



MYRTLE BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS AND OPERATING PROCEDURES

Subject: Missing Persons

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Rescinds: 247 Missing Persons
247 – A Missing Persons
247 – B Missing Persons

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Approved By:

I. PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for handling reports and investigations involving missing persons and runaways.

The Myrtle Beach Police Department regards the investigation of missing persons and runaways as a high priority. Special attention is given to those cases involving young children, the elderly, disabled individuals and other persons who, for other reasons, may be particularly vulnerable.

II. DEFINITIONS

1. Missing Persons - A missing person is someone, either adult or juvenile, who is unaccounted for and who may be in need of assistance due to (but not limited to) the following circumstances:
 - a. Abduction-Kidnapping
 - b. Catastrophic/Disaster Victim
 - c. Domestic Related
 - d. Overdue or lost individuals
 - e. Medical-Psychological or individuals with special needs
2. Runaways - A runaway is a juvenile (person who is 17 years of age or younger) who willfully leaves the care, custody and control of his/her parent/guardian.
3. Missing Child - A person who is 17 years of age or younger and whose whereabouts are unknown to his or her parent, guardian or responsible party.

4. Missing Adult - A person who is 18 years of age or older whose whereabouts are unknown to his or her parent, guardian or responsible party.

5. Authoritative Source - May include but are not limited to a Police agency, parent, court/judicial officer, legal guardian, next of kin, physician, attorney, power of attorney, friend or neighbor in unusual circumstances.

6. Unusual Circumstances:

- a. Thirteen (13) years of age or younger;
- b. Out of zone of safety for his/her age, developmental stage, and/or physical condition;
- c. Mentally diminished;
- d. Drug dependent, including both prescription and illicit substances;
- e. Potential victim of foul play or sexual exploitation
- f. In a life-threatening situation
- g. Absent from home for more than 24 hours before being reported missing;
- h. Believed to be with others who could endanger his/her welfare;
- i. Is absent under circumstances that are inconsistent with his/her established patterns of behavior;
- j. Whose disappearance involves circumstances that would cause a reasonable person to conclude that the person should be considered at risk.

7. Family Child Abduction - When a non-custodial family member takes and flees with a child, usually in direct violation of a court order or custody arrangement.

8. Non-Family Child Abduction - When a child (person who is 17 years of age or younger) is taken by an individual either known or unknown who is not a family member, through force or persuasion, usually in the furtherance of additional victimization.

III. PROCEDURE

1. An incident report will be completed as soon as the Department is notified of a complaint involving a missing person. This requirement is applicable where the person missing is determined to be missing from the City of Myrtle Beach, or the person's last known whereabouts could reasonably be believed to have been in the City of Myrtle Beach.
2. Whenever possible, the following should be part of the initial report:
 - a. A recent photograph of the missing person;
 - b. The name of the missing person's dentist; include address, phone number if known;

- c. The missing person's descriptive information such as clothing, facial hair, glasses, etc.
 - d. Any possible destination the missing person may be headed to;
 - e. Anyone the missing person may have last been seen with;
 - f. Any vehicles the missing person may be traveling with;
 - g. Any prior history of the missing person as a runaway or missing person;
 - h. Any known dependencies;
 - i. Any other factors that might help law enforcement locate the missing person, such as but not limited to:
 - i. Cell phone information (number, make/model of phone, service provider);
 - ii. Social Media Presence (user name and site information);
 - iii. E-mail addresses used;
 - iv. List of credit/debit cards and financial institutions;
 - v. Uber or Lyft accounts;
 - vi. Google or Apple accounts.
3. It is the responsibility of the investigating officer and his/her immediate Supervisor to disseminate information as quickly as possible and ensure that the missing person is entered into the Missing Person Files of NCIC (National Crime Information Center) through the Communications Section.
- a. Provide information to Communications and request a broadcast to local and regional area agencies.
 - b. All supervisors shall ensure that they are familiar with the entry criteria and definitions applicable to Missing Person entries into the NCIC system. This information is located in the Communications Section. This entry must be completed as soon as possible following the receipt of adequate information to make the entry, and no later than the end of the Uniform investigating officer's tour of duty unless adequate information has not been received and the Uniform investigating officer's Lieutenant assigns this duty to another officer who shall complete the entry prior to the end of his/her tour of duty.
 - c. The UCR will reflect the entry and the NCIC paperwork will be forwarded to the Records Section. The Telecommunicator entering the person into NCIC will fill out the Missing Person card. Missing Persons entries will be validated by the Communications Section at least once a month.
4. The investigating officer will consult with their supervisor to conduct a search if circumstances warrant. These circumstances include but are not limited to:
- a. missing children;
 - b. elderly persons or disabled persons who may have "wandered away";
 - c. when foul play is suspected; or
 - d. as otherwise directed by a supervisor.
 - e. If a child, elderly, or disabled person is missing:
 - i. a search of the home and immediate area will be conducted;
 - ii. the RTC cameras in the area will be reviewed;
 - iii. searches will be made of areas the person is known to frequent;

