General Order

Houston Police Department

ISSUE DATE:	NO.
July 14, 2025	100-03

REFERENCE: Supersedes all prior conflicting Circulars and Directives, and General Order 100-03, dated July 31, 2019

SUBJECT: DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

POLICY

All department directives shall conform to the following terminology and definitions, unless a different definition is provided with the directive.

This General Order applies to all employees.

1 GRAMMATICAL USAGE

Gender. Use of a specific gender is inclusive of all genders.

Plurality of Words. The plural encompasses the singular and vice versa.

Tense of Words. The present tense includes the future tense.

2 ACRONYMS AND INITIALISMS

The following acronyms are commonly used in the General Orders:

ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
APC	Administrative Personnel Committee
AVL	Automated Vehicle Location
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
AWOP	Absent Without Permission
B&F	Office of Budget and Finance
CAD	Computer Aided Dispatch
CBRNE	Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive
CED	Conducted Energy Device
CIO	Central Intake Office
CJIS	Criminal Justice Information Services
CODIS	Combined DNA Index System
COH	City of Houston
CSL	Compensable Sick Leave
CSMART	Court System Management and Resource Technology
CSU	Crime Scene Unit (in the Houston Forensic Science Center)
DIMS	District Attorney Intake Management System
DPS	Texas Department of Public Safety
DRT	Differential Response Team
ECD	Emergency Communications Division
ERC	Employee Representative Council
FMLA	Family and Medical Leave Act
HCSO	Harris County Sheriff's Office

HEC	Houston Emergency Center
HPD	Houston Police Department
HPOPS	Houston Police Officers' Pension System
HRISC	Houston Regional Intelligence Service Center
IAD	Internal Affairs Division
ID	Identification
IOD	Injured on Duty
MCD	Mobile Computing Device
METRO	Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, Texas
NCIC	National Crime Information Center
NIBRS	National Incident-Based Reporting System
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NLETS	National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System
NOCC	Narcotics Operations Control Center
NPC	NeuroPsychiatric Center
P-Card	Purchasing Card
PD	Personal Day
PHRS	Personal Hours
PIP	Positive Interaction Program
PRD	Personal Radiation Detector
RMS	Records Management System
SETCIC	Southeast Texas Crime Information Center
SI	Supervisory Intervention
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SOSP	Strategic Officer Staffing Program
SRG	Special Response Group
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics
TCIC	Texas Crime Information Center
TCOLE	Texas Commission on Law Enforcement
TDL	Texas Driver License
TLETS	Texas Law Enforcement Telecommunications System
TMS	Talent Management System
TxDOT	Texas Department of Transportation

3 DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

Abbreviated Term Definitions

The abbreviation "***e.g.,***" (*exempli gratia* in Latin) has the same meaning as "for example" and "including but not limited to." The bracketed words are not exhaustive and are used to give the reader an example of the previous statement and/or word. As an example, *the officer shall arrive to work with all necessary equipment (e.g., primary weapon, uniform).*

The abbreviation "***i.e.,***" (*id est* in Latin) has the same meaning as "that is." The bracketed words restate, rephrase, or better define the previous statement and/or word. As an example, *the officer shall arrive to work at noon (i.e., 1200 hours).*

Directive Words

May. When appearing in written policies or procedures in a directive or instructive context, a permissive or discretionary course of action.

Shall (Will). When appearing in written policies or procedures in a directive or instructive context, a mandatory course of action that carries the same power as a direct order.

Should. When appearing in written policies or procedures in a directive or instructive context, a suggested or encouraged course of action that is not mandatory.

Department and Other Personnel

Assistant Manager. A civilian supervisor equivalent to the rank of a lieutenant.

Civilian Employee (Civilian). An employee of the Houston Police Department who is not a classified employee.

Classified Employee. An employee of the Houston Police Department who is classified as a peace officer in accordance with Chapter 143 of the Texas Local Government Code.

Command Staff. An advisory board to the Chief of Police consisting of all members of the Executive Staff and each commander of a division.

Commander (Division Commander). An employee holding the rank of police captain (or civilian manager) or higher and who is the head supervisor at a division, command, operation or office.

