



Kern County Sheriff's Office

Policies and Procedures

TITLE: Critical Incident Investigations			NO: F-1100
APPROVED: Donny Youngblood, Sheriff-Coroner			
REFERENCE: DPPM F-0100, F-0200, F-1000, F-1200, J-0410, J-3600, P-0600, DBPPM C-900, Government Code §12525 & Penal Code §10008			
EFFECTIVE: August 1, 1990	REVIEWED: January 26, 2026	REVISED: January 26, 2026	UPDATED: July 1, 2026

POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Kern County Sheriff's Office to investigate **all** critical incidents involving the use of deadly force, any use of force determined to be a Category 3¹, any discharge of a firearm by a member of the Sheriff's Office, or any in-custody death. This policy does not apply to an intended discharge of a firearm during training or unintentional discharge on the firing line at the range, unless the unintentional discharge results in injury.

DEFINITIONS

- **IN-CUSTODY DEATH²** – The death of a person who is detained, under arrest, or is in the process of being arrested, is enroute to be incarcerated, or is incarcerated at a municipal or county jail, state prison, state-run boot camp prison, boot camp prison that is contracted out by the state, any state or local contract facility, or other local or state correctional facility, including any juvenile facility. This also includes deaths that occur in medical facilities while in law-enforcement custody.

DIRECTIVE 1

The Commander, Lieutenant, Sergeant, or Detective assigned to an investigation will have full staff authority during the scope of the investigation.

DIRECTIVE 2

An on-duty supervisor or manager shall notify the Union President, Vice President, or their designee of all critical incidents (e.g., officer-involved shooting, in-custody death, etc.) involving bargaining unit employees as soon as possible after learning of the incident.

DIRECTIVE 3

Sheriff's Office staff involved in critical incidents will be given the opportunity to provide a voluntary statement. The Homicide Unit Sergeant will communicate with the involved deputy(s) representative or legal counsel to coordinate a voluntary statement. If the involved deputy(s) opt not to provide a voluntary statement, the criminal investigation will proceed without the involved deputy(s) statement. Involved deputy interviews, barring any exigency, should be delayed by a

¹See DPPM F-0100 for definitions and DPPM F-0200 for UOF Categories.

²As defined in California Penal Code §10008.

minimum of two sleep cycles, allowing the involved deputy(s) time to decompress and overcome the initial stress of the critical incident.

As deemed necessary by the deputy in charge of the investigative team, deputies involved in the incident may be compelled to cooperate with the investigation. All such deputies shall be afforded all rights and consideration applicable under Section 3300 et seq. of the Government Code.

Before obtaining any compelled statements, an Internal Affairs Investigator shall be assigned to assume the interview portion of the investigation, which will initiate a concurrent administrative investigation. The Internal Affairs Investigator will give the subject officer a complete pre-interview advisal, including Miranda and Lybarger admonitions, outlined in the Dictation Guide of Section D-0300 of the Sheriff's Policy and Procedures Manual.

Per the Lybarger Decision, any compelled statement by involved deputy(s) cannot be used against them for any subsequent criminal prosecution unless the statements are being used for impeachment purposes after an in-camera review by a legal authority.

PROCEDURE A: DEADLY FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

- A. Any deputy who is involved in or present at a deadly force incident will:
 - 1. Evaluate and render medical aid as outlined in DPPM F-0100 and DPPM P-0600.
 - 2. Establish a perimeter, make broadcasts, and request additional resources as needed.
 - 3. Preserve the scene.
 - 4. Make a notification to the on-duty Supervisor, Watch Lieutenant, and Communications Center as soon as safely possible.
- B. The Communications Center will:
 - 1. Notify an on-duty Field Supervisor.
 - 2. Call out and notify personnel in accordance with the officer-involved shooting protocol.
- C. The on-duty Supervisor who is notified in such cases shall ensure the following is done:
 - 1. Establish command of the investigation.
 - 2. Ensure that the scene is properly preserved.
 - 3. Check surrounding background areas for collateral property damage and check the welfare of any occupants.
 - 4. If suspect(s) fled, establish a perimeter, make broadcasts, request additional resources, etc.
 - 5. Instruct the Communications Center to initiate a call-out of investigative personnel.
 - 6. Obtain a Public Safety Briefing from involved deputy(s), which shall be recorded.

