
	GAITHERSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT		
	Suicide Notes		
	GENERAL ORDER 1102.1	Related CALEA Standards:	
Effective Date 06/23/2016	42.2.2, 54.1.1, 82.2.1, 83.1.2, 83.2.1		
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I. DEPARTMENT POLICY

It is the policy of the department that officers will protect and preserve a crime scene and will observe all conditions, events, and remarks, and be alert for documents or anything else that would indicate that the scene is indicative of a suicide.

Officers must also be alert for documents or indications that may have been planted or staged to make a crime scene appear like a suicide.

II. PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING

A. Officer to Seize

1. The method by which an intent to commit suicide is communicated is not necessarily limited to paper, but may also be in an electronic format (i.e., home or work desktop computer, laptop computer, or handheld computer).
 - a. If it is determined that a computer is to be seized, officers shall follow the procedures listed in General Order 1107.1 - Seizing Computers and Equipment.
2. If a note is found, whether or not a suicide was successful, it will be seized by the officer as evidence and preserved according to General Order 1101.1 - Protecting and Processing Crime Scene.
3. If the victim is transported to the hospital, the officer may show the suicide note to the physician treating the victim, but the officer shall retain custody of the note.

B. Returning the Note to the Victim or Victim's Family

1. When there is no further need to hold the original note, a copy of it will be attached to the station copy of the Event Report and the original will be returned to the victim or victim's family.
2. If the suicide is successful, the original note is relinquished to the investigator assigned to the case.

Reporting Requirements

1. If an officer returns the note, s(he) shall ensure that a photocopy of it has been made for station records, and will indicate in the Event Report or subsequent Supplement Report:
 - a. Name(s) of the person(s) to whom the note was given;
 - b. The date and time it was relinquished,
 - c. The person's relationship to the victim (i.e., wife, husband, son, daughter, etc.).

C. Release of Note Contents to the Media

1. The Department will not release the contents of a suicide note to members of the media on or off-the-record.