Commanding Officer. (1) An officer assigned to exercise authority over one or more organizational units of the department, or (2) the highest-ranking officer assigned to a location who is authorized to make tactical decisions in the event of an emergency in the absence of the commander.

Deputy Director. A civilian supervisor equivalent to the rank of executive assistant chief tasked with supervising an office.

Designee. A person who has been designated by a supervisor or other official to perform specific duties when the supervisor or official is unavailable. The designee has the decision-making power and authority of the supervisor or official only to the extent granted when designated.

Dispatcher. An employee with the job title of police telecommunicator, senior police telecommunicator, police telecommunicator supervisor, or communications training officer, assigned to Emergency Communications Division with responsibility for receiving and assigning calls for service.

Employee. Without any limiting word or phrase, both classified and civilian employees of the Houston Police Department.

Executive Staff. An advisory board to the Chief of Police consisting of all personnel with a classified rank of assistant chief or higher, the deputy directors of each office, the Chief of Staff, and the HPD City Council Liaison.

Exempt Employee. Employee designated by the City of Houston Human Resources Department as, for all intents and purposes, exempt from overtime compensation under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

Field Personnel. A classified employee who is assigned to a division that conducts patrol investigations, responds to calls for service, has a unit number, regularly conducts operations in the field, and maintains contact with the dispatcher.

Immediate Supervisor. The supervisor to whom an employee directly reports.

Manager. A supervisor holding the rank of police captain or civilian equivalent. When used as a job title, "manager" denotes civilian status.

Medical Examiner. The person empowered by state law to investigate and determine the cause of death of a person.

Mid Manager. A supervisor holding the rank of lieutenant or assistant manager.

Night Commander. A designated lieutenant or police captain who, during non-traditional business hours, is a representative of the Chief of Police.

Non-Exempt Employee. A classified employee who holds the rank of sergeant or below or a civilian employee whose job classification is covered by FLSA overtime rules and has been designated as such by the City of Houston Human Resources Director and the Civil Service Commission.

Officer (Peace Officer, Police Officer). (1) When used without any limiting word or phrase, Houston Police Department classified employees of any rank or assignment. (2) When used to denote a rank, a classified employee holding the rank of probationary police officer, police officer, or senior police officer.

Police Captain (previously Police Commander). For General Order purposes, a classified employee who holds the classified rank that is pay grade IX.

Senior Police Officer. A non-supervisory officer who, from the date of hire, has completed a minimum of twelve years of service with the Houston Police Department.

Shift Commander. The lieutenant in charge of a shift, or a sergeant in charge of a shift when the lieutenant is absent.

Supervisor. An employee who is authorized to carry out supervisory responsibilities over another employee.

Uniformed Officer (In Uniform). An officer wearing any department uniform that readily identifies the officer as a police officer (e.g., a uniform with a badge or badge patch, name tag, shoulder patches, and duty belt) to the general public, including the standard patrol uniform, dress uniform, and those specialized uniforms that include all such items (e.g., bike uniform, K-9 patrol uniform).

Organizational Terms

Beat. An area within a district assigned to officers for patrol purposes.

Concerned Division (Responsible Division). Any department division that has a responsibility for investigating or handling any part of an incident or investigation.

Department. Unless noted otherwise, when used as a standalone lowercase word, the Houston Police Department.

Detail. A group of employees assigned a specified mission, generally distinct from the larger organizational unit of the department to which they are assigned.

District. A geographic area within the city limits containing police beats and assigned to a patrol division.

Office. An organizational unit of the department supervised by a deputy director.

Police Headquarters. The Houston Police Department Edward A. Thomas Building and property located at 1200 Travis Street.

Police Station (Station). A facility primarily serving as the operation center for a patrol division and patrol related functions.

Primary Division. The HPD division responsible for investigating the most serious offense involved in a criminal investigation. When multiple offenses occur that are of equal offense classification according to the Texas Penal Code, the offense that occurred first shall determine the primary division.

Regular Assigned Division. The division to which an employee is regularly assigned according to the Employee Services Division's records. This does not include a temporary assignment.