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- a. Remind the deputy(s) they do not have the right to remain silent about public safety issues and provide the following admonition:

“Deputy, I am ordering you to give me a public safety statement. Due to the immediate need to take action, you do not have the right to wait for representation before answering questions limited to public safety issues.”

- b. Some questions relative to public safety may include the following:

- (1) Where were you standing when you fired?
 - (2) What direction did you fire?
 - (3) How many rounds did you fire?
 - (4) Is it possible the suspect(s) fired rounds at you? (If No, Skip to #7)
 - (5) Where were they standing when they fired?
 - (6) What direction were those rounds fired?
 - (7) Are you aware of any victims or injured persons? If so, where are they?
 - (8) Are there any outstanding suspects?
 - (9) What is their description?
 - (10) Is there a vehicle description?
 - (11) What is the direction of travel?
 - (12) How long have they been gone?
 - (13) For what crime(s) are they wanted?
 - (14) Are they still armed? If so, with what weapon(s)?
 - (15) Is there any evidence that needs to be protected? If so, where?
 - (16) Are you aware of any witnesses? If so, where are they?
 - (17) Is there any other information available that would ensure the safety of officers and the public or assist in the apprehension of any outstanding suspects?
7. Instruct the deputy(s) that they may not discuss the shooting with other deputies or supervisors, except to provide the above public safety statement, prior to providing a formal criminal or administrative statement.
- a. See “Procedure E: Peer Support Unit” for additional exceptions.
8. Assign personnel as available and necessary to identify and isolate any witnesses.
- a. A recorded statement will be taken if a witness cannot remain at the scene, and a diligent effort to obtain complete personal information shall be attempted.

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- b. As outlined in DPPM F-0100, at no time shall deputies interfere with, threaten, intimidate, block, or otherwise discourage a member of the public who is taking photographs or recording video in any place in which they are lawfully present.
 - c. See DPPM F-0100 for additional prohibited actions that may relate to contacting witnesses.
 - 9. At the direction of the Investigations Division Commander, assign a deputy not involved in the incident to transport the involved deputy to the closest Sheriff's Office station, where they will be sequestered to prevent any unnecessary questioning.
 - a. The involved deputy(s) will be allowed and encouraged to contact their family to notify them of their well-being and obtain support as needed.
 - 10. Provide a complete briefing for investigators when needed.
 - 11. Complete a supplemental report if involved in any decision-making, including but not limited to tactics, the direction of resources and personnel, and de-escalation techniques employed.
- D. In cases of deputy injury, the on-duty Supervisor will:
- 1. Assign a deputy to accompany the injured deputy to the hospital.
 - a. Take charge of the injured deputy's equipment.
 - b. Receive a dying declaration when necessary.
- E. The Investigations Division Commander or designee will:
- 1. Maintain ultimate control of the investigation.
- F. The Investigations Division Commander or the Detectives Section Lieutenant will:
- 1. Determine the appropriate number of personnel and resources to conduct the investigation.
 - 2. Ensure the incident investigation follows current policy, applicable law, and accepted investigative procedures.
 - 3. Ensure the investigation is thorough and complete.
- G. The Sergeant in charge of the investigation team will:
- 1. Assign sufficient Detectives and Crime Scene Technicians to the investigation.
 - 2. Assign duties to personnel on the investigative team as the situation dictates.
 - 3. Ensure that the incident is investigated following current accepted policy and investigative procedures.
 - 4. Coordinate with the Field Supervisor who is responsible for writing reports.
 - a. Ensure the involved deputies in incidents resulting in serious injury or death will not write a report.

