





POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

	OFFICER INVOLVED DEATH OR SERIOUS INJURY	
	POLICY NUMBER: 11-2	ISSUING AUTHORITY 
	EFFECTIVE DATE: June 12, 2025	Christine A. Elow Police Commissioner

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

Competent and responsible use of force investigations are critical for maintaining legitimate authority and the public's confidence. This is especially true when police action results in death or serious injury or has significance within the broader community. Furthermore, investigations into the circumstances and facts surrounding such events do not rely on general criminal investigative processes. This policy provides specific detailed plans and directives for the management of these critical incidents including the well-being of involved officers as well as the inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the event.

Officer-involved deaths or serious injuries, though rare, tend to be high-profile events that draw media coverage and sometimes citizen concern. The Cambridge Police Department is committed to demonstrating its accountability to the community by conducting an impartial, transparent, and systematic investigation into any officer-involved death or other serious injury. It is the policy of the Cambridge Police Department to balance the need to release timely information regarding the status of the investigation to the public and the media with the obligation to protect the integrity of the investigation.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Cambridge Police Department to:

- A. provide to officers involved in an officer-involved death or serious injury, and to their families, both physical and psychological and or medical support and resources as soon as practical;
- B. investigate all incidents of officer involved serious injury and to request the assistance of outside agencies for the sake of transparency when appropriate;
- C. turn over the investigation to the Office of the District Attorney when death occurs;
- D. cooperate with the media and disclose information as allowable by law; and
- E. provide information to the public when such disclosure will not interfere with investigative efforts.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. *CISM*: Critical Incident Stress Management, a program designed to help officers prepare for and respond to critical incidents with a focus on their wellness and resiliency.
- B. *Incident Commander (IC)*: The person responsible for all incident activities, including the development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and release of resources. The IC has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for the management of all operations at the incident site.
- C. *Involved officer(s)*: Unless otherwise indicated, those sworn officers in on-duty or off-duty status who are involved in a serious incident or are direct witnesses to such an event.
- D. *MSP*: Massachusetts State Police.
- E. *POST*: Peace Officer Standards and Training.
- F. *Serious Incident*: A serious incident includes, but is not limited to, the following.
 - 1. Any use of deadly force where the employee's actions resulted in injury or death, except as provided below.
 - 2. Any death or serious injury resulting from, or that occurs during, the course of a departmental operation.
 - 3. Pursuits resulting in serious injury or death.
 - 4. Employee-involved collisions resulting in serious injury or death.
 - 5. Matters of an unusually serious nature involving department employees, to include large-scale event response resulting in serious injury or death.
- G. *Serious Injury*: Injury that involves a substantial risk of death, protracted and obvious disfigurement, or extended loss or impairment of the function of a body part or organ.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. Immediate responsibilities of officers at the scene include:
 - 1. stopping active threats of death or serious injury to anyone in the vicinity including community members, officers, and suspects. Officers should:
 - a. handcuff suspects who have been apprehended unless doing so would interfere with life-saving efforts;
 - b. isolate the suspect weapons; and
 - c. remain vigilant to the possibility of additional threats nearby;
 - 2. providing for and summoning medical assistance when appropriate even if there are no apparent injuries;

3. relaying pertinent information to supervisors and dispatch;
 4. preserving evidence including all firearms at the scene belonging to both suspects and involved officers whether discharged or not.
- B. Once the incident has been deemed safe, involved officers should be transported to the hospital for evaluation; but prior to receiving medication, shall provide a brief public safety statement to a supervisor unless exigent circumstances dictate otherwise.
1. After providing the public safety statement, officers should not discuss any aspect of the incident amongst themselves or with others except for an attorney, a union representative, a qualified medical/mental health professional, or authorized investigative personnel.
- C. Officers involved in the incident are entitled to certain rights along with certain obligations.
1. Garrity Rights protect public employees from being compelled to incriminate themselves during investigatory interviews conducted by their employers. This protection stems from the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which declares that the government cannot compel a person to be a witness in a criminal case against themselves.
 2. Officers are obligated to cooperate with an investigation by the department and may be subject to disciplinary actions up to and including dismissal for non-cooperation.
- D. Immediately after an officer-involved death or serious injury, officers may be temporarily relieved of duty or placed on administrative leave for a period to be determined by the Commissioner pending an internal affairs investigation, criminal, or civil proceedings. Return to duty:
1. will be determined by the outcome of all investigations with the approval of the Commissioner; and
 2. may depend upon retraining and medical and or psychological clearance(s).
- E. Officers from jurisdictions other than their own may be involved in such incidents.
1. These officers shall be subject to their own department policies and procedures.
 2. However, they will be subject to cooperating with any investigation by the lead department, the Office of the District Attorney, or the Massachusetts State Police.
 3. A department officer involved in an incident that takes place in another jurisdiction, including members of state or federal task forces, shall be subject to the department's policy and will be obligated to cooperate with the investigation.
- F. Responsibilities of secondary officers at the scene who were not directly involved include but are not limited to:
1. setting up an inner and outer perimeter;
 2. providing for the security of evidence; and
 3. assisting with the flow of pedestrian and vehicular traffic in the area.

