

July 26, 2021

Chief Mike Heintzelman
Nome Police Department
PO Box 1230
Nome, Alaska 99762

Reference: Assessment of Nome Police Department for Accreditation.

Dear Chief Heintzelman,

Thank you for your hospitality during my visit of your agency. The goal of the visit was to provide a site assessment of needs to proceed with accreditation through a national or regional accreditation body. The assessment involved an inspection of the facilities, interviews with members of the department and a review of policy and practices of the Nome Police Department. An agency site assessment check list was utilized for the assessment and has been provided with this report. The site assessment check list is not specific to an accreditation body. The check list is what most state, regional, and national accreditation bodies look for. You will find that the check list encompasses most if not all the requirements the Oregon Accreditation Alliance accreditation program covers. This review was not intended to be all inclusive, but rather provide insight as to what is needed by the department to be successful with accreditation.

Law enforcement accreditation establishes a uniform set of "Best Practices" for police agencies that are consistent on an international scale, measurable, verified by an independent body as to compliance, and creates an accountability to the community, elected policy makers, and the line officers who are performing the day-to-day work. Within the law enforcement standards of best practices are compliance requirements dealing with life, health, safety, and **high liability** exposures. Every standard is intended to make an agency more professional while at the same time improving its services to the community. Accreditation also provides police administrators a blueprint for an effective evaluation of their agency.

ASSESSMENT FINDINGS:

Overall, I found the department facilities to be adequate for the function of the police department and the officers that I spoke to personally seemed to have a positive attitude and dedicated to their profession. From what was heard and witnessed, it was obvious that the department has made significant advancement within the last few years. Equipment was adequate in some areas and lacking in others.

Facilities/Equipment:

Control of entry is always a concern with facilities and the department use of key cards or fobs is an excellent way to control access and document who enters and when. Video recording systems to assist in documentation also throughout the building. The evidence room and

storage are up to standards. There is an on-site generator for the building for continuity of operations. The following are recommendations for improvement.

1. CCTV or video recording system should include rear of the building, all entrances. (not part of an accreditation standard)
2. Off site video monitoring should be moved to onsite. **Off site video monitoring of interview rooms should be suspended immediately! Equipment in these rooms should be disconnected ASAP.** Recommendation is to use body worn cameras for recording until this is corrected. This cannot be stressed enough. This current setup violates the rights of victims and compromises investigations. Off site monitoring of facilities provides no assistance should there be an incident outside, in the lobby, with evidence concerns or with an active shooter. This current setup increases your liability instead of decreasing it.
3. Visitors entering the building should be also required to sign in.
4. Fire extinguishers throughout the building should all be regularly inspected. Upon my inspection, some were, and some were not.
5. AED should be in the police side of the building and with that comes inspection of the device and training to all personnel.
6. Emergency Communications room should remain secure. (door kept closed)
7. Recommendations for the lobby: Have brochures available to the public; such as, information for victims, Alaska Office of Victim rights, Safe Shelter, Service handbook, etc. In addition, have posted how to make a complaint/or compliment. The only place I saw this was at city hall posted on a door by the Nome Public Safety Advisory Commission. A citizen should be able to complain or compliment directly to the police department also, especially if they desire a quick resolution.
8. Mission/Vision statement. Posted in the lobby and inside the building so everyone sees it and knows it. If you feel it is outdated, change it with input from employees. Currently, no one knows it. (it will be looked for and asked during an accreditation site assessment)
9. Property/Evidence: One of the greatest liabilities to a department. I found property evidence manager Paul Kosto to be very knowledgeable and capable in this position. Secured evidence lockers, separate secure area for monies or other high value evidence was in place. Video monitoring and secure access with required sign in of personnel in place, as well as a system that accurately documents evidence. What needs improvement are:
 - a. Repair of the bar code labeler. **This is an essential repair to maintain proper inventory and control.**
 - b. Increase destruction of property and evidence. Work with district attorney to free up space in the property room. Monies that are no longer evidence should be turned into the general fund. Weapons no longer of evidence should be destroyed or adopted by the department for use.
 - c. Currently the property/evidence manager is a part time position. To correct the above (b), will require additional hours with the help of an assistant or full-time position, until back log is manageable.