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- b. Ensure the deputies who witnessed the force will be interviewed instead of completing a report.
5. Ensure the involved deputy(s) body-worn camera (BWC) is docked as soon as possible per DPPM J-3600.
6. Ensure involved deputy(s), any deputy witnesses, and their legal representative have access to any BWC or other available footage prior to their interview with detectives, per DPPM J-3650.
7. Ensure the detectives investigating the incident create a Use of Force Reporting System entry for each involved deputy.
8. Ensure the involved deputy(s), including any deputy witnesses, do not participate in group debriefs until after they have completed their detailed interview.
9. Forward all completed reports to the Investigations Division Commander through the Detectives Section Lieutenant.

H. The Investigations Division Commander or his designee will:

1. Initiate a review of the incident according to DPPM Section F-1200.

DIRECTIVE A-1

Procedure A will apply to any on-duty incident in Kern County, regardless of the jurisdiction, or any off-duty incident in the Sheriff's Office's jurisdiction.

DIRECTIVE A-2

Any off-duty incident in another jurisdiction in Kern County will be investigated by the agency of jurisdiction unless that agency requests the incident be investigated by the Sheriff's Office. If the agency of jurisdiction investigates the incident, the Investigations Division Commander, or the Detectives Section Lieutenant and a Detective Sergeant will respond to assist the other agency.

DIRECTIVE A-3

For any incident outside Kern County, the Investigations Division will coordinate with the law enforcement agency that has jurisdiction to determine how the incident will be investigated. Generally, incidents in another jurisdiction will be investigated by the agency of that jurisdiction, unless that agency requests the incident be investigated by the Sheriff's Office. Such a determination will be made by the Investigations Bureau Chief Deputy.

If the agency of jurisdiction is designated as the lead investigative entity, the Sheriff's Office will conduct a concurrent criminal and/or administrative investigation as appropriate and in accordance with applicable portions of this policy. The Investigations Division Commander or Detectives Section Lieutenant and a Detective Sergeant may respond to assist the other agency with approval by the Investigations Bureau Chief Deputy.

The involved deputy(s) shall comply with all applicable provisions of this policy. The deputy(s) shall make themselves available to both the lead investigative agency and the Sheriff's Office,

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follow directives regarding interviews, evidence collection, and ensure timely communication with their chain of command throughout the investigative process.

DIRECTIVE A-4

To meet the reporting requirements of California Government Code §12525.2 & §12525.3 for qualifying officer-involved shootings and incidents involving the use of force resulting in serious bodily injury or death, a report shall be submitted in writing to the Attorney General of the State of California as outlined in DPPM F-0200.

PROCEDURE B: SHOOTING OF AN ANIMAL

A. A deputy who shoots at an animal will:

1. Check for injured persons and property damage.
2. Seek and render medical aid to injured persons as necessary.
3. Notify Animal Control.
4. Notify an on-duty Supervisor or the Rangemaster if at the range.
5. Preserve the scene.

B. The Supervisor will:

1. Ensure the scene is preserved.
2. Notify the on-duty Watch Lieutenant
3. Obtain a Public Safety Briefing of what took place.
4. Evaluate the event for any potential liability.
5. Assign an investigator at the rank of Senior Deputy or higher to investigate and complete a Use of Force Reporting System entry.
 - a. Entry selections will be made in the Use of Force Reporting System related to the shooting of an animal.
6. Notify the Investigations Division Commander, the Detectives Section Lieutenant, or the Homicide Unit Sergeant in their absence if there are any identified liabilities (e.g., deputy or citizen injured during the incident).
 - a. The Investigations Division Commander, the Detectives Section Lieutenant, or Homicide Unit Sergeant, in their absence, will assess the information provided and determine if a detective callout is warranted and to what extent the callout will be.
7. Review the completed investigation and associated Use of Force Reporting System entry. Ensure all identified witnesses were interviewed and all relevant evidence was seized.

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8. Complete a memorandum summarizing the investigation and attach the memorandum to the Use of Force Reporting System entry. The Use of Force Reporting System entry and memorandum will be forwarded to the affected Section Lieutenant for manager-level review.