Secondary Division. An HPD division, other than the primary division, responsible for part of an investigation.

Specialized Unit. A unit requiring unique training and designated as such by the Chief of Police, having a primary responsibility other than responding to calls for service (e.g., Mounted Patrol, Patrol Canine Detail, Bomb Squad, SWAT Detail, Dive Team, Marine Unit).

Undercover. An assignment that involves a classified employee using an assumed name, disguise, and and/or other means, for a law enforcement purpose, to hide the fact that the employee is working for a law enforcement agency.

Uniformed Division. A division in the department in which most of the officers are required to wear a police uniform for their regularly assigned duties.

Other Definitions

Benefit Year. A twelve-month period for the City beginning September 1 of each calendar year and continuing through August 31 of the next calendar year and used for the purpose of awarding or calculating benefits payable to employees.

Business Day. For department purposes, any day in which normal business operations are conducted at Houston City Hall (i.e., Monday through Friday, excluding weekends and City Council declared holidays). Hours vary, but typically cover the period from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Calendar Days. All days in a given time period including weekends, holidays, and days off.

Calendar Year. A twelve-month period beginning January 1 and ending December 31, and which has 365 days in non-leap years and 366 days in a leap year.

Chain of Command. The line of authority extending from the Chief of Police through a single subordinate at each level of command.

City. When capitalized, it refers to the entities that govern Houston (e.g., City of Houston Legal Department, City Council). When lower case, it refers to Houston as a geographic location.

Civil Service Commission. (1) For classified employees, the Firefighters' and Police Officers' Civil Service Commission of the City of Houston. (2) For civilian employees, the City of Houston, Municipal Employees' Civil Service Commission.

Department Identification. The official HPD identification card issued by the department containing the employee's name and photograph.

Extra Employment or Extra Job. Any employment engaged in while off-duty, including unpaid police-related work done for a charitable or nonprofit organization.

Fiscal Year. A twelve-month period for the City beginning July 1 of each calendar year and continuing through June 30 of the next calendar year and used for the purpose of budgeting and other administrative planning.

General Public (previously Citizens). Persons not employed by the Houston Police Department.

Hazardous Material (HAZMAT). Any item or agent (biological, chemical, radiological, and/or physical) that has the potential to cause harm to humans, animals, or the environment, either by itself or through interaction with other factors.

Incident Report. An official written account of an incident, offense, or situation that is assigned a unique incident number by the department that completed the report.

Indefinite Suspension. Involuntary removal of an employee from employment with the department and the City of Houston after the probationary period.

Intranet. The internal computer network linking department computers to each other and to the department's data center and cloud-based servers. This is a closed system accessible only through department computer terminals and is not to be confused with the Internet.

Intranet Portal. The department's internal website for accessing applications, division web pages, department directives and forms, and other data and information available on the department's local/wide area computer network, the contents of which are proprietary.

Jail. A place for the confinement of persons accused or convicted of a crime.

Leave. Any time, whether scheduled or unscheduled, that an employee is not at work when normally scheduled.

Leave Time. Any and all types of leave an employee may use (burn) to take scheduled or unscheduled leave from the employee's regular shift.

Longevity. The time calculated from the date of employment by the City of Houston. Previous City of Houston service shall be added when calculating length of service.

Longevity Pay. An amount of compensation based on years of service and as authorized by state law, City Council, and/or the applicable Meet and Confer Agreement.

Marked Vehicle. A police vehicle with recognizable police decals displayed, with or without exposed emergency equipment.

Meet and Confer Agreement (MCA). An agreement entered into between the City of Houston and the respective bargaining agent which includes the rules, benefits, union privileges and wages for a certain group of department employees.

Minimum Staffing Level. The staffing levels below which operation of the department, division, shift, and/or unit would create an undue burden to on-duty staff and jeopardize the delivery of necessary police services.

Off-Duty. The status of an employee who is free of the responsibility to perform department duties.

On-Duty. The status of an employee who is scheduled and present for department duties.

Order. A written or oral instruction or directive issued by a supervisor to a subordinate.

Out of Service. The status of an employee not available for service calls.

