

Law Enforcement Agency Best Practices

I. Personnel

Hiring qualified people

Properly screened – Department personnel must be screened before hiring, to ensure that personnel have the necessary qualifications for their jobs.

Candidates for any position with a police department must be properly screened, not only to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to perform the job tasks, but also to maintain the integrity of the police agency and function.

Screening for police officer candidates must include at minimum the following:

- Written examination ([OAR 259-008-0010](#))
- Interview in person ([OAR 259-008-0015](#))
- Criminal history check ([OAR 259-008-0010 and 0070](#))
- Psychological assessment
- Background investigation ([OAR 259-008-0015](#))
- Medical examination with baseline hearing ([OAR 259-008-0010](#))
- Physical agility assessment

Entry level training

Formal Field Training and Evaluation Program (FTEP) – Initial training of police personnel must include successful completion a formal field training program.

After hire, all police personnel must be required to complete a structured on-the-job training program. The training must ensure the individual knows how to perform necessary job tasks by showing them how to perform the task then observing them performing the task. ([OAR 259-008-0025](#))

Training needs to include an evaluation component, assessing the knowledge and skills necessary for the individual to perform job tasks. Reports on progress and conclusion of training need to be provided to the appropriate executive at the agency.

Proper use of probationary period – Probationary periods need to be used to observe performance and ensure the individual has the knowledge and skills necessary to perform job tasks.

Probationary periods, whether initial hire or promotional, need to be used to observe and assess the individual's ability to perform the job tasks necessary for success. Individuals should be provided regular feedback on their performance and progress, allowing them time and opportunity to address deficient or weak areas of performance.

Failure to perform acceptably during probationary periods needs to be documented and discussed with the individual, and if performance does not meet acceptable standards by the end of the probationary period the individual must not be retained in the position.

On-going training

Mandated training – Police department personnel must regularly receive mandated training.

Police agency personnel must receive regular training covering required topics. This training is mandated by various rules, and is dependant upon job tasks of their position.

Mandated training for police personnel includes but is not limited to:

- Hazardous materials ([OAR 437-002-0100](#))
- Blood borne pathogens ([OAR 437-002-1030](#))
- Lead safety (at firing range) ([OAR 437-002-0125](#))
- Firearms and use of force ([OAR 259-008-0065](#))
- First aid/CPR ([OAR 259-008-0065](#))
- Vienna Convention provisions ([ORS 181.642](#))
- Crimes motivated by prejudice or constitute abuse ([ORS 181.642](#))
- Leadership/Professional training for supervisors and above ([OAR 259-008-0065](#))
- Hazard communication ([OAR 437-002-0360](#))

All officers must complete at least a minimum of eighty-four (84) hours of agency approved training every three (3) years to comply with Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) requirements. This training must include at least eight (8) hours of training annually in either “firearms” or “use of force” subject areas. ([OAR 259-008-0065](#))

Training to keep skills current – To perform effectively police personnel need to have the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their job tasks. Personnel need to regularly be trained and review necessary knowledge and skills.

Although not mandated by statute, administrative rule, or court ruling, good risk management requires police personnel to constantly keep their knowledge and skills current. To accomplish this, training should include:

- Regular legal updates
- Annual vehicle operation
- Annual training/refreshers in non-lethal force options
- Annual defensive tactics
- Discrimination/harassment
- Annual response to domestic violence or specialized cases
- Workplace safety
- Officer Safety (including fitness for duty)

Documentation of training – Police departments must keep documentation of the required training on each officer. Police Departments must notify DPSST of each officer’s training by the end of each calendar year on a schedule developed by DPSST. ([OAR 259-008-0065 \(3\) \(a\)](#))

Preparation training

Emerging challenges - Public safety issues and community priorities are constantly changing, and police department personnel face new and different challenges each year. Personnel need to be provided the opportunity to prepare themselves for new and unique challenges; to that end police personnel should receive training in emerging issues and responses.

Environmental trends are often identified, and many times training is available to help prepare police personnel with the knowledge and skills they will need to meet these new challenges. Police personnel should be provided opportunity to develop this knowledge/skills base so they are prepared to respond should the emerging trend or issue impact their community.

