

The Bemidji Police Department, as a department of the City of Bemidji, is directed by the Chief of Police. This authority is granted by the City Code, Chapter 2, Article IV, and the authority delegated by the City Manager to the Chief of Police for the purpose of directing all of the department's operational and administrative duties.

## **Purpose**

An organizational chain of command establishes a system whereby authority passes down from the higher levels of administration to the front-line employees. Each employee is accountable to the person who is their direct supervisor. Open communication between the various levels in a chain of command is essential to the successful operation of the Bemidji Police Department.

## **Policy**

The Bemidji Police Department organizational chain of command is designed to help guide employees in communicating all matters concerning department operations, and to receive quick responses to inquiries or requests for information. The chain of command is not intended to restrict employee access to higher levels of authority, as such, all supervisors and administration will maintain an open door policy.

## **Scope**

See attached diagram of the department chain of command.

## **Definitions**

The following phrases have special meanings as used in this policy:

- A. **Authority** - is the legitimate power of a supervisor to direct subordinates to take action within the scope of the supervisor's position.
- B. **Chain of Command** – is an unbroken line of reporting relationships that extends through the entire organization that defines the formal decision-making structure. It helps employees know to whom they are accountable, and whom to go to with a problem.
- C. **Open Door Policy** – encourages open communication, feedback, and discussion about any matter of importance to an employee. The BPD open door policy provides the expectation that an employee will address concerns, ideas, or suggestions first with his or her immediate supervisor. If the immediate supervisor is unable to provide solutions, the employee may discuss issues or concerns with the next level of supervision, usually in conjunction with their immediate supervisor. The employee will be asked what steps they have taken to resolve the problem or concern before they approached a higher level supervision.

## **Procedure**

### **I. COMMAND RESPONSIBILITY**

- a. The Bemidji Chief of Police is assisted in managing the department by the police captain, and sergeants. In the absence of the chief of police, the Bemidji Police Captain is responsible for the department. In the event both the chief captain are absent from the city, sergeants are responsible for their respective area, and the Bemidji City Manager should be consulted on matters that cannot await the return of the chief or the captain. In the case of a discrepancy as to who is in command, the shift supervisor or officer in charge (OIC) currently on duty shall be in command.
- b. Division and unit supervisors are responsible for the personnel assigned to their division or unit. This responsibility includes being accountable for the division's or unit's performance and the performance of the personnel assigned to the division or unit. Supervisors are responsible and accountable for discipline within their assigned area.

### **II. RECOGNITION OF COMMAND AUTHORITY**

- a. Members of the Bemidji Police Department are required to follow all lawful directives of a supervisor. The directive can be an order, assignment, or direction. The supervisor may or may not be the member's immediate supervisor; however, if the supervisor is of a higher rank than the employee, the directive must be followed. Supervisors should refrain from issuing directives to members outside of their chain of command except in cases of incident command, project/program management, or exigent circumstances.
- b. Directives relayed via a peer or subordinate from a higher ranking supervisor shall be followed as though the directive were delivered directly by the directive's originator. If the validity of a relayed directive is in question, the member receiving the directive shall either verify the directive by making contact with the originator or obey the directive.
- c. In the event a member of the department receives conflicting directives, the member shall tactfully bring to the attention of the supervisor giving the latest directive the conflicting nature of the directive. If the supervisor does not rescind the latest directive, it shall stand. The employee is not responsible for disobedience of the former directive when this procedure is followed. The supervisor issuing the latter directive is responsible for notifying the initial directive originator of the change in directives.
- d. If there is a question about a matter, it is the responsibility of the officer to take this question to his/her on-shift supervisor. If the supervisor cannot answer the question, the supervisor in charge of the specific area in question will be consulted.
- e. Disputes, disagreements and questions can hopefully be brought to a conclusion at the supervisor level. If this is not possible, then the proper procedure should be followed to the next highest level of command.

- f. Any member who fails to obey lawful directives issued in accordance with this policy shall be deemed insubordinate and subject to disciplinary action.

### **III. ACCOUNTABILITY**

- a. Supervisors of the department are responsible for ensuring this and all policies of the department are followed. Deviations from this or any other policy are permitted within the scope of authority granted all members of the department; however, the deviation must be reported in accordance with the policy.
- b. The chain of command shall not and is not intended to prevent access by any member of the department to the chief of police. However, following the chain of command is required if the subject is related to department policies, rules in dispute, contract disputes, or disciplinary action.
- c. If officers wish to discuss a personal matter with the chief of police, the door is always open and the chain of command will not apply. This exception to the chain of command is at the discretion of the individual officer.

#### **Reference or Revision Date(s):**

- A. Bemidji City Code, Chapter 2, Article IV
- B. Bemidji Police chain of command flow chart

#### **REVISION DATE(S):**

