



| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | GAITHERSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT | |  |
| | Missing Persons | | |
| | GENERAL ORDER | 608.1 | |
| Effective Date | 05/24/2012 | 41.2.5, 42.1.4, 42.2.2, 55.1.1, 81.2.9 | |
| Authorized by: | Mark P. Sroka CHIEF OF POLICE | SIGNATURE | DATE |

I. DEPARTMENT POLICY

Patrol officers are responsible for conducting the preliminary investigation of persons reported as missing. Even though the person who wishes to make a missing person report is not reporting a crime, the person making the report will be treated with dignity, respect, courtesy, and sensitivity.

This directive is written from the perspective of a first-responder as patrol officers respond to the scene, meet with the complainant, and conduct their preliminary investigation.

For procedures regarding juveniles, see General Orders 902.1.

II. PROCEDURES

A. Preliminary Investigation

1. When a patrol officer is dispatched to a report of a missing person (adult or juvenile) the officer will conduct a preliminary investigation, which will include, and may not be limited to the guidelines and procedures listed in this and other Department directives.
2. Officers will interview the complainant, witnesses, and anyone else at the scene that may have information about the missing person.
3. On their approach to and at the scene of the interview with the complainant, officers will observe all conditions, events, and remarks made at or near the scene.
 - *Unless the complainant wishes to wait a while longer before initiating a formal report, GPD officers will not tell complainants that the missing person has to be gone for a certain period of time before a report can be written.*
4. The missing person's residence, vehicle, place of work, or other location (if they are missing from one of these locations) shall be treated as a crime scene in the sense that the officer will maintain it

and protect it, while looking for any signs of suspected foul-play, suicide note, or other type of note or indication which may explain the missing person's intentions, and if evidence needs to be collected, the officer will make appropriate arrangements for its collection.

5. The missing person's residence shall be thoroughly searched before beginning searches of any other locations.
6. The neighborhood, surrounding areas, and places that the missing person is known to frequent (i.e., parks, recreation areas, shopping areas, etc.) will be checked in an attempt to locate the missing person, or witnesses, or other people that may have seen the missing person, unless it has been verified that the missing person is not in the immediate area.
7. PSCC/Message Routing (MRC) will be contacted immediately by phone (from the scene, if possible) to place a radio look-out in the following circumstances, unless there is reliable information that the missing person is outside Montgomery County:
 - The missing adult is senile (critical),
 - The missing adult is mentally deficient (critical),
 - The missing adult is physically handicapped (critical),
 - The missing adult is suicidal (critical), and/or
 - Foul-play is suspected (critical).
 - Any juvenile (under age 18) that is missing or considered a runaway.
8. The complainant will be advised that the officer will begin the preliminary investigation and will ensure that an investigator is provided with a copy of the Missing Person report so that the investigator can conduct any follow-up investigation:
 - The person reporting a missing adult must also sign an NCIC ***Adult Missing Person Attestment Statement*** to be submitted with the Missing Person Report.
 - If foul play is suspected or the missing person is a ***critical missing person***, the officer will contact an investigator from the scene and will forward a copy to the investigator

as soon as possible.

- The officer is permitted to provide the investigator with a copy of the report (without having it first approved by a supervisor) if the provision will enhance the chances of locating the missing person.
9. The complainant will be advised to contact PSCC immediately upon hearing from the missing person, or the missing person returns before the complainant has been contacted by the officer or investigator.
 10. Officers will ensure that a county-wide teletype or MCP Web Board posting is accomplished immediately so that other districts are aware of the missing person's name and description, especially if the missing person is known to frequent a location in another district or if the teletype would enhance efforts to locate the missing person.
 11. Officers will ensure that a teletype is sent to a jurisdiction outside the County if information is developed that would indicate the missing person may be located in that jurisdiction. The teletype should advise the foreign jurisdiction of the missing person's possible location and request that an officer(s) from that jurisdiction be dispatched to the location to attempt to locate the missing person.
 - *Officers should attempt to ascertain a specific location where the missing person may be located because some jurisdictions may not dispatch an officer to check an area, but will dispatch an officer to an address.*
 12. MRC shall be notified immediately to make an NCIC computer entry regarding the missing person.
 13. Officers shall complete and submit a Missing Person Report as soon as possible for supervisory approval that contains at least the following information to document the missing person's disappearance, and to assist the investigator conducting the follow-up:
 - *A full description (a good-quality photograph should be attached, if available, to the report for the investigator's follow-up),*
 - *Any known associates, places frequented, threats of*

violence, etc.

- *Whether a radio look-out was made,*
- *The number of the PSCC operator who made the N.C.I.C. entry,*
- *Investigator notified when appropriate, and*
- *The circumstances under which the missing person is being reported.*

14. If a patrol officer closes or cancels a missing person report, the officer will do the following:

- *Verify the return and identity of the missing person (if the person is located in another jurisdiction, the officer can have the police agency with jurisdiction make the verification),*
- *Write a Supplement Report to cancel the original report (unless the original report has been written, but not yet submitted for supervisory review, in which case, the cancellation can be made on the original report in the designated area),*
- *The Supplement Report will indicate the location where the individual was found, his/her physical/mental condition, how the identity was verified, and a synopsis of any criminal charges contemplated.*
- *Have PSCC Message Routing cancel all teletypes, computer entries and/or look-outs for the individual,*
- *Notify the appropriate investigative unit (see General Order 607.2),*
- *Re-contact the complainant later during the tour of duty and/or during the next tour of duty to ascertain any additional information or to advise them of relevant details of the case. Tact and discretion shall be used when dealing with the complainant (or the missing person's family) if it appears that the missing person has been the subject of foul-play or has been located either deceased or in a severely deteriorated physical or mental condition;*

- *Return any photographs in the possession of police to the owner.*

B. Follow-up Investigations

1. Normally, the follow-up investigation of missing persons is handled by GPD or MCP investigators.
2. Any follow-up investigation conducted by a patrol officer will be coordinated with any investigator assigned to the case.