This does not mean that personnel should attend training on every new or “hot topic” as it becomes available; department leadership should make an honest assessment of potential impacts in their community and develop training plans based on their assessment.

Reserve Officer Program

Reserve Officer Standards – Reserve Officers must be required to meet standards similar to regular officers, depending upon the authority granted to the officer. ([ORS 181.640](#); [OAR 259-008-0010](#))

If a department uses Reserve Officers, they must recognize the link between the role of the Reserve Officer within their agency and the support necessary for the Reserve Officer to perform the duties they are being asked to perform.

All Reserve Officers need to be equipped similar to regular officers, with uniform, protective vest, etc. All Reserve Officers must receive at minimum, academy training similar to regular officers. ([OAR 437-002-0123](#) may apply)

If a Reserve Officer is allowed to work by themselves, without a regular constantly present, then they must complete training similar to a regular officer. This would include a full Field Training and Evaluation Program in addition to the academy training. Reserve Officers with these duties must also have to complete all in-service training required of a regular officer.

Reserve officers need to be covered with the same level and type of liability and worker's compensation coverage as a regular officer. If a Reserve Officer is a volunteer, then the City Council must adopt a resolution providing coverage and ensure that the City's insurance carrier has been notified.

II. Facilities and Equipment

Facility. A Police Department needs adequate facilities to function properly. The facilities can be in a shared structure, but they must meet some minimum requirements:

Safe – A police department facility must meet minimal safety standards.

Any workspace must provide minimal levels of safety from not only the elements, but also minimum building and/or workplace safety standards (including OSHA standards), including things like

- Fire alarms ([OAR 437-002-0041](#))
- Fire extinguishers ([OAR 437-002-0180](#))
- Fire sprinklers
- Exit markings ([OAR 437-002-0041](#))
- Emergency lighting
- First aid kits ([OAR 437-002-0161](#))
- Bio-hazard kits ([OAR 437-002-0360](#))
- Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) posted and available ([OAR 437-002-0360](#))
- Building evacuation plan (part of Emergency Action Plan) ([OAR 437-002-0042](#))
- Proper storage of hazardous materials ([OAR 437-002-0180](#))
- Eye wash stations where needed ([OAR 437-002-0161](#))

Secure – Police facilities must be secure.

A police facility needs to provide minimum separation of personnel from potential hazards. For example a facility where an officer and person in custody share the same space without some level of physical protection for the officer would not meet security standards.

Police Departments have access to information that cannot be left about for anyone to see and/or read; good police administration requires this as well as agreements with information providers like Law Enforcement Data System (LEDS) and National Crime Information Center (NCIC). This means that Police Department office space must not be shared with other city departments unless the Police Department space can be secured so other city employees cannot enter the Police Department unless authorized. Security also means that visitors to the Police Department must not have unescorted access to secure parts of the Police Department space. Consideration, however not mandatory, is that visitors do not pass through critical working space when entering the facility. ([OAR 257-015-0060](#); [257-015-0070](#))

Police Departments often own firearms and other weapons. These need to be stored in manner which makes them secure against unauthorized access and use.

Adequate – Police department facilities need to be functional and adequate enough to allow department personnel to perform necessary job tasks.

Adequate does not mean perfect, but it does mean functional, meaning that police personnel can perform necessary duties in an efficient and effective manner. This does not mean that every member of a Police Department has his/her own desk or workspace; it does mean the officers have workspace where they can effectively complete their job tasks. The space does not necessarily have to result in the **most** efficient work production; once basic standards for effectiveness are met it is up to the jurisdiction to determine how efficient they want the workspace used by their police personnel.

Holding facility or jail – If the Department has a holding facility, it must meet safety and security standards.

A temporary holding facility must meet the standards set for holding facilities by the state, and be inspected as required by statute and administrative rules. ([OAR 291-167-0015](#))

A jail facility must meet stricter standards than a temporary holding facility. For example, in addition to meeting the minimum standards and inspections as required by statute and administrative rules, jails must have adequate medical and mental health services available.

Jails also require additional policies and procedures, to address the aspects of longer confinement of the inmates.

Evidence – A Police Department must have secure storage for receiving and maintaining evidence.