C. The affected Section Lieutenant will:

1. Review the incident and all associated documentation. If no policy violations are identified, the Lieutenant will approve the memorandum and forward it to the Internal Affairs Unit via the Use of Force Reporting System. The affected Section Lieutenant will follow DPPM Sections D-0200 or D-0300 if potential policy violations are identified.
2. Review and forward the Use of Force Reporting System entry to the Internal Affairs Unit.

PROCEDURE C: NEGLIGENT DISCHARGES OF FIREARMS

A. A deputy who negligently or unintentionally discharges a firearm will:

1. Check for injured persons and property damage.
2. Seek and render medical aid as necessary.
3. Notify an on-duty Supervisor or the Rangemaster if at the range (see Directive C-1 below for a negligent discharge at the Range).
4. Preserve the scene.

B. The Supervisor will:

1. Ensure the scene is preserved.
2. Notify the on-duty Watch Lieutenant or affected Section Lieutenant.
3. Obtain a Public Safety Briefing of what took place.
4. Evaluate the event for any potential liability.
5. Assign an investigator at the rank of Senior Deputy or higher to conduct an investigation and complete a Use of Force Reporting System entry. If any person sustains injury due to a negligent firearm discharge, the Homicide Unit will respond and investigate.
6. Notify the Investigations Division Commander, the Detectives Section Lieutenant, or the Homicide Unit Sergeant, in their absence, if there are any identified liabilities.
 - a. The Investigations Division Commander, the Detectives Section Lieutenant, or the Homicide Unit Sergeant in their absence will assess the information provided and determine if a detective callout is warranted and to what extent the callout will be (e.g., deputy or citizen injured during the incident).

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7. Review the completed investigation and associated Use of Force Reporting System entry. Ensure all identified witnesses were interviewed and all relevant evidence was seized.
8. Complete a memorandum summarizing the investigation and attach the memorandum to the Use of Force Reporting System entry. The Use of Force Reporting System entry and memorandum will be forwarded to the affected Section Lieutenant for manager-level review.
 - a. Entry selections will be made in the Use of Force Reporting System related to the negligent or unintentional discharge of a firearm.

C. The affected Section Lieutenant will:

1. Review the incident and all associated documentation. If no policy violations are identified, the Lieutenant will approve the memorandum and forward it to the Internal Affairs Unit via the Use of Force Reporting System. The affected Section Lieutenant will follow DPPM Sections D-0200 or D-0300 if potential policy violations are identified.
2. Review and forward the Use of Force Reporting System entry to the Internal Affairs Unit.

DIRECTIVE C-1

An unintentional discharge of a firearm at the firearms range or during training will be investigated by the Rangemaster, who will forward a copy of the report to the Investigations Division Commander or the Detectives Section Lieutenant. If the incident results in injury or death to any person, or the Rangemaster determines the investigation is too complex, the Detectives Section will assume the investigation.

PROCEDURE D: IN-CUSTODY DEATHS

- A. Any deputy who is involved in or present during an in-custody death shall:
1. Immediately request and render medical aid as needed.
 2. Preserve the scene.
 3. Notify the Communications Center of the incident.
 4. Obtain the name and title of all responding medical and emergency personnel.
- B. The Communications Center will:
1. Notify the on-duty Supervisor.
 2. Initiate a Homicide Unit callout and notify executive staff.
- C. The on-duty Supervisor who is overseeing an in-custody death investigation will:
1. Ensure that the scene is properly preserved.

