

Columbus Police Division Directive	EFFECTIVE	NUMBER
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<b>Command Protocol and Unity of Command</b>		



## I. Definitions

### A. *Act-in-Command*

***Any time sworn personnel are temporarily placed into and assume a supervisory position held by a higher ranking officer.***

### B. Command Protocol

The process established to ensure a continuation of supervision at all levels of the chain of command when a vacancy or absence from duty exists; and to identify a position in command of an operation involving multiple Division components.

### C. Division Component

An organizational group within the Division, e.g., Bureau, Section, etc.

### D. Span of Control

The number of employees reporting to one supervisor.

### E. Unity of Command

The concept that Division ***personnel have*** one immediate supervisor.

## II. Policy Statements

### A. Communication Through Channels

- Division personnel shall forward official communications through their chain of command, beginning with their immediate supervisor.***
- Through what is commonly referred to as an "Open Door Policy," Division personnel are provided the opportunity and freedom to communicate to command officers any information or problem they feel needs immediate attention. However, this shall not be used to avoid addressing a problem through the chain of command. Unless an exception exists, issues or problems shall be referred to the immediate supervisor.
- Division personnel may bypass the chain of command if information must be brought to the immediate attention of a higher-ranking supervisor, including the Chief of Police, but justification may be required.***
- Division personnel shall not ***initiate*** communication or correspondence with the Mayor or Director of Public Safety without prior knowledge of the Chief of Police. ***Division personnel shall notify the Chief of***

**Police, via the chain of command of any requests made by the Mayor, Director of Public Safety or City Council.**

B. Working Out of Class/Promotions

1. **Unless approved by the Chief, sworn personnel shall only be assigned to act-in-command to a position that is one rank higher than currently assigned, and only to fill an extended vacancy at the commander, deputy chief or chief level. Only sworn personnel assigned to act-in-command as a sergeant for 30 days or more shall be permitted to wear the insignia of the acting rank.**
2. Commanders and deputy chiefs may **only assign personnel to act-in-command when they will be** absent for periods of eight hours or more. Commanders assigned **to act-in-command** may **assign personnel to act-in-command for extended periods** for their position.
  - a. **When a** commander or deputy chief is working, but absent from his or her normal work station due to local training or a similar activity, no acting will be made.
  - b. During short term absences of a commanding officer, decisions that must be dealt with immediately should be referred to the commanding officer, to a higher ranking officer in the chain of command, or to an on-duty commander.
3. **When** a vacancy occurs, **personnel assigned to act-in-command shall be selected** from within the chain of command where the vacancy exists.
  - a. A commander or deputy chief may rotate **personnel assigned to act-in-command or choose** the most qualified **personnel**. However, if the latter course of action is chosen, justification **may be** required.
  - b. Under normal circumstances, the selected individual should be notified **prior to** the assignment's **effective date**.
4. When a vacancy occurs of a permanent nature **and** the assigned person will not be returning to the assignment, the person **assigned** to act-in-command should be the next promotable candidate from the current eligibility list for that rank.
  - a. When no eligibility list for the rank of commander exists, the person **assigned** to act-in-command will be **selected** from within the chain of command where the vacancy exists.
  - b. **When no eligibility list for the rank of deputy chief exists**, the selection will be made by the Chief of Police.
5. With the approval of the bureau commander, civilian personnel may be assigned to work in a position outside their civil service classification. Any such assignment change for civilian personnel **shall** conform to applicable Civil Service Regulations as well as applicable provisions in the appropriate **collective bargaining agreement**.

6. Promotions **shall not** be made until an actual vacant position exists, **except under exigent circumstances**.
- C. Acting Chief of Police/System of Succession
1. **The Division has established the following system of succession to ensure leadership is provided in the absence of the Chief of Police.**
  2. Each January, the Chief of Police shall prepare a rotating monthly schedule of emergency Acting Chief of Police assignments for the **calendar** year.
    - a. If the Chief of Police is unable to report for duty, **the list shall be used to determine which** deputy chief **shall act-in-command** of the Division of Police. **The deputy chief shall act-in-command** until the Chief of Police assigns another deputy chief to **act-in-command** or returns to duty.
    - b. A copy of **the** schedule shall be **forwarded** to the Director of Public Safety, each deputy chief, and the **Communications Bureau personnel**.
  3. In non-emergency **absences**, the Chief of Police shall appoint an Acting Chief of Police.
    - a. These **assignments are not required to** follow the emergency rotating list.
    - b. **Any time a deputy chief is assigned to act-in-command, a notification shall** be posted in the Daily Bulletin.
  4. **Whenever the position of Chief of Police is vacated, the Director of Public Safety may assign an Interim Chief of Police to act-in-command until a new Chief is appointed.**
  5. In the event that the Chief of Police and the deputy chiefs are **all** absent or incapacitated, the senior police commander shall **act-in-command** of the Division of Police.
- D. Multiple Organizational Components Engaged in a Single Operation
1. Unless otherwise **directed** by Division Directives or competent authority, **when** personnel from different Division **units** are engaged in a single operation, the ranking officer having functional authority over that operation shall also have command authority over all personnel assigned to the operation.
  2. In the event a higher ranking officer wishes to assume command over **a** particular operation, that higher ranking officer shall notify the ranking officer **that he or she is** assuming command of the operation.
- E. The Chief of Police, or his **or her** designee, shall be responsible for the supervision of special events **requiring a police response**.

F. Command Protocol for Normal Day-to-Day Operations

For normal operations, **personnel** shall refer to their particular SOP manual for guidance.

G. Unity of Command

Division personnel shall be administratively accountable to only one chain of command; however, personnel may be temporarily assigned to another chain of command.