Overtime Compensation. Compensation given as appropriate for the employee's rank and the nature of the overtime worked in excess of an officer's regular shift or a civilian employee's workweek and in accordance with federal and state statutes, the City of Houston Code of Ordinances, the applicable Meet and Confer Agreement, and the applicable General Order.

Paid Time Off (PTO). The bi-weekly accrual of time off for officers which incorporates and replaces the sick and vacation leave banks and specifically excludes the compensatory time off bank and holiday leave, as outlined in the classified Meet and Confer Agreement.

Pay Period. A 14-calendar-day period beginning at 0500 hours on the Saturday in the week before a department payday Friday and continuing through 0459 hours on the Saturday in the week following that payday Friday.

Phase Down Program (PDP). A program with varying options for retirement in which officers who are eligible for retirement extend the payment of their accrued leave pursuant to General Order 300-35, **Phase Down Program**, and the Meet and Confer Agreement.

Plainclothes. When an officer, whether on-duty or off-duty, is not wearing a department uniform.

Police Personnel System (PPS). The system used by the department to manage employee records such as general employee information, emergency contacts, assignment, classification, transfer history, weapons qualifications, commendations, and disciplinary history.

Police Roll Call and Equipment (PRE) System. The system used by the department to manage roll call information, Red Book entries, and equipment assignments.

Positive Discipline. Department discipline requiring approval by the Chief of Police in which an officer may elect to forfeit accrued PTO hours instead of receiving a disciplinary suspension. The number of hours forfeited must equal the number of department work hours in the time period of the disciplinary suspension based on the officer's regular assigned shift.

Probationary Period. (1) For a classified employee, the time period the employee is evaluated on their ability to perform the duties for which they were employed in accordance with Chapter 143 of the Texas Local Government Code. (2) For a civilian employee, the time period the employee is evaluated on their ability to perform the duties for which they were hired in accordance with City of Houston civil service regulations.

Procedure. A method of carrying out a specific function.

Promotion. A change in the employment status of an employee to a position of higher classification.

Rank. An employee's classification or job title.

Red Book. A City issued calendar used to record personal leave for employees and to document minimum staffing levels for each particular day and shift.

Regular Day Off (RDO). Any of the days each week that the employee is not regularly scheduled to work.

Relieved of Duty. The status of an employee who is not permitted to perform job-related tasks.

Restricted Duty. The status of an employee who is temporarily permitted to work only limited job-related tasks.

Resignation. Voluntary departure of an employee from employment with the department and the City of Houston prior to retirement.

Retirement. The status of an employee who has ended employment with the department and the City of Houston and who is eligible to receive a pension. Eligibility varies based on the employee's pension system and number of years of service to the City of Houston and, in some cases, the employee's age.

Shift. (1) The working period a group of employees is regularly scheduled to be on-duty during approximately the same time of day, usually 8 or 10 hours in duration, or (2) the time period an individual employee is expected to be present for duty, including both regular and overtime assignments.

Straight Time. A wage-rate calculation including base and longevity pay only.

Supervisory Intervention (SI). A nonpunitive corrective action as defined in the department's current *Corrective Action Manual*.

Supplement. A report made in addition to and relating to an original incident report.

Suspension. The status of an employee temporarily relieved of duty for disciplinary reasons.

Systems Applications and Products® (SAP). The financial, purchasing, fixed asset, payroll, and human resources program used by the City of Houston.

Temporary Assignment. An assignment outside an employee's regular assigned division normally lasting 30 *calendar days* or less unless otherwise approved.

Termination. The involuntary removal of an employee from employment with the department and the City of Houston during the employee's probationary period.

Unmarked Vehicle. A police vehicle with no recognizable police decals and no exposed emergency equipment.

Unscheduled Leave. When an employee requests leave less than 24 hours prior to the start of the leave unless there is an open position in the Red Book or approved by a supervisor.

Workday. (1) One of the days of the week that is not one of an employee's regular days off and not an observed City Council declared holiday, (2) the duration of an employee's assigned shift, or (3) when referring to an organizational unit of the department, any day in which normal operations for the unit are conducted.

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