

# SPECIAL ORDER



Title  
**Carrying Service Firearms While Off-Duty in the District of Columbia**

Topic / Number

**SO-04-07**

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Distribution

**B**

Related to:

**General Order RAR-901.01 (Handling of Service Weapons)**

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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### I. BACKGROUND

Under District of Columbia laws and regulations, members of the Metropolitan Police Department are required to carry their badge, identification card and service firearm at all times, and "held to be always on duty."

Title 6A DCMR (Police Manual), Section 206.1, has been amended by the Off-Duty Service Firearm Authorization Amendment Act. The amended section now reads as follows:

"A member of the force, when off duty any place in the District of Columbia, shall carry his or her badge and identification card and service firearm except in his or her residence and as the Chief of Police may designate."

The new amendment authorizes the Chief of Police to prescribe those circumstances when an off-duty member of the force is excused from carrying his or her authorized service firearm when off-duty in the District of Columbia.

This directive is not intended to overly restrict a member's ability to carry his/her issued service firearm or authorized off-duty firearm while off-duty in the District of Columbia. If a member chooses to carry an authorized firearm while off-duty, he/she must do so in compliance with existing District and state laws and Department guidelines.

### II. POLICY

The policy of the Metropolitan Police Department is to recognize that there are some off-duty situations where carrying a weapon may prove unnecessary or imprudent. Some of these situations include attendance at religious services, events where in-house, armed security is present, engaging in athletic activities, or attending social functions where officers may consume alcohol and their weapons cannot be secured in accordance with department policy. Exempting off-duty officers from the

requirement that they be armed at all times while in the District will provide them with opportunities to comfortably engage in family, religious, and social activities where the presence of firearms may be ill-advised.

While it is desirable that members have a broad range of discretion in determining for themselves when such situations exist, this directive provides guidance intended to ensure consistent application of this policy.

### III. DEFINITIONS

When used in this directive, the following terms shall have the meanings designated:

Police Powers – the authority granted to a sworn police officer by the Metropolitan Police Department in accordance with applicable law to enforce the law, make arrests, and carry and/or use authorized service weapons.

### IV. RULES

- A. While in an off-duty status, members traveling to and from the District of Columbia and carrying their Department-issued or authorized off-duty firearm, shall ensure that they are in compliance with all applicable rules, regulations and laws of the jurisdiction in which they are traveling.
- B. Unarmed, off-duty members, shall take the appropriate police actions when they observe a crime or situation that requires police service, giving due regard to their personal safety and the safety of innocent bystanders.
  - 1. Shall not take direct police action as a Metropolitan Police Officer unless such action can be taken safely without use of force or the endangerment of others. Such members shall inform the Public Safety Communications Center (Communications) prior to engaging in any direct police action where it is practical to do so.
  - 2. Shall immediately report all crimes including felonies in progress and crimes against persons to the Public Safety Communications Center by telephone or police radio when available.
  - 3. Who witness a felony in progress or a crime against a person shall remain on the scene until an on-duty officer arrives.
- C. In the event of an incident requiring police action, members in a off-duty status shall cooperate fully with on-duty officers who respond and shall advise the on-duty officers of his or her presence and duty status as soon as practicable.

- D. When a sworn member is off-duty and is not carrying a firearm on his/her person, all firearms shall be secured in accordance with G.O. RAR 901.01 (Handling of Service Weapons). No service firearms are to be stored in a vehicle or placed in the custody of any person not a member of the Department.
- E. All members shall carry their badge and identification card at all times while in the District of Columbia, even if they are not carrying a firearm.
- F. Members who choose to carry a firearm while off-duty shall carry the weapon on their person at all times, or leave the weapon properly secured at their home.
- G. Off-duty members shall not carry their authorized firearm:
  - 1. When consuming, planning to consume, or likely to consume an alcoholic beverage. This applies to both the member's issued service firearm and an authorized off-duty firearm.
  - 2. To any public or private event, function, religious gathering, or business or entertainment establishment, **and** remove the weapon from their person to store, "check," or otherwise place in the custody of another party outside of their direct control.

## V. PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

- A. Police Responsibilities of the Unarmed Member
  - 1. Although the exercise of police authority by unarmed members is restricted, the responsibility of an involved member is to take proper action befitting a member of the Department in any situation involving any criminal conduct or requiring prompt governmental action. Members shall act responsibly so as to bring credit upon the Department and their profession. In all situations, members shall conduct themselves in a manner that is mindful of their own safety as well as the safety of those around them.
  - 2. When directed to comply with an on-duty officer, off-duty members shall utilize the tentative recognition signal as described in GO-OPS-308.13 (Casual Clothes Units). At one time in this situation shall the off-duty officer make any further attempt to identify himself or herself until after the situation has stabilized. No furtive movements toward gathering a badge or identification folder from within their clothing shall be made.

3. If a member witnesses or is involved in an incident or event while off-duty that requires police attention, the member shall be aware and/or take notes, if applicable, of the circumstances surrounding the incident, i.e., any look-outs, witnesses, etc., and sharing that information with appropriate responding authorities. The members shall further relay any pertinent information to the Public Safety Communications Center as soon as practicable, if applicable.
4. When a member is involved or witnessed an incident while off-duty and required a police response, the off-duty member shall cooperate with responding officers in the preparation of required reports and the identification of suspects and shall make corresponding entries in his/her memorandum notebook promptly after attendance at the activity for further reference as may be needed.

//SIGNED//  
Charles H. Ramsey  
Chief of Police

\*This Special Order supersedes any provision in any other Department directive that is contrary or inconsistent and shall remain in effect until rescinded or incorporated into another directive.

CHR:NMJ:MAR:njg