- G. Depending on the severity of the incident, crime scene duties and follow-up forensics may be assigned to the department, the Boston Police Department, or the Massachusetts State Police.
 - 1. The department does have ballistics capabilities, but the MSP usually processes ballistics for homicides.
 - 2. A Deputy Superintendent may determine who processes the scene.
- H. Supervisor response and responsibilities are as follows.
 - 1. The patrol sergeant and lieutenant shall respond and be on scene as soon as possible and deploy the Incident Command System if necessary. They will:
 - a. establish the inner and outer perimeter if not already established by officers on scene;
 - b. assign an officer to maintain a log of those entering or exiting the scene;
 - c. take possession of all firearms at the scene that have been discharged taking into consideration all safety precautions since the firearms are likely still loaded with a live round chambered;
 - d. collect and render safe all firearms belonging to involved officers on scene and turn them over to investigators to determine if they have been discharged. Firearms that were discharged shall be secured as evidence, and primary service firearms shall be replaced by a similar firearm as soon as reasonably practicable. Firearms determined not to have been discharged will then be returned to the police officers to whom they were issued as soon as possible;
 - e. make notifications to the Shift Commander at the station who will notify the Duty Chief or the Day Operations Deputy if the incident occurs during the daytime;
 - f. set up a command post and staging area if necessary and provide a location for the media;
 - g. advise officers at the scene that they should not discuss the incident with uninvolved parties;
 - h. direct that involved officers should be separated and removed from the immediate scene and assigned a companion officer to provide for their physical needs; and
 - i. check all officers involved in the incident for injuries, as it is possible they are injured but may not realize it due to increased levels of adrenaline. All injured officers should be transported to the hospital.
 - j. If an involved officer is transported to the hospital, assign a companion officer or peer support personnel to accompany or meet them there.
 - k. If the involved officer is incapable of calling, a supervisor or designee of the department should notify the involved officer's immediate family as soon as possible. This notification should be made in person, when possible.

- (1) The notification should provide the family members with basic information on the status of the involved officer and when and where they will be able to see the officer.
 - (2) Any other notifications will depend on the circumstances.
- l. Identify and separate all potential witnesses and request that they remain on scene to provide a statement. If witnesses wish to leave and there is no legal obligation to detain them, officers should attempt to obtain their contact information for future communications.
 - m. Obtain a brief public safety statement, preferably by a supervisor, individually from the involved officer(s), covering only information necessary to focus initial law enforcement response and direct the preliminary investigation. Information obtained may include where appropriate:
 - (1) description of at-large suspects and their direction of travel, time elapsed since the suspects were last seen, and any weapons they may have;
 - (2) location of injured persons;
 - (3) description and location of any known victims or witnesses;
 - (4) type of force and weapons used;
 - (5) direction and approximate number of shots fired by involved officer(s) and suspects;
 - (6) description and location of any known evidence;
 - (7) any other information necessary to ensure officer and public safety and to assist in the apprehension of at-large subjects.
 - n. As soon as practical, either at the scene or at the hospital, a supervisor or designee should take photographs of the involved officer(s) to include any injuries sustained.
- I. Command and Leadership response and responsibilities are as follows.
 1. The Commissioner is responsible for communicating with the City Manager, the City Solicitor, and any other city official whose services may be required. The Command Staff will supervise all subsequent activity surrounding the incident, such as:
 - a. affirming and reinforcing that no unauthorized statements regarding the incident should be made;
 - b. determining the need for activation of the CISM, alerting the Peer Support Team for follow-up if necessary, providing support for the families of involved officers if appropriate;
 - c. determining who will conduct the follow-up investigation. In those instances where the use of force results in death, the District Attorney's Office, pursuant to the terms of M.G.L. c. 38, § 4, will assume control of the investigation;
 - (1) The statute reads, in part, "The District Attorney or his law enforcement representative shall direct and control the investigation of the death and shall

coordinate the investigation with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and the police department within whose jurisdiction the death occurred.”

