

VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

CITIZEN COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Law enforcement personnel often face an almost impossible task. They must enforce the law in a fair and impartial manner and still protect the rights of all parties involved. They come in contact with people under the most stressful circumstances and yet must remain patient and courteous. They must exercise good judgment at all times, though they are often called upon to make split-second decisions. They see the worst sides of life but still are expected to give only their best. Being only human, sometimes they make mistakes and may appear to be conducting themselves improperly.

The Ventura County Sheriff Department has established rules of conduct for its employees and guidelines for appropriate corrective action when those rules are breached. In addition to providing citizens with a procedure to present their legitimate complaints, the system protects police employees from false charges and unwarranted criticism.

The Personnel Bureau

A function of the Personnel Bureau is to protect the integrity of the Department and its personnel, both sworn and civilian. Only through citizen's trust and confidence in their police is effective law enforcement possible.

The investigation of certain minor allegations is handled at the division level by an employee's immediate supervisors. Serious complaints are investigated by the Personnel Bureau.

How to Register a Complaint

While the Sheriff's Department does not actively solicit complaints against its personnel, it encourages any citizen who believes he or she has a valid complaint to come forward. Only by knowing about internal problems can the Sheriff deal with them properly.

You may register a complaint in person, by mail, or by phone. If you have a complaint, contact the Personnel Bureau, whose regular office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The Personnel Bureau is located on the first floor of the PreTrial Detention Facility building, Ventura County Government Center, 800 South Victoria Avenue, Ventura, Ca 93009, (805) 654-2375. On weekends or after hours (or any other time), you may contact the duty Watch Commander in the West County area at (805) 654-2314 or in the East County area at (805) 494-8207. Complaints may also be registered with any member of the Department.

It is necessary that as much specific information as possible be provided about the incident, including time and date of occurrence, location, the employee's name (if you know it), and names of witnesses, if any.

Every complaint of misconduct, regardless of its nature is investigated.

Investigation of Complaints

The Personnel Bureau Commander, acting on behalf of the Sheriff, will assign your complaint to a staff investigator or to the appropriate supervisor in the employee's division through the chain of command. A comprehensive investigation will be conducted.

Upon completion of the investigation of your complaint, it will be reviewed by the Sheriff as well as the employee's superiors. The disposition of your complaint will be determined in one of five ways:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Unfounded | The allegation is false and not supported by the evidence. |
| Exonerated | The incident complained of occurred, but the employee involved acted lawfully and properly. |
| Not Sustained | The investigation did not disclose enough information to either prove or disprove the allegation. |
| Sustained | The allegation is supported by the evidence. |
| Abated | A complaint is deemed to be abated due to lack of merit; the complainant withdraws the complaint or refuses to cooperate with the investigation, and/or there is insufficient evidence or alternative sources of information to pursue the matter further. |

If the allegation is sustained against an employee, the Sheriff or a supervisor acting on the Sheriff's behalf will take proper corrective measures. These measures may include additional training, verbal or written reprimand or suspension without pay. In severe cases, the Sheriff may demote an employee or even terminate an employee from the Department.

Employees are notified promptly of any action taken against them.

California law prohibits the Sheriff from reporting back to you the specifics of the investigation or the extent of any action which may result from your complaint.

As Sheriff of Ventura County, it is my responsibility to enforce the law fairly and impartially with respect for each person's dignity. In order to accomplish this, it is absolutely essential to investigate objectively all citizen complaints as expeditiously as possible. This must be done in order to arrive at all the facts necessary to clear the deputy's name or to substantiate the citizen's complaint, whichever is appropriate.

Bob Brooks, Sheriff

VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BUREAU
800 SOUTH VICTORIA AVENUE
VENTURA, CA 93009

CITIZEN'S COMPLAINT FORM

Complainant's Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Residence Phone: _____ Business Phone: _____

Date and time of incident or action: _____

Location of incident or action: _____

Names, addresses and phone numbers of witnesses or others involved:

Was a Deputy Sheriff involved? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, give the badge number and name, if known: _____

Can you identify the Deputy? Yes ____ No ____

Please use the back of this form and explain, in your own words, the action or inaction which caused this complaint:

(Attach additional pages, if necessary)

PLEASE NOTE: Civil Code Section 47.5 – ACTION FOR DEFAMATION AGAINST INDIVIDUAL FILING FALSE COMPLAINT AGAINST POLICE OFFICER: “Notwithstanding Section 47, a peace officer may bring an action for defamation against an individual who has filed a complaint with that officer’s employing agency alleging misconduct, criminal conduct, or incompetence, if that complaint is false, the complaint was made with the knowledge that it was false and it was made with spite hatred, or ill will. Knowledge that the complaint was false may be proved by a showing that the complainant had no reasonable grounds to believe the statement was true and that the complainant exhibited a reckless disregard for ascertaining the truth.”

I have read and understood the above statement.

Signature of Complainant

Date

Complaint

Control# _____ Received By: _____ ID # _____ Date: _____

