



# *Town of Lexington*

## Police Department

**Subject:** Command Authority,  
Succession and Protocol

**Effective Date:**  
November 1, 2010

**Review Date:**  
Annually

**By Order of:** Mark J. Corr, Chief of Police

**Policy &  
Procedure**

# 12A

### **GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES**

In 1921 the Town of Lexington adopted M.G.L. Chapter 41, section 97 designating the Chief of Police as being in "immediate control" of the management, direction and supervision of the police department. The Chief shall use this authority to direct the resources of the organization toward the accomplishment of its goals and objectives.

The chain of command shall serve as the principle means through which the organization will be managed. Consistent with this chain of command shall be a designated order of precedence for command authority. The establishment of command succession shall ensure that leadership and direction is available should the Chief of Police be incapacitated or otherwise unavailable to act.

In most routine situations, the chain of command will also identify the person responsible for the direction and control of an operation. However, some incidents require the cooperative efforts of officers from different divisions. In these instances, command protocol shall designate which officer shall have the command responsibility in the joint operation.

## PROCEDURES

### A. Orders

1. **Definition:** An order is a command or instruction, written or oral, given by a superior officer directly or relayed by an employee of the same or lesser rank as the person who is receiving the order.
  - a. All lawful orders, written or oral, shall be carried out fully and in the manner prescribed.
  - b. An order, transmitted via the communications network by the dispatcher or desk officer, shall be treated as an order issued by the Commanding Officer.
2. **Unlawful Orders:** No member shall knowingly issue an order in violation of law or any departmental regulation. Unlawful orders shall not be obeyed. The officer to whom the order was given shall notify the ordering officer of the illegality of his order. Responsibility for refusal to obey rests with the officer to whom the order was given. He shall be strictly required to justify his action.
3. **Unjust or Improper Orders:** Lawful orders, which appear to be unjust or improper, shall be carried out. After carrying out the orders, the officer to whom the order was given may file a written report to the Chief via the chain of command. The report shall include the following:
  - a. The circumstances in which the order was given;
  - b. The reasons for questioning the order; and
  - c. A request for clarification of policy.
4. **Conflicting Orders:** Should any order given by a superior officer conflict with any previous departmental order, the member to whom such order is given will call attention to the conflict. If the superior officer does not change his order to avoid such conflict his order will be obeyed. The member obeying such order will not be held responsible for disobedience of the previous order. It should later be reported to the Chief in writing for clarification.
5. Members and employees will not publicly criticize:
  - a. Any order, policy, or other directive;
  - b. Any superior officer issuing orders; or

- c. Any member or employee relaying or obeying an order from a superior officer.

B. Command Succession

1. If the Chief of Police is scheduled to be out of state, is incapacitated by illness or injury or otherwise incapable of caring to the needs of the police Department, he shall:
  - a. Notify the Town Manager or Designee;
  - b. Give written notice to the Police Department designating the officer-in-charge during his absence;
  - c. If possible, identify the dates of his absence.
2. The order of precedence for overall command authority of the Lexington Police Department in the unanticipated absence of the Chief of Police and without the opportunity to issue a special order, shall be as follows:
  - Captains, by seniority in rank;
  - Lieutenant, Detective Commander;
  - Lieutenants, by seniority in rank;
  - Sergeants, by seniority in rank;
  - Patrolmen, by seniority in rank.

C. Command Protocol

1. Command protocol for activities initiated by the Operations Division shall be as follows:
  - Chief of Police;
  - Captain of Operations;
  - Captain of Administration;
  - Lieutenant, Detective Commander;
  - Lieutenant, Shift Commander;
  - Lieutenants, by seniority in rank;
  - Sergeant, Shift Patrol Supervisor;
  - Sergeants, by seniority in rank;
  - Detectives, by order of seniority within the bureau;
  - Patrolmen, by order of seniority unless otherwise designated by the Patrol Supervisor or Commanding Officer.
2. Command protocol in activities initiated by the Detective Bureau or Administration Division shall be as follows:
  - Chief of Police;

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- Captain of Administration;
  - Captain of Operations;
  - Lieutenant, Detective Commander;
  - Lieutenant, Shift Commander;
  - Lieutenants, by seniority in rank;
  - Sergeant, Shift Patrol Supervisor;
  - Sergeants, by seniority in rank;
  - Detectives, by order of seniority within the bureau;
  - Patrolmen, by order of seniority unless otherwise designated by the Patrol Supervisor or Commanding Officer.
3. If a temporary assignment, such as an overtime shift, places an officer in two protocol positions, his command authority shall be commensurate with the highest-ranking position.