General Order

Houston Police Department

ISSUE DATE:	NO.
May 10, 2023	300-34

REFERENCE: Supersedes all prior conflicting Circulars and Directives, and General Order 300-34, dated June 5, 2018

SUBJECT: STRATEGIC OFFICER STAFFING PROGRAM

POLICY

This General Order outlines the Strategic Officer Staffing Program (SOSP), which helps to maintain the minimum staffing levels needed to deliver necessary police services while establishing staffing programs and procedures, allowing:

a. Classified employees to take time off from work when the Red Book is full.

b. The department to staff special programs with less budgetary and personnel impact.

Classified employees participating in the Phase Down Program shall not work SOSP without the prior written approval of the Chief of Police.

This General Order applies to classified employees only.

DEFINITIONS

Requester. For this General Order, a classified employee holding the rank of officer or sergeant, who is requesting SOSP coverage for a certain shift.

Volunteer. For this General Order, a classified employee holding the rank of officer, sergeant, or lieutenant, who volunteers to work SOSP in a manner outlined in this General Order.

1 PROCEDURES

A volunteer may work SOSP at any division, so long as the volunteer meets the applicable requirements outlined in Section 2, *Requirements to Work SOSP*. A volunteer is subject to approval by the requester's shift commander and division commander. A volunteer who is not approved to work SOSP may not grieve the matter under General Order 300-12, **Grievance Procedure**.

A volunteer shall receive express approval from the requester's division commander prior to working SOSP for straight time pay, in addition to the requirements of Section 4, *Working SOSP for Pay*.

Replacement Program

If the Red Book is full, a requester may use SOSP to take time off from work by finding a qualified volunteer to work the shift needing coverage. The requester shall submit a *Strategic Officer Staffing Program Request* form no less than 72 hours prior to the shift for which the requester needs coverage. The affected shift commander may waive the minimum time requirement on a case-by-case basis.

Prior to taking time off, the requester shall confirm that the roll call sergeant and shift commander have approved the *Strategic Officer Staffing Program Request* form and confirm that the following information is documented in the Red Book:

a. Name of the requester.

b. Number of hours being taken off.

c. Type of leave time being used (burned).

d. Name of the volunteer.

e. Type of compensation for the volunteer (i.e., pay, compensatory time, or exempt time credit).

Division commanders may develop additional methods of finding a volunteer (e.g., a volunteer roster). However, the requester shall still complete the above requirements prior to taking time off.

With approval of the requester's shift commander, the volunteer may work up to 2 hours less than the requester's complete shift. At the end of the SOSP shift, the volunteer shall complete and submit the *Strategic Officer Staffing Program Compensation Request* form and turn it in with the *Strategic Officer Staffing Program Request* form. Both forms are available on the Intranet Portal.

Requester and Volunteer Rank

A police officer or senior police officer may work SOSP for another police officer or senior police officer. A sergeant may work SOSP for another sergeant.

A sergeant may also work SOSP for a police officer or senior police officer with approval from the requester's shift commander. A lieutenant may work SOSP for a sergeant with approval from the requester's division commander. When working SOSP for an officer of a lower rank, the volunteer sergeant or lieutenant shall still supervise according to their actual rank. The volunteer sergeant or lieutenant shall sign on using the requester's unit number.

Special Programs and Staffing Shortages

Supervisors shall not order classified employees to work SOSP and shall refer to General Order 300-07, **Overtime Compensation – Classified**, when ordering classified employees to work overtime.

The Chief of Police may designate any temporary assignment or event as a special program to be staffed through SOSP in whole or in part. The division commander in charge shall have discretion in the staffing of the assignment or event. A special program may also consist of staffing shortages, emergency call-ups, special assignments, or providing additional staffing to patrol shifts. A shift commander may use SOSP to assist in the staffing of a shift during staffing shortages and may request for volunteers to work all or part of a shift.

At the end of a SOSP shift for a special program, the volunteer shall complete and submit the *Strategic Officer Staffing Program Compensation Request* form.

