

103. CONDUCT UNBECOMING A POLICE OFFICER



RICHFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY

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Authority: Chief Jay Henthorne

NOTE: This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil or criminal liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violations of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this Department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

I. PURPOSE

This Policy defines conduct unbecoming a police officer. This Policy supplements the ethical standards contained in the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics, which can be found at the end of this Policy. This Policy was issued in compliance with State Law which requires each law enforcement agency to adopt and maintain a policy on conduct unbecoming a police officer.

II. POLICY

Law enforcement effectiveness depends upon community respect and confidence. Conduct which detracts from this respect and confidence is detrimental to the public interest and should be prohibited. The policy of this Department is to investigate circumstances suggesting an officer has engaged in unbecoming conduct, and impose disciplinary action when appropriate.

III. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all officers of this agency engaged in official duties, whether within or outside of the territorial jurisdiction of this agency. Unless otherwise noted, this Policy also applies to off duty conduct as well. Conduct not mentioned under a specific rule, but which violates a general principle is prohibited.

This Policy is organized into eight principles governing conduct unbecoming an officer. Each principle is followed by the rationale explaining the principle and a set of rules.

Principle One

Police officers **shall** conduct themselves, whether on or off duty, in accordance with the Constitution of the United States, the Minnesota Constitution, and all applicable laws, ordinances and rules enacted or established pursuant to legal authority.

Rationale

Police officers conduct their duties pursuant to a grant of limited authority from the community. Therefore, officers must understand the laws defining the scope of their enforcement powers. Police officers may only act in accordance with the powers granted to them.

Rules

- 1) Police officers **shall** not knowingly exceed their authority in the enforcement of the law.
- 2) Police officers **shall** not knowingly disobey the law or rules of criminal procedure in such areas as interrogation, arrest, detention, searches, seizures, use of informants and preservation of evidence.
- 3) Police officers **shall** not knowingly restrict the freedom of individuals, whether by arrest or detention, in violation of the Constitutions and laws of the United States and the State of Minnesota.

- 4) Police officers, whether on or off duty, **shall** not knowingly commit any criminal offense under any laws of the United States or any state or local jurisdiction in which the officer is present, except where permitted in the performance of duty under proper authority.

Principle Two

Police officers **shall** refrain from any conduct in an official capacity that detracts from the public's faith in the integrity of the criminal justice system.

Rationale

Community cooperation with the police is a product of its trust that officers will act honestly and with impartiality. The police officer, as the public's initial contact with the criminal justice system, must act in a manner that instills such trust.

Rules

- 1) Police officers **shall** carry out their duties with integrity, fairness and impartiality.
- 2) Police officers **shall** not knowingly make false accusations of any criminal, ordinance, traffic or other law violation. This provision **shall** not prohibit the use of deception during criminal investigations or interrogations as permitted under law.
- 3) Police officers **shall** truthfully, completely and impartially report, testify and present evidence, including exculpatory evidence, in all matters of an official nature.
- 4) Police officers **shall** take no action knowing it will violate the constitutional rights of any person.
- 5) Police officers must obey lawful orders, but must refuse to obey any orders the officer knows would require the officer to commit an illegal act. If in doubt as to the clarity of an order, the officer **shall**, if feasible, request the issuing officer to clarify the order. An officer refusing to obey an order **shall** be required to justify their actions.
- 6) Police officers learning of conduct or observing conduct which is in violation of any law or policy of this Department **shall** take necessary action and report the incident to the officer's immediate supervisor, who **shall** forward the information to the chief law enforcement officer. If the misconduct is committed by the officer's immediate supervisor, the officer **shall** report the incident to the immediate supervisor's supervisor.

Principle Three

Police officers **shall** perform their duties and apply the law impartially and without prejudice or discrimination.

Rationale

Law enforcement effectiveness requires public trust and confidence. Diverse communities must have faith in the fairness and impartiality of their police. Police officers must refrain from fostering disharmony in their communities based upon diversity, and perform their duties without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, sexual orientation or age.

Rules

- 1) Police officers **shall** provide every person in our society with professional, effective and efficient law enforcement services.
- 2) Police officers **shall** not express, whether by act, omission or statement, prejudice concerning race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, sexual orientation or age.
- 3) Police officers **shall** not allow their law enforcement decisions to be influenced by race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, sexual orientation or age.

Principle Four

Police officers **shall** not, whether on or off duty, exhibit any conduct which discredits themselves or the Department or otherwise impairs their ability or that of other officers or the Department to provide law enforcement services to the community.

Rationale

A police officer's ability to perform their duties is dependent upon the respect and confidence communities have for the officer and law enforcement officers in general. Police officers must conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the integrity and trustworthiness expected of them by the public.