C. Search Procedures

1. Searches for missing persons beyond the checking of the the residence, neighborhoods, congregating areas, etc., will be conducted as the circumstances warrant and based on available information.
2. If an officer believes that the Maryland State Police helicopter would aid in the search for the missing person (regardless of age), the officer must request this assistance via PSCC. (See [General Order 1001.1](#)).
3. Officers should also consider the use of canine (i.e., MCP bloodhound), which can be requested through PSCC. (See [General Order 609.1](#)).
4. Additional resources that can be used are the GPD motorcycles and four wheel-drive vehicles. (See [General Order 606.2](#)).
5. When a search is conducted, a command post should be established and all persons participating in the search should be briefed and provided with a photograph (if available) prior to beginning the search. (See General Order 1000.2 – Incident Command System).
6. Searches should be methodical and all participants should be equipped with appropriate means of communication.
7. Maps of the area to be searched should be present at the command post (available in the Incident Command Box).

8. Further search procedures are listed in General Order 902.1 - Missing and Runaway Juveniles)

D. Search Managers

1. The primary focus of a Search Manager is managing searches for critical missing persons. However, they have also been tasked with manhunts and evidentiary searches. Search Managers are trained and experienced in the deployment and proper application of specialized search resources (Air Scent, Trailing, Tracking, and Cadaver K9s, Ground searchers, Air, Technical and investigative resources etc) and with the characteristics of lost person behavior. These skills combined with the use of the Incident Command Structure provide a highly effective and focused use of available assets to bring a successful conclusion to a search.
2. Levels of search and identified resources are present in each of the four below levels. These are general categories as there are no defined lines that separate them but the use of specific resources are benchmarks that allow the supervisor to gauge the relative effort involved.

Search Levels:
 - a) Level 1; Handled by patrol shift with minimal assistance. Subject located within a reasonable amount of time.
 - b) Level 2; Search efforts are enhanced by the addition and use of limited resources, K9, Bloodhound, Helicopter. No formal search management. (Search Manager may be consulted).
 - c) Level 3; Managed Search, Search manager on scene, resource use increased and outside assets may be requested.
 - d) Level 4; Extended Managed Search, outside resources used, multi operational periods are possible. Logistics become a factor (on the scale of an ERT callout).
3. Search Managers can be consulted at any level of search. ECC is able to contact the Search Manager or they can be contacted directly by the primary supervisor on the search. Often, the search manager is already aware of the search through the critical incident paging system.
4. Consultation with a Search Manager can provide the primary supervisor with tips for conducting the search as well as validation

of efforts that are underway. Search managers are competent to make the determination as to when to suspend active search efforts.

E. Notifications

1. Unless otherwise addressed in this directive, officers shall ensure immediate notification of GPD Command Staff members, GPD PIO, MCP Public Information Office, and the appropriate investigative unit, whenever an *active* search for a missing person (adult or juvenile) is taking place in the City – whether by City or MCP officers – in the event of any of the following:
 - *The missing person is not missing of his/her own free will; or*
 - *The missing person is a juvenile (under 18), is elderly, or is suffering from Alzheimer's or other debilitating disease or condition; or*
 - *A canine team(s) and/or helicopter is/are deployed; or*
 - *An Amber Alert is about to be or has been issued.*
2. The supervisor shall make notification to A Child Is Missing at 888-875-2246 and Gaithersburg Alert when any of the above criteria is met. The two networks will activate their telephone notification systems informing citizens of the active search and missing subject's description.

III. ABUSE VICTIMS REPORTED MISSING

A. Procedures

1. During the course of an officer's initial investigation regarding a missing person reported to him/her, officers should contact the Crisis Center (240) 777-4000 to determine if the Crisis Center has knowledge of the missing person. It is best to make this phone call from the police station whenever possible.
2. When contacting the Crisis Center, the officer will ask to speak to a supervisor and the officer will identify him/herself accordingly, along with giving the supervisor the phone number at which the supervisor can re-contact the officer.
3. Because of confidentiality issues, the Center supervisor will re-

contact the officer to confirm identity.

4. The officer will inform the supervisor that a person is attempting to report a certain individual as a missing person and the officer will provide the supervisor with the missing person's name.
5. The supervisor will advise the officer whether or not the officer has a missing person.
6. The Crisis Center will not provide the officer with any additional information, and officers should not attempt to seek it.

B. Informing the Complainant

1. If it is confirmed that the Crisis Center has knowledge of the missing person, the confidentiality of persons seeking shelter is of the utmost importance and the complainant will not be told the missing person's whereabouts by the officer.
2. The complainant will be informed that the missing person has been located, but does not wish for his/her location to be revealed.
3. Officers must remember that their report is a matter of public record so discretion must be used when documenting the officer's conversation with the Crisis Center's supervisor.