- iv. contact will be made with the acquaintances, friends, and relatives the missing person is likely to contact;
 - v. contact will be made with the local taxi cab companies and ride-share companies for assistance in determining if the missing person may have departed the area by using one of these conveyances.
- 5. If the incident involves abduction, kidnapping or other crime, the Uniform investigating officer shall:
 - a. Obtain all necessary information to include description of victims, suspects, vehicles involved, people involved and any potential destination;
 - b. Secure and safeguard any and all areas involved as potential crime scenes;
 - c. Prepare and submit an initial report detailing information that would substantiate that a crime was committed;
 - d. Prepare and submit supplemental reports to include statements of witness, evidence gathered and any other information.
- 6. The Uniform Supervisor Shall:
 - a. Obtain a briefing from the Uniform investigative officer;
 - b. Refer the missing person case to the Family Services Unit Supervisor.
- 7. The Family Services Unit Supervisor Shall:
 - a. Investigate all missing persons to include juvenile runaways.
 - b. Upon review of the missing person case a determination will be made to assign the case to a juvenile officer for additional investigation to the point where there is a discovery of foul play.
- 8. In any case where there is an indication of foul play, criminal activity or circumstances which would dictate or require immediate follow-up, the Juvenile officer shall complete a supplemental report documenting this information and shall notify his/her supervisor of the incident. The Family Services Unit Supervisor, if deemed necessary, shall contact the duty detective and after consulting with the duty detective shall determine the need for the intervention from the Investigative Section, and the opening of an Investigative case file. Any member of the Department's Command Staff may authorize the opening of a missing person investigative case file, but should only do so after consulting with the Investigative Division's Commander or the Detective Section's Lieutenant unless doing so would unduly jeopardize the safety of the missing person.
- 9. If the missing person is a child, the juvenile officer shall ascertain the circumstances surrounding the child's disappearance. If unusual circumstances exist, as defined in this procedure, then the decision to employ additional response methods will be determined by the Family Services Unit Supervisor following consultation with the Street Crimes Unit Lieutenant. If the case has been turned over to the Investigative Division, then the duty detective may decide to employ additional response methods after consultation with his/her supervisor. In any situation where the circumstances

are not clear, the officers should always keep in mind that the missing person's safety is our ultimate goal and should act accordingly.

10. In cases to which Amber Alerts are applicable, the assigned Investigator will complete the SC Amber Alert Information Form and forward to the authorized approving official for transmittal.
 - a. Activate Amber Alert per Procedure 704;
 - b. Establish a command post;
 - c. Establish a liaison with the victim's family
11. If the incident involves a runaway, the Uniform investigating officer shall:
 - a. Obtain all necessary information to include description of the runaway, description of the people the runaway may be in a the company of, description of vehicles involved, school the runaway is attending, any friends or locations the runaway might frequent;
 - b. Enter the runaway information NCIC;
 - c. Forward a completed report to the Family Services Unit.
12. The Family Services Unit Supervisor shall:
 - a. Review the runaway report
 - b. Assign a juvenile officer to investigate the incident further.
13. The Juvenile Officer Shall:
 - a. Conduct a full investigation.
 - b. Confer with the runaway's School Resource Officer if they attend an area school.
 - c. Following-up with family, friends, schools and other locations the runaway may frequent;
 - d. Following-up with Family Court if the runaway is habitual, on probation, etc., to obtain pick-up orders.
14. The responsibility for conducting the follow-up investigations in missing persons/runaway cases belongs to the Family Services Unit unless the Investigative Division has adopted the case. This should never relieve or prohibit any officer from conducting follow-up investigations in a missing person or runaway case or from filing a supplemental report detailing pertinent information in any case.
15. Upon receipt of information indicating the location of, or the return of a missing person, the assigned officer shall verify that the located missing person is in fact the reported missing person.
 - a. He/she will conduct a follow up interview with the located person to determine if additional services are needed and will be alert for any indications of criminal activity resulting in the person's running away.
 - b. The officer will file a supplemental report listing the appropriate information and disposition (when applicable).

- c. The investigating officer shall notify the original complainant of the results of the investigations results as required by SLED (State Law Enforcement Division).

16. In the event that the notification is received and the assigned officer is off-duty or otherwise unavailable, it shall be the responsibility of the assigned supervisor to ensure that the information is received and that a supplemental report is completed.

17. If the case has not been adopted by the Investigative Division, then the Juvenile officer shall notify his/her supervisor who shall direct the Communications Section to remove the person from the NCIC missing person's record when the person is located and a copy of the NCIC printout shall be sent to the Records Section.

IV. DISCUSSION

Everyone should be reminded that the Department regards the investigation of missing persons and runaway cases as a high priority. The handling of these cases with compassion, urgency and professionalism shall ensure the appropriate response to these emotionally charged cases. By responding consistently to these calls for service, our performance level should be at or above what should be expected on each call. The Myrtle Beach Police Department and its officers should never find it acceptable to allow one incident to slip through the system without the attention required to seek a prompt disposition when possible.