Rules

- 1) Police officers **shall** not consume alcoholic beverages or chemical substances, while on duty, except as permitted in the performance of official duties, and under no circumstances while in uniform, except as provided for in Department policy.
- 2) Police officers **shall** not consume alcoholic beverages to the extent the officer would be rendered unfit for the officer's next scheduled shift. A peace officer **shall** not report for work with the odor of an alcoholic beverage on the officer's breath.
- 3) Police officers **shall** not use narcotics, hallucinogens, or other controlled substances except when legally prescribed. When medications are prescribed, the officer **shall** inquire of the prescribing physician whether the medication will impair the officer in the performance of the officer's duties. The officer **shall** immediately notify the officer's supervisor if a prescribed medication is likely to impair the officer's performance during the officer's next scheduled shift.
- 4) Police officers, while on duty, **shall** not commit any act which, as defined under Minnesota law, constitutes sexual harassment, including but not limited to, making unwelcome sexual advances, requesting sexual favors, engaging in sexually motivated physical contact or other verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature.
- 5) Police officers, while off duty, **shall** not engage in any conduct which the officer knows, or reasonably should know constitutes an unwelcome sexual advance or request for sexual favor, or unwelcome sexually motivated physical contact or other unwelcome verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature.
- 6) Police officers **shall** not commit any acts which, as defined under Minnesota law, constitute sexual assault or indecent exposure. Sexual assault does not include a frisk or other search done in accordance with proper police procedures.
- 7) Police officers **shall** not commit any acts which, as defined under Minnesota law, constitute (1) domestic abuse, or (2) the violation of a court order restraining the officer from committing an act of domestic abuse or harassment, having contact with the petitioner, or excluding the police officer from the petitioner's home or workplace.
- 8) Police officers **shall** not, in the course of performing their duties, engage in any sexual contact or conduct constituting lewd behavior, including but not limited to, showering or receiving a massage in the nude, exposing themselves or otherwise making physical contact with the nude or partially nude body of any person, except as pursuant to a written policy of the Department.
- 9) Police officers **shall** avoid regular personal associations with persons who are known to engage in criminal activity where such associations will undermine the public trust and confidence in the officer or Department. This rule does not prohibit those associations that are necessary to the performance of official duties, or where such associations are unavoidable because of the officer's personal or family relationships.

Principle Five

Police officers **shall** treat all members of the public courteously and with respect.

Rationale

Police officers are the most visible form of local government. Therefore, police officers must make a positive impression when interacting with the public and each other.

Rules

- 1) Police officers **shall** exercise reasonable courtesy in their dealings with the public, fellow officers, superiors and subordinates.
- 2) No police officer **shall** ridicule, mock, deride, taunt, belittle, willfully embarrass, humiliate, or shame any person to do anything reasonably calculated to incite a person to violence.
- 3) Police officers **shall** promptly advise any inquiring citizen of the Department's complaint procedure, and **shall** follow the established Departmental policy for processing complaints.

Principle Six

Police officers **shall** not compromise their integrity, nor that of the Department or profession, by accepting, giving or soliciting any gratuity which could be reasonably interpreted as capable of influencing their official acts or judgments, or by using their status as a police officer for personal, commercial, or political gain.

Rationale

For a community to have faith in its police officers, officers must avoid conduct that does or could cast doubt upon the impartiality of the individual officer or the Department.

Rules

- 1) Police officers **shall** not use their official position, identification cards or badges: (1) for personal or financial gain, for themselves or another person; (2) for obtaining privileges not otherwise available to them except in the performance of duty; and (3) for avoiding consequences of unlawful or prohibited actions.
- 2) Police officers **shall** not lend to another person their identification cards or badges or permit these items to be photographed or reproduced without approval of the chief law enforcement officer.
- 3) Police officers **shall** refuse favors or gratuities which could be reasonably interpreted as capable of influencing official acts or judgments.
- 4) Unless required for the performance of official duties, police officers **shall** not, while on duty, be present at establishments that have the primary purpose of providing sexually-oriented adult entertainment. This rule does not prohibit officers from conducting walk-throughs of such establishments as part of regular assigned duties.
- 5) Police officers **shall**:
 - a) Not authorize the use of their names, photographs or titles in a manner that identifies the officer as an employee of this Department in connection with advertisements for any product, commodity or commercial enterprise;
 - b) Maintain a neutral position with regard to the merits of any labor dispute, political protest, or other public demonstration while acting in an official capacity;
 - c) Not make endorsements of political candidates, while on duty, or while wearing the Department's official uniform.

This section does not prohibit officers from expressing their views on existing, proposed or pending criminal justice legislation in their official capacity.

None of these rules **shall** prevent officers from engaging in the free expression of political speech in their capacities as private citizens, or the rights of police fraternal or labor organizations to endorse political candidates or express views on political issues or other matters of public concern.

Principle Seven

Police officers **shall** not compromise their integrity, nor that of the Department or profession, by taking or attempting to influence actions when a conflict of interest exists.

Rationale

For the public to maintain its faith in the integrity and impartiality of police officers and the Department, officers must avoid taking or influencing official actions where the officer's actions would or could conflict with the officer's appropriate responsibilities.

Rules

- 1) Police officers **shall**, unless required by law or policy, refrain from becoming involved in official matters, or influencing actions of other peace officers in official matters, impacting the officer's immediate family, relatives, or persons with whom the officer has or has had a significant personal relationship.
- 2) Police officers **shall**, unless required by law or policy, refrain from acting or influencing official actions of other peace officers in official matters impacting persons with whom the officer has or has had a business or employment relationship.
- 3) Police officers **shall** not use the authority of their position as police officers or information available to them due to their status as police officers, for any purpose of personal gain including, but not limited to, initiating or furthering personal and/or intimate interactions of any kind with persons with whom the officer has had contact while on duty.
- 4) Police officers **shall** not engage in any off-duty employment if the position compromises or would reasonably tend to compromise the officer's ability to impartially perform the officer's official duties.

Principle Eight

Police officers **shall** observe the confidentiality of information available to them due to their status as peace officers.

Rationale

Police officers are entrusted with vast amounts of private and personal information, or access thereto. Police officers must maintain the confidentiality of such information to protect the privacy of the subjects of that information, and to maintain public faith in the officer's and Department's commitment to preserving such confidences.

Rules

- 1) Police officers **shall** not knowingly violate any legal restriction for the release or dissemination of information.
- 2) Police officers **shall** not, except in the course of official duties or as required by law, publicly disclose information likely to endanger or embarrass victims, witnesses or complainants.
- 3) Police officers **shall** not divulge the identity of persons giving confidential information except as required by law or Department policy.

By Order Of:



Chief of Police