

Understanding the Tacoma Police Department Complaint Process

Policy

The Tacoma Police Department strives to promote a high level of confidence within our community and to maintain the professional integrity of the Department. It is our policy to vigorously investigate and review all instances of alleged misconduct against our employees. All investigations are conducted in a fair and efficient manner in accordance with department, city, state, and federal regulations.

Investigative Process

Complaint Defined

A complaint is any communication, verbal or written, conveying dissatisfaction with the performance or conduct of the Department or one or more of its members.

Who May Complain?

Any person, regardless of age, sex or nationality, who witnesses or has direct knowledge of police misconduct or unlawful behavior may file a complaint with the Tacoma Police Department.

The Tacoma Police Department views all citizen complaints against its employees seriously. For this reason you must ensure that your complaint is based upon fact.

Intentional false reporting in an attempt to unjustly subject a police employee to undeserved discipline or slander, or to place his/her employment in jeopardy, could result in criminal charges and/or civil actions by the employee involved.

Once your complaint is filed, the investigation will begin.

- Witnesses will be contacted and pertinent information will be gathered.
- The employee in question will be interviewed.
- The investigation will be reviewed by administrative personnel.
- A decision will be made as to the disposition.
- You will receive notification of the results and outcome of the investigation.
- If you have questions about the results, you may contact the supervisor and chain of command listed at the bottom of the notification.

Your cooperation in all of these elements is very important to a successful and proper investigation.

When a complaint is received, it will be reviewed and classified into one of the four categories:

Inquiries

Inquiries can be handled by any supervisor within the department. Usually an inquiry is a question involving the actions of an employee. If the question can be satisfactorily answered by the supervisor, it will simply be recorded in a log.

Bureau Level Complaints

Most complaints will be handled at the bureau level. This means the employee's supervisor will complete the investigation and make recommendations to the bureau commander. Retraining, counseling, and reprimands could result if the complaint is sustained.

Internal Affairs Complaints

Complaints of a more serious nature will be investigated by Internal Affairs. Suspension, demotion, and/or termination of the employee could result if the complaint is sustained.

Criminal Complaints

Criminal Complaints will be investigated by Criminal Investigative Detectives or an outside law enforcement agency, as well as a parallel investigation conducted by Internal Affairs.

How Long Will the Investigation Take?

We try to complete all investigations as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Inquiries can be completed immediately.

Bureau Level Complaints should be completed within 30 days, but depending on the complexity of the complaint, it could take longer.

Internal Affairs Complaints are difficult to predict because of the seriousness and processes involved.

Criminal Complaints are difficult to predict because they involve the legal process.

Dispositions/Definitions

Sustained

The investigation revealed the employee acted improperly with respect to the Department policy.

Not Sustained

The investigation is unable to substantiate whether or not misconduct or violation of rules, regulations or procedures occurred.

Unfounded

The investigation revealed that the facts or actions alleged did not occur.

Exonerated

The investigation revealed that the facts or actions alleged were substantially correct; however, the conduct of the employee was proper given the circumstances.

Commendations

Employees of the Tacoma Police Department work very hard for the safety and security of the citizens of Tacoma. We encourage citizens who have positive experiences with our employees, or witness examples of outstanding professionalism to inform us. This type of positive feedback provides a morale boost to our employees.

You can commend a Tacoma Police employee by calling any of the numbers listed on the back of this pamphlet, sending a letter to the Chief of Police, or sending an email via the Tacoma Police Department web page.

How Do You File A Complaint?

- Complaints may be filed, either anonymously or in person, by mail, telephone or e-mail through the Tacoma Police Department website at www.tacomapolice.org under Complaints and Commendations.
- The Tacoma Police Department is open to receive walk-in complaints during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, at Tacoma Police Headquarters, 3701 South Pine Street.
- Phone-in complaints can be made to a 24-hour recorded line at 253-591-5283 or by calling the Communications Center at 253-798-4722.

How to Contact Us

Tacoma Police Department
3701 South Pine Street
Tacoma, WA 98409
(253) 591-5900

Internal Affairs Section
(253) 591-5283
(24-hour recorded line)

or
TPD-IA@CI.Tacoma.WA.US

Walk-In Complaints
3701 South Pine Street

Phone-In Complaints
Communications Center

(253) 798-4722
(24-hours – calls will be forwarded to an on-duty supervisor)



City of Tacoma
Police Department
3701 South Pine Street
Tacoma, WA 98409-5735
www.tacomapolice.org

under Complaints and Commendations.

To create a safe and secure environment in which to live, work, and visit by working together with the community, enforcing the law in a fair and impartial manner, preserving the peace and order in our neighborhoods, and safeguarding our constitutional guarantees.