- d. providing direction for the department to lead the follow-up investigation when death does not occur unless there is a need to request outside assistance for the sake of transparency. Types of investigations may include:
 - (1) a criminal investigation of the suspect’s actions;
 - (2) a criminal investigation of the involved officer’s actions;
 - (3) an administrative investigation as to policy compliance by involved officers; or
 - (4) a civil investigation to determine potential liability.
 - e. Blood testing for a controlled substance and/or alcohol will be conducted upon those individual employees where the facts are sufficient to constitute reasonable suspicion of unauthorized use. Reasonable suspicion shall be based upon objective facts obtained by the department and the rational inferences which may be drawn from those facts.
2. In conjunction with the District Attorney’s Office, the Director of Communications and Media Relations shall be responsible for activating the Community Alert System, if necessary, talking with the media and determining when:
- a. and if a Community Alert will be issued;
 - b. the names of officers and suspects can be released to the public;
 - c. video footage may be released;
 - d. an incident report will be made public; and
 - e. reports from ShotSpotter may be used in the investigation.
 - f. The Director shall also supervise the use of social media with regard to the incident.
- J. The Commissioner may solicit the advice and assistance of the City Solicitor for the City regarding such issues as indemnification by the City, qualified immunity, and the certification of officers according to the POST Commission ruling.
1. “An officer’s certification shall be revoked if shown by clear and convincing evidence that an officer committed a felony or hate crime, inflicted excessive force that resulted in death or serious bodily injury, failed to intervene, or submitted false timesheets. Once decertified no law enforcement officer shall be immune from civil liability and instead can be held accountable in court.”
- K. As soon as practical after an incident, and only after all involved members of the department have provided recorded or formal statements to criminal and/or administrative investigators, the department should conduct a tactical debrief to discuss the incident. The debrief will not be recorded.

1. The Commissioner or appropriate member of the Command Staff will identify participants in the debrief; however, participation is voluntary.
- L. An administrative investigation shall be conducted to determine whether violations of agency policy, procedures, rules, or training occurred, and, if so, whether disciplinary action should be recommended or modifications to policy, procedures, or training considered. In those instances where the use of force results in death and/or the District Attorney's Office, Attorney General's Office and/or the U.S. Attorney's Office initiates a criminal investigation of the incident, the Professional Standards Unit will conduct a parallel administrative investigation that will not interfere with the criminal investigation.
1. Whenever feasible, officers should have some recovery time before providing a full formal statement. At least two sleep cycles (48 hours) is advisable prior to being interviewed.
 2. All interviews should be audio and/or video recorded.
 3. Investigators shall be trained in and take into account symptoms of post-traumatic stress during involved officer interviews, such as time and space distortions, confusion, and hearing and visual distortions associated with recalling details of the incident, as well as emotional impairment during questioning.
 4. The Commissioner shall be responsible for approving all final reports and the disposition of any Professional Standards investigations. In some cases, the Commissioner may seek additional approval from the City Manager.
- M. The following section pertains to police actions that result in death or serious bodily injuries. Police actions may include, but are not limited to, deaths or serious bodily injuries resulting from motor vehicle collisions, foot pursuits, or incidents occurring while in police custody. Many protocols previously mentioned in this policy will largely remain the same regarding preserving the integrity of the scene, making the appropriate notifications, administrative leave procedures and so forth. The Middlesex County District Attorney's Office will retain jurisdiction over any police action that results in death. In situations in which a police action has resulted in serious bodily injuries, the Police Commissioner retains the authority to determine the appropriate investigatory entity, including whether the Cambridge Police Department will conduct the investigation or refer the investigation to an outside agency such as the Massachusetts State Police.
- N. All officers of the department shall receive initial and regular training regarding:
1. agency policy and applicable laws regarding the investigation of officer-involved death or serious injury;
 2. potential negative emotional, psychological, and physical reactions following officer involved death or serious injury and available resources; and
 3. what to expect following an officer involved death or serious injury incident.

- O. The department's Leadership Team and all supervisors will receive training related to managing officer-involved critical incidents on an annual basis and upon being promoted to a higher rank.