempt to interview a missing child within 48 hours of when he / she is located. A forensic interview by a child advocacy center may be appropriate for missing children that were victims of sexual abuse.
- D. If ICS was initiated for a critical missing person case, the Incident Commander shall complete an after action review report. Any identified training needs or weaknesses shall be addressed.

This policy supersedes any previous policies issued.

BY ORDER OF

CHIEF OF POLICE

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