



Policy Name:	NOTEBOOKS		
Policy #:	OP 8.5	Last Updated:	2021-10-21
Issued By:	SUPPORT SERVICES BUREAU	Approved By:	SURREY POLICE BOARD
		Review Frequency:	AS REQUIRED

RELATED POLICIES

1. PURPOSE

1.1. The purpose of this policy is to:

- i. define the responsibilities of Surrey Police Service (SPS) Members in relation to the use of police notebooks and the taking of notes in the course of duty;
- ii. provide guidelines to ensure that Members take appropriate notes in the course of their duties;
- iii. establish rules for the form, maintenance and retention of police notebooks; and
- iv. ensure that Members are meeting the expectations of the courts and the legal requirements for police note taking.

2. SCOPE

2.1. This policy applies to all SPS Members.

3. POLICY

3.1. Accurate and timely notes are the expectation of the courts through case law and is a common requirement of universally accepted policing standards.

3.2. Police notes serve to refresh memory, justify decisions made and record police actions and evidence. Members have a duty to prepare accurate and detailed notes as soon as practicable during or shortly after an incident. Well-documented notes lend credibility and reliability to police testimony and help to substantiate information years after the original entry was made.

- 3.3. Notes, for the purposes of this policy, are defined as hand-written notes, electronic notes and/or reports, or a combination thereof. It is recognized that both electronic and hand-written notes may form the contemporaneous documentation of an event depending on how and when they are made. However, links and transitions between these two forms of notetaking should be recorded.
- 3.4. Police notebooks are considered “records” under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and are subject to disclosure requests. All notes compiled in relation to events become part of the record of that event. Notebooks also may be ordered disclosed by the Courts in civil litigation matters.
- 3.5. Members’ notes and notebooks are the property of SPS and must be stored and safeguarded as set out in s. 4.17 – 4.22 below.
- 3.6. Employees shall not destroy, purge, renumber or remove pages from SPS notebooks.
- 3.7. Notebooks used, and notes made, by SPS Members while seconded to other police agencies are SPS property and must be retained by the Members.

4. PROCEDURE

Notes and Notebooks – General

- 4.1. Member notebooks, notes, drawings, and all other written or audio and/or video recorded records made during a Member’s duties are the property of the SPS and as such:
 - i. must be retained by the Member and dealt with in accordance with this policy;
 - ii. are subject to review by a Supervisor at any time; and
 - iii. may be considered evidence and if so, must be handled in accordance with evidence-handling policy and procedures.
- 4.2. Notes are official documents and must be carefully prepared, preserved, and properly used. There are four commonly used forms of notebooks:
 - i. *Patrol Notebook* – shall have numbered pages. The front of each notebook must have “Surrey Police Service”, a sequential number identifying the notebook number, the rank, name, and PIN number of Member, a contact number for the Member in the event the notebook is lost, and the dates within which the notebook was used;
 - ii. *Investigator Notebook* – shall be bound with numbered pages and shall follow the business rules of the Investigative section;
 - iii. *Project Notebook* – shall be bound with numbered pages and shall follow the business rules of the project within the Investigative section; and
 - iv. *Informant Notebook* – shall be safeguarded and used as per informant/source handling guidelines.

4.3. In circumstances where notes are made on pieces of paper or investigative logs rather than in a notebook, these items shall be preserved even if the information is subsequently transferred into notebooks. If applicable, each piece of paper will have a file number written on it and an indication of which member wrote it. The original notes will then be attached to the original file or submitted to IMS for scanning, similar to the procedure for written statements.

4.4. Members shall only use one notebook at a time unless there is a requirement that a second notebook be used for a specific project and/or investigation.

4.5. Under no circumstances shall anyone remove any page of a notebook that has entries made in it.

Notetaking

4.6. Members carrying out their duties are required to make notes. The information to be included in the notes will depend on the nature of the incident and the involvement of the member.

4.7. Members shall keep sufficient notes of their activities and observations to assist them in accurately documenting the incident and their daily activities, and in giving evidence in court.

4.8. When making hand-written notes, Members shall follow these guidelines:

- i. entries should be completed in black ink;
- ii. there should be no unnecessary blank spaces between entries - If lines are left blank to separate subject matter and to allow for ease of information retrieval, a line should be drawn through the space and initialled when making a correction, a single line should be drawn through the error and initialled by the Member; and
- iii. in situations where notes are added after the original note taking time, members should indicate that the additional notes are a late entry, include the time, date and location at which the notes were made, and comment on the reason for the delay.