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2. Notify the affected Section Lieutenant or on-duty Watch Lieutenant
 3. Obtain a briefing from the involved deputy(s)
 4. Assign a deputy to start a crime scene log.
 5. Assign personnel as available and necessary to identify and isolate any witnesses.
 - a. If a witness is unable to remain at the scene, a statement will be taken, and complete personal information will be obtained.
 6. Provide a complete briefing for detectives when needed.
 7. Assign a deputy to remain with the decedent until relieved by Homicide Unit Detectives
 8. Ensure assisting deputies document their actions in supplemental reports and forward them to the Homicide Unit.
- D. The Investigations Division Commander or his designee will:
1. Maintain ultimate control of the investigation.
- E. The Investigations Division Commander or the Detectives Section Lieutenant will:
1. Determine the appropriate amount of personnel and resources for the investigation.
 2. Ensure the incident investigation follows current policy, applicable law, and accepted investigative procedures.
 3. Ensure the investigation is thorough and complete.
- F. The Sergeant in charge of the investigation team will:
1. Assign sufficient Detectives and Crime Scene Technicians to the investigation.
 2. Assign duties to personnel on the investigative team as the situation dictates.
 3. Ensure that the incident is investigated following current accepted policy and investigative procedures.
 4. Ensure all BWC and stationary camera footage is preserved and reviewed.
 5. Coordinate with the Field Supervisor who is responsible for writing reports.
 - a. Based on the discretion of the Detective Section Lieutenant, or their designee, the primary deputy(s) involved in the incident may not write a report. The involved deputy(s) may be interviewed by detectives assigned to the investigation.
 6. Forward all completed reports to the Investigations Division Commander through the Detectives Section Lieutenant to be provided to the Detentions Bureau Compliance Section for review.

DIRECTIVE D-1

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The on-duty Supervisor will inform the affected Section Lieutenant or on-duty Watch Lieutenant immediately upon notification of any incarcerated person's death. The affected Section Lieutenant or on-duty Watch Lieutenant will notify the Division Commander, who will notify the Sheriff via the chain of command.

DIRECTIVE D-2

The on-duty Supervisor will advise the on-call Detective Sergeant of any incident resulting in an in-custody death. The on-call Detective Sergeant will initiate a detective call-out and determine the number of resources needed to conduct the investigation.

DIRECTIVE D-3

For in-custody deaths that occur within Sheriff's Office Detention Facilities, refer to DBPPM C-900 for the appropriate procedure and investigative requirements. For all other in-custody deaths, the on-duty Watch Lieutenant or affected Section Lieutenant shall consult with the Investigations Division Commander or their designee. The Investigations Division Commander or their designee will determine whether the in-custody death will follow the procedure and investigative requirements of this policy or DBPPM C-900.

DIRECTIVE D-4

If an incarcerated person has died, the Watch Lieutenant shall adhere to the requirements outlined in Detentions Bureau Policy C-950: "In-Custody Death Next of Kin Notification" to ensure compliance with State law³. This policy shall not supersede any death notifications required to be made by the Coroner's Office.

DIRECTIVE D-5

To meet the reporting requirements of California Government Code §12525, any time a person dies while in the custody of the Sheriff's Office, a report shall be submitted in writing to the Attorney General of the State of California, within 10 days after the death. In addition, the Detentions Bureau Compliance Section shall be notified by the Homicide Unit.

If any of the information provided pursuant to subdivision (a) of Penal Code §10008 changes or if new information becomes available regarding the death, including, but not limited to, the manner and means of death, the Compliance Section shall update its written report to the Attorney General within 10 days of the date of the change or the date the new information becomes available.

The Correctional Standards Section shall post specified information to the Sheriff's Office website within 10 days⁴.

³California Penal Code § 4032.5(b)

⁴California Penal Code §10008.

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PROCEDURE E: PEER SUPPORT UNIT

In accordance with DPPM J-0410, the Peer Support Coordinator shall be contacted by the Communications Center concerning all critical incidents. The Peer Support Coordinator shall coordinate a Peer Support response or a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) group counseling session, if needed (see J-0400). If a Peer Support Response to the scene is needed, the Peer Support Coordinator will consult with the Homicide Unit Sergeant upon their arrival to coordinate any assistance to the involved deputy(s).

At no time will Peer Support personnel become involved in the investigative process. Any details of the critical incident discussed with the involved deputy(s) outside the presence of Homicide Unit Detectives shall be considered confidential pursuant to the provisions of the “Law Enforcement Peer Support and Crisis Referral Services Program” unless disclosure is authorized by Government Code 8669.4. Any such applicable disclosures shall be reported to the Homicide Unit Sergeant.

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