

S.O.P. #: 400-31

SUBJECT: COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION

DIVISION: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

Objective: To provide a process for receipt, investigation and resolution of complaints received by the Fire Department.

Section 1: Receipt of Complaint

- A. Each complaint received by the Department will be investigated thoroughly and promptly. Regardless of severity, each complaint should be regarded as an opportunity to examine our customer service at the point of contact.
- B. All complaints, including those from citizens wishing to remain anonymous, will be documented on the Complaint Form (Form 59). The form will be filled out as completely as possible. The completed form will be forwarded immediately to (FireComplaints@baltimorecountymd.gov).
- C. If a complaint pertains to serious misconduct, the Fire Chief will be notified immediately, through the chain-of-command.

Section 2: Investigation of Complaint

- A. The Division/Battalion Chief will ensure that the complainant is contacted within twenty-four (24) hours.
- B. The appropriate Division/Battalion Chief shall assign an investigating officer.
- C. If the complaint involves a volunteer member or unit, the Division/Battalion Chief shall notify the BCVFA VP of Operations.
- D. The Complaint Coordinator will ensure a case number is assigned and a folder is created for all information related to the complaint.

Section 3: Duties of Investigating Officer

- A. Unless the complainant requests “no contact” the investigating officer shall contact the complainant. Upon contact, the following steps should be performed.
 - 1. Inform the complainant of your name and rank and how you relate to the area of concern.
 - 2. Restate the complaint as you understand it.
 - 3. Ask if your understanding of the complaint is correct.
 - 4. Reconcile any discrepancies.
 - 5. Ask complainant if they would like you to contact them when the investigation is complete.
 - 6. Thank the complainant for bringing their concerns to your attention.
 - 7. If the complainant requested follow-up, the investigator should thank them for sharing their concerns and advise them that the complaint was investigated and proper action was taken.

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Section 4: Disposition

- A. After considering all available information, the investigating officer will make one of the following findings.
1. UNFOUNDED – the alleged act did not occur.
 2. EXONERATED – the act occurred but was justified, lawful and proper.
 3. NOT SUSTAINED – the investigation produced information insufficient to prove or disprove the allegation.
 4. SUSTAINED – all or part of the act occurred as alleged based on the existence of fact or reasonable proof.
- B. The Division/Battalion Chief will forward all documentation of the case and final disposition to the Complaint Coordinator when the case is closed.