This generally involves two functional areas. The first area is one where police personnel can submit evidence in a secure fashion. This area must be accessible to police personnel and also the personnel responsible for receiving and storing evidence (evidence custodian). Generally this area also allows for some basic processing of evidence (like obtaining latent fingerprints by dusting). This area allows for temporary storage of evidence when an evidence custodian is not available to receive evidence. The officer processing and submitting the evidence must be able to store it in a locked space that is only accessible to the evidence custodian.

The second area is for storage of evidence; it usually has very limited access (for example just the evidence custodian and their back up). Evidence must be protected from destruction, contamination, or unauthorized access; for this reason the storage area must be secure and not easily breached. It is recommended that the area also be alarmed to warn of unauthorized access. Regular evidence audits need to be conducted to ensure the integrity of evidence stored within the facility.

Specified areas and procedures must to be established for storage of special types of evidence, for example cash, firearms, drugs, hazardous materials and bio-hazards. Potentially hazardous evidence must be identified and appropriately labeled. ([OAR 437-002-0360](#))

Records – Storage of police department records and files must be secure from unauthorized intrusion or inspection.

Police department files often contain information that requires controlled access, and so access to areas containing police department records must be limited to police department personnel or others so authorized. ([OAR 257-015-0070](#))

Emergency communications (dispatch) – As a minimum safety standard police personnel must have access to emergency communications.

All police departments must have access to 24 hours a day/7 days a week communications support. If the Department has a dispatch center, the facility needs to be designed to ensure the security of the people who work there and the information processed in the center. The facility needs to have adequate back up power in case of power failure.

Every dispatch facility should have a designated back up facility in case of catastrophic failure of the primary facility. If the Department does not have their own dispatch facility, the dispatch center they use needs to meet these standards.

Officers need to be made aware of any “dead spots” in their community, where emergency radio communications may be difficult or impossible.

Vehicles

Properly equipped – Any vehicle used by police department personnel must be properly equipped so the officer can safely perform their job tasks.

Any vehicle used by police department personnel must meet minimum safety equipment standards (like safety belts where appropriate, standard lighting, etc.). ([OAR 437-002-0223](#))

Vehicles used in primary patrol service, whether marked or unmarked, must be equipped with emergency lights and siren, and a police radio. This equipment must comply with applicable standards (for example Oregon Administrative Rules) and be maintained in good working order. ([ORS 816.250](#); [OAR 735-110-0010](#); [735-110-0050](#))

In addition, vehicles should be equipped with exterior spot light, public address speaker and alley lights. Police cars need to have necessary supplies so police personnel can perform the tasks expected by their agency.

This equipment includes first aid kits, equipment for protection against blood borne pathogens, blankets, flares, traffic cones, measuring tapes, investigative supplies (like fingerprint kits, evidence collection supplies, etc.), fire extinguisher, etc.; the specific requirements should be established by the agency. ([OAR 437-002-0128](#))

Vehicles used for transportation of prisoners need to be equipped with a barrier between the area where the prisoner is transported and the area where the driver sits. Patrol vehicles should be marked and should have some form of reflective tape for increased nighttime visibility.

Special use vehicles, such as police bicycles, need to meet safety and equipment standards established for such vehicles.

Properly maintained – Vehicles must be properly maintained in order to be functional. ([OAR 437-002-0223 \(3\) \(b\)](#))

Proper maintenance is necessary to ensure that the vehicle can meet the demands of patrol duty. Tires, brakes, drive-train, routine and emergency equipment must be in good working condition so police personnel have the equipment to properly perform their job tasks.

Proper maintenance requires replacement of worn out or outdated/outmoded equipment. This does not mean equipment should be replaced every year or whenever the newest innovation is introduced. However if equipment becomes worn to the point it is not safe to operate or the wear contributes to excessive down time, then it is time to consider replacement. In considering lifespan and replacement of vehicles, the demands placed on police vehicles during routine use must be considered in making the replacement decisions.

Department members who operate department owned vehicles must be required to inspect those vehicles each day before they operate them, to ensure they meet minimum safety standards. ([OAR 437-002-0223 \(19\)\(a\)](#))

Officers

Properly equipped – Police department personnel must have the proper equipment to perform their job functions.