4.9. When Members are making notes, entries must consider the following principles of good notetaking:

- i. **Concise:** without sacrificing accuracy and while recognizing that notes need to be complete, notes are not expected to be detailed as the police report;
- ii. **Accurate:** The notes must be as accurate as possible. Where relevant and practicable, the notes of the Member should include the:
 - a. time, location, nature of call, file number;
 - b. names, birth dates, and contact information of persons present or otherwise involved;
 - c. names, birth dates, and contact information of persons or otherwise involved;
 - d. times of critical events such as statements taken, evidence seized;
 - e. details regarding use of force and injuries;
 - f. details regarding any search and seizure;

- g. details regarding the arrest and Chartering of a suspect – what was said, the suspect’s responses, and the times of both; and
- h. if the conversation recorded with a suspect, witness, or victim is verbatim, it should be indicated in notes as such with quotation marks.

4.10. Frontline (Patrol) Members must make entries in their notebooks for each tour of duty. Entries should include, but are not limited to:

- i. day of the week and date;
- ii. shift hours and assignment;
- iii. unit call sign;
- iv. vehicle asset number;
- v. police radio asset number;
- vi. on duty and off duty times; and
- vii. if applicable, partner surname and PIN.

4.11. Members are required to make their own notes detailing their actions and involvement. Members must not adopt the notes of another Member as their own except when done through Master Note taking (used by surveillance teams), and Scribing (used by various Incident Command Structures). When either of these approaches are employed, the Member must adhere to the business rules of the SPS section or project involved.

4.12. When making notes, Members should avoid writing their personal opinions in their notebooks unless it is necessary to explain decision-making by the member.

Electronic Notes – PRIME Entries

4.13. If notes are made electronically (e.g., PRIME report or CAD memo):

- i. they must be made at the time of the incident or as soon thereafter as possible (i.e., contemporaneously);
- ii. the Member must be the sole author of the portion considered to be their notes;
- iii. the text pages must be “date and time” stamped and locked by the note taker immediately upon completion;
- iv. the member must clearly state in the PRIME entry that they consider the electronic report or memo to form all or part of their notes;
- v. if electronic notes are taken in relation to an RTCC, this should be indicated in the attachment list of the report (i.e.: Notes of PC XXXX – see PS Page of PC XXXX); and
- vi. the Member should make a notebook entry that documents the file number and the fact that the Member’s notes for the incident were recorded in PRIME.

4.14. Electronic reports or electronic text pages that are not made contemporaneously (i.e., that are made several hours after the incident or later) cannot be considered part of the Member’s notes

of the incident. In these instances, Members are expected to make handwritten notes at the time of the incident or as soon as practicable after the incident, as required by this policy.

Review of Notebooks

- 4.15. Supervisors must ensure that their Members comply with this policy and properly document the incidents in which they are involved. Supervisors are encouraged to give timely periodic reminders to Members to make detailed notes and to conduct periodic reviews of Members' notes and reports.
- 4.16. Supervisors must review their Members' police notebooks at least once every six (6) months, and this review should coincide with their Members' annual assessment and mid-year review.

Storage, Retention, and Archiving of Notebooks

- 4.17. Members shall ensure the security of notebooks and safeguard their contents. Members should refrain from keeping their duty notebooks at home except in circumstances where the notebook is needed by the Member for investigative reasons, for court, or for some other reason connected to their police duties.
- 4.18. Members must report a lost or damaged notebook to a Supervisor as soon as practicable.
- 4.19. Notebooks shall be retained securely at the Member's work location (e.g., locked in their desk or locker) for a period of three (3) years following completion of the notebook, or longer if the Member requires the notebook for investigative reasons or court purposes.
- 4.20. Completed notebooks older than three (3) years that are no longer required for investigative reasons or court purposes shall be surrendered to the SPS Information Management Section for archiving.
- 4.21. Archived notebooks will only be available to the Member during regular business hours except in exigent circumstances.
- 4.22. At the time of retirement, resignation, or termination of a Member, the Member or the Member's Supervisor shall surrender outstanding notebooks and all other investigative material and records in their custody to the Information Management Section.

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

“Employee” means any employee of SPS (including Members and civilian staff).

“Member” means a sworn Police Officer appointed by the Surrey Police Board.

“PC” means Police Constable.

“PIN” means Police Identification Number (i.e., badge number).

“PRIME” means Police Records Information Management Environment, the provincial police records management system.

“Supervisor” means a Team Leader, Manager, Sergeant, Staff Sergeant, Inspector, Superintendent, Deputy Chief Constable, Chief Constable, and any other person acting in a Supervisory capacity who is accountable for a particular area or shift on behalf of the SPS.

APPENDIX B: REFERENCES

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 165