



Subject: Complaint Processing and Internal Affairs		General Order Number: 09.02
Effective Date: 07/06/16	Reference: Citizen Complaint Form - Appendix 09.02	
Approval: Chief Justin D. Laps		No. of Pages: 3
Updated: Annually		

Chapter 9

A. Policy

To insure the integrity of the Stark County Park District Ranger Department, it is essential that the public confidence be maintained in the ability of the department to investigate and properly adjudicate complaints against the department and its employees.

B. Procedures

To protect the integrity of the Stark County Park District Ranger Department and its employees and reduce malicious and false accusations, all complaints against the department and/or its employees (alleged or suspected, verbal or written, signed or anonymous) shall be investigated.

1. Acceptance of Complaints
 - a. Employees shall provide assistance to those who express the desire to lodge complaints against any employee(s) of this agency. This includes but is not limited to:
 - i. calling a supervisor to the scene to document the complaint,
 - ii. explaining the department’s complaint procedures,
 - iii. providing referrals to individuals and/or locations where such complaints can be made in person, or
 - iv. explaining alternative means for lodging complaints, such as by telephone or mail.
 - b. Complaints may be received by supervisory members either in person, over the telephone or in writing, and may be lodged anonymously or by any other means.
 - c. The Stark County Park District has the responsibility to protect the rights of all persons within its jurisdiction. This includes protecting its Rangers and employees from false allegations of misconduct. In this context, complainants should be made aware of the following sections of the Ohio

Criminal Code: O.R.C. section 2921.15 prohibits a person from “knowingly filing a complaint against a peace officer that alleges that the peace officer engaged in misconduct in the performance of the officer’s duties if the person knows that the allegation is false.” A violation of the prohibition is the offense of making a false allegation of peace officer misconduct and is a misdemeanor of the first degree. If the complainant wishes to make a written complaint, the supervisor shall present the complainant with the Citizen Complaint Form (see Appendix 09.02).

2. Supervisory Authority to Investigate Complaints
 - a. Supervisors must take initiative in investigating complaints against the Ranger Department and its employees. Supervisors have the authority and responsibility to investigate complaints of a minor nature, but the complaint must be reported promptly to the Chief Ranger. Complaints of a minor nature may include allegations such as rudeness on the part of the ranger, tardiness, or insubordination.
 - b. Complaints of a serious nature will be directed through the chain of command to the Chief. The Chief will perform the functions of internal affairs during the investigation. The Chief may assign a supervisor to assist with the investigation. The supervisor will report all of his/her findings directly to the Chief Ranger. Complaints of a serious nature may include allegations of corruption, brutality, misuse of force, civil rights violations and criminal misconduct.
3. Investigation Time Limits / Dispositions
 - a. Investigative reports must be completed within 30 days from the beginning of the investigation.
 - b. All investigative reports must be completed as soon as possible. Completed investigative reports will be concluded with the following dispositions:
 - Not Involved- The employee was not present at the time the alleged misconduct occurred.
 - Unfounded- The investigation indicates that the alleged act(s) or omission(s) complained of did not occur or did not involve ranger personnel.
 - Not Sustained- The investigation indicates there was insufficient evidence either to prove or disprove the allegation(s).
 - Exonerated- The investigation indicates the act(s) or omission(s) did occur, but were justified, lawful and proper.
 - Sustained- The investigation disclosed sufficient evidence to prove the allegation(s) clearly.
 - Policy Deficiency- The department’s written policy does not properly address the allegation or action that led to the alleged conduct and the investigation reveals that a policy or procedural change may be necessary.
 - The Chief Ranger may, after review of the investigation,

Exhibit H

reclassify the recommended disposition and then take appropriate action.

4. Records Maintenance and Security
 - a. Complaints and internal affairs investigation files will be stored securely and separately from Central Records can only be accessed by the Chief Ranger and the Human Resources Manager.
 - b. Complaint and internal affairs records will be retained in accordance with the Schedule of Records Retention.
5. Access
 - a. Complaint forms will be available on the Stark County Park District website or by request from any member of the Public Safety Department.
 - b. Complaint forms will also be available by request through all Stark County Park District social media sites.