Police personnel must have appropriate identification – both badge and identification cards. These are necessary to identify a person as a police officer. Personnel in uniform must have a uniform with badge displayed, and the uniform needs to have shoulder patches identifying the police department and a name tag or plate identifying the individual employee. Officers authorized to carry firearms must also carry additional ammunition on their person – spare magazines or speed loaders. ([ORS 810.400](#))

Safety equipment – Police department personnel must have the proper safety equipment in order to perform job tasks.

Police personnel assigned to uniform duty must be provided protective vests, and agency policy must direct they be worn during patrol duty. For safety reasons, patrol personnel must be provided portable radios for emergency communications while on duty. ([OAR 437-002-0123 may apply](#))

Community members expect officers to have a variety of defensive tools available to them, allowing officers the option of not having to resort to the use of deadly force when a less lethal option may be effective. To that end, officers need to have available a variety of defensive tools, including pepper spray, baton, taser, extended range impact weapons (often referred to as “bean bag rounds”), pepperball guns, and the like.

Police personnel must be provided with appropriate hearing and eye protection to comply with Oregon OSHA standards, and policies must require utilization of the protective equipment. (Agencies must also comply with other OSHA hearing conservation standards, including baseline hearing tests, annual retests, and range noise survey.) ([OAR 437-002-0080](#); [437-002-0095](#); [437-002-0120](#))

III. Policies and Procedures

Types and/or approaches

Rules – Police agencies must have written directives that outline strict boundaries for acceptable behavior.

Directives must give police personnel specific direction, establishing regulations that department personnel must not violate.

Guidelines – Police agencies must have written directives that provide guidance for decision making.

Police Department directives must recognize that department personnel exercise discretion and make decisions as part of their job tasks. Directives must provide police personnel with criteria to be used in making discretionary decisions, thus providing guidance to police personnel in making those decisions.

Adequate

Address critical topics – Police department directives need to provide police personnel with a set of rules and direction in critical areas.

Police department directives need to address critical, high-risk areas, including at minimum:

- Code of conduct
- Use of force and instruments of force
- Vehicle operation and pursuit driving
- Arrests, search and seizure
- Response to domestic violence
- Investigation of citizen complaints against personnel
- Response to special/unique events
- Enforcement guidelines
- Holding and transporting people in custody
- Handling evidence

Distributed – Department directives need to be distributed to all personnel impacted by the directives.

Police personnel must know what is expected of them, and department directives help outline expectations. To accomplish this, directives must be distributed to all personnel who are impacted by the directives.

Training on Directives – Police personnel need to be trained on the contents and meaning of directives to increase compliance with the direction.

Police department personnel must be trained on the content and intent of department directives. Police departments must provide training to department personnel in order to familiarize them with the expectations of the agency, to enhance compliance with standards.

Contemporary

Kept current – Department directives need to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Departments need to have a process to keep directives up to date, and revised as needed when changes occur in statutes or as a result of court decisions. Reviews should also include comparison to current “best practices” in policing.

Inter-Agency Relations

Inter-Agency Agreements – Departments need to have written agreements outlining the relationships with other law enforcement agencies.

Police departments need written agreements with nearby law enforcement agencies, outlining how they will assist each other, how they will share resources, and the financial arrangements between the agencies when sharing resources. These agreements need to be agreed upon and signed ahead of time so when inter-agency assistance is needed these questions have been resolved. Note: these agreements are most likely inter-governmental agreements under ORS Chapter 190, and as such to be legal they have to be approved by the elected governing body of a jurisdiction.

Another inter-agency agreement that needs to be established is a pursuit agreement. Vehicle pursuits often involve multiple jurisdictions, and it is important that each jurisdiction know how the other will respond to vehicle pursuits.

Multi-agency teams or task forces are becoming common in policing, and agreements should be established governing agency participation in such teams and task forces.

IV. Department Administration

How are people led and managed

Department leadership – Police administrators need to be prepared to lead, set direction and generate enthusiasm and commitment from those within their organization.

Police chiefs need to be knowledgeable about their community and environment, knowing the issues and priorities. They need to be able to identify and set direction for their organization, and help guide those within the organization toward that end.