2 REQUIREMENTS TO WORK SOSP

A volunteer, regardless of rank, working SOSP in the calls for service (CFS) loop shall have served in the CFS loop within the previous 36 months or completed the department's "patrol reorientation" at a patrol division within the previous 12 months.

A volunteer, regardless of rank, working SOSP in the CFS loop or any other assignment that requires the use of a Body Worn Camera (BWC), shall have completed the required BWC training and shall use a BWC. Volunteers working SOSP shall refer to General Order 400-28, **Body Worn Cameras**, for exceptions and other policies regarding BWCs.

A volunteer working SOSP for a specialized unit (e.g., Radar, Truck Enforcement, K-9, SWAT, Bomb Squad) or investigative division shall possess the requisite knowledge, current training, and expertise necessary to fill the position.

3 RESTRICTIONS

A requester may use SOSP a maximum of two times per calendar month. The roll call sergeant may approve additional SOSP requests in the same calendar month on a case-by-case basis. An officer shall not establish a pattern of using SOSP to effectively change the officer's regular shift or regular days off. The shift commander and division commander shall review such instances to prevent abuse of SOSP.

A volunteer shall not:

a. Agree to work as a replacement for a time which the volunteer is otherwise scheduled to work.

b. Use (burn) all or part of a regular shift to work SOSP in the same shift.

c. Use (burn) unscheduled leave for all or part of a regular shift in the 24-hour period before or after working SOSP unless one of the "Earn and Burn" policy exceptions outlined in General Order 300-07, **Overtime Compensation – Classified**, applies.

d. Agree to work for a requester who acted as a volunteer for them during the same or previous 14-day pay period, unless authorized by the affected shift commander.

e. Work SOSP for compensatory time if the volunteer's applicable compensatory time bank or exempt time credit bank is at or above 460 hours.

4 WORKING SOSP FOR PAY

A volunteer approved to work SOSP for straight time pay (base, longevity, and training only) cannot work more than 86 hours of straight time in a 14-day pay period, as defined by General Order 200-26, **Workday and Workweek**.

For calculating Fair Labor Standards Act overtime for SOSP, any leave taken during the 14-day pay period will not count as time actually worked, as defined by General Order 300-07, **Overtime**

Compensation – Classified, and will not count towards the 80 hours of straight time already included in the volunteer's regularly scheduled shifts. Court overtime and any other overtime paid at a rate of time and a half are not counted towards the 86 total hours of straight time. Only hours worked for straight time pay shall be used in calculating the 86 hours.

Unless a volunteer uses leave time within the same 14-day pay period, the volunteer may only work six total hours of SOSP for straight time pay. If a volunteer uses any leave during the 14-day pay period, the volunteer may work additional SOSP hours for straight time pay up to the number of hours of leave time the volunteer used, subject to the "Earn and Burn" policy. The volunteer shall receive compensatory time or exempt time credit, as applicable, for any SOSP hours worked beyond the 86-hour limit.

5 VIOLATIONS

Requesting Officer

A requester's first violation for failing to ensure a volunteer is listed in the Red Book, as required by Section 1, *Procedures*, may result in a 30-day disqualification from participation in any aspect of SOSP and may be handled as a Supervisory Intervention. Any subsequent violation within a 12-month period shall result in a mandatory 6-month disqualification from participating in any aspect of SOSP and shall be investigated in accordance with the department's disciplinary system.

Volunteer Officer

A volunteer's first violation for failing to report to duty for an SOSP assignment shall result in a 90-day disqualification from participation in any aspect of SOSP and may be investigated in accordance with the department's disciplinary system. Any subsequent violation within a 36-month period shall result in a mandatory 6-month disqualification from participating in any aspect of SOSP and shall be investigated in accordance with the department's disciplinary system. The only exceptions will be if the volunteer requests Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave for the affected shift or if prevented by department policy after volunteering (e.g., placed on transitional duty, restricted duty, or relieved of duty).

6 REFERENCE MATERIAL

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)
Meet and Confer Agreement (MCA)

To the extent there are any conflicts, the FLSA and MCA supersede this General Order.

Troy Finner
Chief of Police