- d. Lock the drying cabinet when there is evidence in it. Treat it as a temporary locker.
 - e. Secure cell phones that are evidence and are being charged. Treat those as a temporary locker.
 - f. Property room inspections and audits are required. There should be two unannounced property room inspections with written findings kept on file each year as well as quarterly audits where evidence is randomly pulled and checked. (usually, 10 items of evidence are sufficient) All require written documentation of findings.
 - g. Stored vehicles in the rear of the building that may be evidence are required to be secure. A locked fenced lot would be adequate.
10. Stored equipment inventory: All stored equipment, especially weapons should be inventoried and inspected at least twice a year. An inventory of equipment should be kept as well as documentation of inspections.
11. Stored Files: Stored files are kept locked and maintained by the administrative assistant; however, she was unable to provide any information on file retention. Training and knowledge of the Alaska rules for file retention should be provided.
12. Department Vehicles: All vehicles are required to have safety equipment and training in the use of.
- a. The chief's vehicle needs repair such as seat belt, wind shield and mirror.
 - b. The four-wheel drive utility vehicle should have documented training on its uses for individuals to use. **This is a high liability issue.**
 - c. During winter months, officers will use personal snow machines and conduct police work on them. **This is a high liability issue and does not meet accreditation standards. It is strongly recommended that the department purchase two snow machines and provide documented training and guidelines for use.**

Policy/ Standard Operating Procedures

The policy/standard operating procedures manual is the guidelines for the police department. It should contain the best practices of law enforcement and should be reviewed yearly and updated as necessary and documented. The police department *does not* do this. The Nome policy is outdated and lacks in several areas to meet accreditation standards. Parts of the policy were found to not be followed, such as: qualifying with firearms 3 times a year and the use of notebooks. Those are just two of several. It is essential that if it is in policy, it is followed. If not followed change or remove policy. For example: qualifications of firearms are only required once a year by Alaska. Change the policy to state qualifications of firearms will be conducted at least once a year. Exceeding policy requirement is fine. Officers that violate policy can argue that policy is only a guideline since the department doesn't follow all its own policies.

The Agency Site Assessment work sheet is a yes/no check list that was done during the assessment. Every check box that states "A written directive" requires a written directive or

policy for it. The Nome Police department lacks a substantial number of policies to comply with accreditation standards and have several policies that need additional verbiage to comply with standards. Some policies are robust and up to date, such as; sexual assault and use of force. The following are recommendations for improvement:

1. A complete re-write of the policy manual to bring all policies in line with the current standards. Sections such as budget and fiscal management, constitutional safeguards, inspections, records, crime prevention, do not exist. (This does not require reinventing the wheel. Recommendation is to contact a jurisdiction in Alaska that is in the accreditation process or accredited with the Oregon Accreditation Alliance and have them share their policies with you. It will probably be given through Power DMS privilege. Currently Juneau is in process with Oregon and Soldotna Police Department, an agency with similar size to Nome is accredited through the Alliance. Policies can be obtained from other jurisdictions and changed in the areas needed to make it relevant to Nome.)
2. New policies are only effective if there is training associated with policies that is documented. Documented training should be done on all policies that have liability attached. Some policies will require yearly/bi-yearly refreshers such as biased policing, non-lethal weapons, and deadly weapons.
3. All members should sign a receipt of policy manual/standard operating procedures that is then maintained to show proof that the officer has been given the standards and they are responsible to follow. (Example attached)
4. All policies are to be followed. If not, changed to reflect what the department does if it is within scope of accreditation standards.