Police administrators today cannot just issue orders to police personnel and expect them to be followed. Administrators need to be able to gain commitment from people to work toward and achieve the desired end state. To accomplish this end, the administrator should be clear that people within the organization are valued not just as an instrument of production, but every individual is truly valued and each individual's contribution is significant.

Competent Administrator – Police departments must have an administrator who understands the importance of each of the “best practices” for a police department.

How people are held accountable

Supervision and management – Police departments must have a system of management in place, to ensure that efforts of department personnel work toward accomplishing the mission and objectives of the department and that behavior complies with department expectations.

A police department must have adequate supervision and management. Police personnel exercise considerable discretion and freedom in performance of their job tasks. People entrusted with that power and authority are screened and trained in use of authority and discretion. However, activities of department personnel need to be regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with standards and/or correct inappropriate or unacceptable exercise of the discretion and freedom by department personnel.

To accomplish this end, a department must have competent managers – people who know what is expected and can recognize acceptable and unacceptable performance. In addition, they need to be able to communicate their observations to others, and generate changes in performance when dictated.

Performance review – Performance of police personnel should be regularly reviewed and documented.

To ensure that police agencies deliver competent, legal and professional service to their community, three things are necessary: police personnel must be properly screened, they must be provided necessary training so they have the knowledge to perform the job, and they must be well managed to ensure that resources are efficiently and effectively used to deliver police services. Part of the effective delivery of police services is ensuring that officer performance is dedicated to accomplishing the police mission and that it complies with legal and community standards. To accomplish this, officer's performance must be consistently and regularly monitored and reviewed, particularly for inexperienced officers.

The vast majority of police personnel, those who have been properly screened and trained, want to do the right thing. However, policing is done in a dynamic and constantly changing environment where no two situations are exactly alike. Combine this with a legal environment that is constantly in a state of flux due to legislative action and court decisions, and communities where priorities change, and even the best, most well intentioned officer will not always make the "correct" decision.

To reduce the potential for error, review of an officer's work can provide feedback to the individual officer and to the department. Workers want to know how they are performing, and appropriate performance feedback can also motivate the individual. Issues or problems can also be identified early and appropriately addressed, either individually or department wide.

Newly hired police personnel are required to satisfactorily complete a field training program, during which time their performance must meet standards set by the department. ([OAR 259-008-0025](#))

The performance of more experienced police personnel should also be reviewed, to provide appropriate feedback and to ensure compliance with department standards.

Managerial effectiveness – Department administrators need to regularly review the effectiveness of managers within the department.

Department managers are charged with ensuring the daily compliance with organizational standards, and they need to be effective to ensure department personnel meet department standards and expend organizational resources toward the department mission.

Department administrators should regularly review performance of managers and provide them guidance as necessary to enhance their performance as managers and thus the performance of the organization.

Ensuring these functions are performed is the responsibility of the Police Chief.

Processes to ensure compliance

Incident review – Due to their nature, certain incidents need to be reviewed by administrative personnel.

To maintain credibility within the community, police department administrators have the responsibility to ensure that department personnel comply with legal parameters, department policies, and community expectations. The only way to ensure compliance is to regularly review incidents, particularly high risk exposure incidents, to ensure department personnel are meeting department expectations.

Incidents involving the use of force and vehicle pursuits are two examples of the exercise of police powers that need to be regularly reviewed by administrative personnel. Departments should require documentation of all use of force incidents and vehicle pursuits, and they should have an established process for reviewing these incidents.

Special or unique incidents need a post-incident review to ensure officers are trained and prepared to address these low frequency events and that they were handled in the best way possible.

In addition, department administrators need to be aware of complaints concerning department personnel, in order to be aware of trends and/or potential problems.

Must – Required by statute, administrative rule or court decision or are needed to protect the rights of individuals; cannot have a police department or officer without them.

Need to – Needed to deliver law enforcement services; needed for effective law enforcement; needed to ensure safety of community members.

Should – Impact the effectiveness or efficiency of a police agency to the extent that operating without them is not good administrative practices; need to ensure proper and legal expenditure of public resources.