General Order

Houston Police Department

ISSUE DATE:	NO.
September 6, 2024	200-27

REFERENCE: Supersedes all prior conflicting Circulars and Directives, and General Order 200-27, dated January 18, 2013

SUBJECT: MEAL PERIOD

POLICY

The department shall allow each employee to take a meal period, provided that it does not interfere with the delivery of necessary police services to the community or disrupt the employee's ability to complete official activities, events, functions, or programs that benefit or advance the City's interests.

Each employee is limited to 40 minutes for a meal period. An employee's meal period shall be counted as time actually worked, as outlined in General Order 200-26, **Workday and Workweek**. To ensure rapid response to emergencies or City business requiring immediate attention, each employee shall limit the location of their meal period to within reasonable proximity of their work assignment, as pre-determined by their division commander.

A dispatcher or divisional supervisor may preempt field personnel from their meal periods as needed for operational necessity (i.e., response priority code E, 1, or 2 calls for service).

This General Order applies to all employees.

1 RESTRICTIONS

Unless otherwise approved by an appropriate divisional supervisor on a case-by-case basis, an employee shall not:

a. Start a meal period within the first two hours of their shift (regularly assigned shift or overtime programs).

b. Be out on a meal period during the last two hours of their shift (regularly assigned shift or overtime programs).

Prior to taking a meal period, an officer in the calls for service loop shall request permission from their respective dispatcher by providing the exact location of where the officer will be eating.

If the officer finds they would be in violation of the below subsection, *Maximum Number of Officers and Marked Vehicles*, the officer shall immediately notify the dispatcher. The officer may then either relocate to a food establishment within reasonable proximity or return to service and take a meal period at a later time. If the officer is thus required to relocate or return to service, the dispatcher shall not count this time towards the officer's allotted meal period, provided that the time the officer was out of service was reasonable and does not have an appearance of impropriety.

The dispatcher shall place the officer back in service at the expiration of the meal period. If the officer returns to service early, the officer shall immediately notify the dispatcher.

Maximum Number of Officers and Marked Vehicles

Except for officers working night shift (i.e., shifts beginning between 2000 hours and 0459 hours), officers shall not exceed the following restrictions at a single food establishment at any given time:

a. Three marked vehicles, regardless of rank, assignment, and/or the duty status of the officers.

b. Six officers, regardless of rank, assignment, and/or the duty status of the officers, if the officers are uniformed or if it is obvious to the general public by method of transportation or circumstances that the officers are on duty.

On a case-by-case basis, a shift commander or higher may authorize officers to exceed the above restrictions due to a special event or circumstance.

J. Noe Diaz, Jr.
Chief of Police