Public Information/Social Media

The website of the Nome Police Department is informative. The Facebook site is also. I would recommend utilizing the Facebook site to provide additional positive public information messages and increase public information to establish greater accountability to the public. The Facebook page should be monitored daily. Posts that may not be appropriate posted on the page will require quick removal. The Facebook page should also be verified. This informs viewers that it is the Nome Police Department official site. A Twitter site with the same information and verification should also be set up and monitored, even if little or no information is posted on the site. The verified site will prevent others from establishing a "Nome PD site" where they can post anything. Although the recommendations for social media are items required for accreditation they do fall under "best practices".

The Oregon Accreditation Alliance doesn't require an annual report but an annual report that covers statistics and events of the police department for the year is recommended and is completed by most police departments.

CJIS Compliance

CJIS (criminal justice information systems) is usually not covered in accreditation standards. They are requirements by the federal government if you have access to any criminal justice information such as NCIC. CJIS requirements are usually performed by the jurisdiction's IT. The requirements are listed in the assessment but have not been reviewed. It should be noted that during the assessment, no one really knew anything about the standards. There was no security awareness training, and it was unknown if building cleaners had been properly vetted.

Training

As with most small jurisdictions, there is usually a lack of training for personnel. With the remote location of Nome, training becomes more difficult and expensive. Many of the new policies that would be obtained will require additional training. The main concern with the Nome Police department is the lack of documentation associated with training. The following are recommendations for improvement:

1. There should be a person (sworn or civilian) that maintains training documentation, needs, availability of training and deadlines. This should also cover field training standards.
2. Training should meet policy standards.
3. Additional training for civilian personnel such as evidence custodian and administrative assistant is recommended. Certification for evidence custodian is preferred.
4. The Chief and Deputy Chief should seek out training that will assist with networking with other jurisdictions such as the Alaska Chief of Police Association.
5. Explore online learning opportunities. There are many resources such as the COPS portal.
6. Obtain accreditation training with the Oregon Accreditation Alliance.

Communications

An assessment was not conducted of the Emergency Communications Center. I did notice that the policy manual was out of review by 5 years. It can be assumed that it will require updates also. Included with this report is the Oregon Accreditation Alliance requirements for accreditation of a dispatch/emergency Communications Center. There are also concerns with what appeared to be limited staffing and training when talking to the dispatchers who were working, as well as parts of the manual that are not followed. The dispatch center door is usually left open, which violates most accreditation standards.

Summary

There was nothing found that would prevent the Nome Police Department from achieving accreditation. The recommended accreditation body would be the Oregon Accreditation Alliance, since it works with Alaska for accreditation. It is significantly less expensive than CALEA and it is not as expansive as CALEA (Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement

Agencies). It follows CALEA standards and is updated yearly. Mr. Scott Hayes is the executive director and can be contacted at scott.hayes@oregonaccreditation.org to start the process.

The path to accreditation will require the following:

1. Establish a new policy that meets accreditation standards. A copy of the standards for the Alliance are attached to this report.
2. Standards and proof of compliance are placed on PowerDMS software to manage your accreditation. The Alliance may provide discounts for DMS use. An example of setting up proofs of compliance is also attached.
3. Correct deficiencies.
4. Provide training.
5. Documentation.

It should take approximately 6 months to get policy together, uploaded to PowerDMS and start the process. It then requires 12 months of documentation to become accredited with an assessment of policy, compliance, and an onsite inspection. This is considered the self-assessment phase prior to accreditation. Once accreditation is achieved it needs to be maintained for reaccreditation 4 years later.

Accreditation will require by in by all members of the department. This is important when it comes to documentation. The initial policy development and entry into PowerDMS can probably be done off site. To document compliance, training and inspections would usually require a full-time person for the full year. This individual can be the accreditation manager and the training coordinator as well as several other jobs within the department. As of this report the administrative assistant is tasked with everything other than property room. This new position would fill a needed void. Experience in law enforcement would be preferred but not necessary. A new accreditation manager can be trained. Training is available through the Alliance. A manager unknown to accreditation would probably need to travel to an accredited agency such as Soldotna Police Department to have a better understanding of the process.

I am available to assist and help with questions or policy. Please don't hesitate to call. If I can't help, I can point you in the right direction.

Sincerely,



Robert Skowron
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