


PINE BLUFF POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY & PROCEDURES MANUAL

	SUBJECT:	POLICY NUMBER 201
	MISSING PERSONS	ISSUE DATE 02/19/2008
	CHAPTER: PATROL	EFFECTIVE DATE 02/19/2008
	ISSUED By: Chief of Police John E. Howell	TOTAL PAGES 6

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish responsibilities and guidelines for the investigation of missing persons.

II. POLICY

The high priority that the Pine Bluff Police Department places on the locating of lost and/or missing persons is equal to the anguish and apprehension felt by the parents and other family members of any person reported as missing. Therefore, it is the policy of the department to accept all missing person's reports from any person concerning an apparent credible report of any of the following:

- A. Possible involuntary absence.
- B. Voluntary absence if other circumstances are involved (i.e. disabled, very young or very old, suicidal, etc.)
- C. Persons under eighteen (18) years of age suspected of being a runaway.

III. PROCEDURE

A. REPORTING.

1. There is no waiting period for reporting a missing person. Missing person reports shall be taken in-person in conformance with the criteria of this policy and the criticality of the incident.
2. A person may be declared "missing" when his/her whereabouts is unknown and unexplainable for a period of time that is regarded by knowledgeable parties as highly unusual or suspicious in consideration of the subject's behavior patterns, plans or routines.

3. An individual may be considered "missing-critical" who meets the foregoing criteria and who, among other possible circumstances:
 - a. may be the subject of foul play,
 - b. because of age (young or old), may be unable to properly safeguard or care for himself/herself,
 - c. suffers from diminished mental capacity or medical conditions that are potentially life threatening if left untreated/unattended;
 - d. is a patient of a mental institution and is considered potentially dangerous to himself or others;
 - e. has demonstrated the potential for suicide; or
 - f. may have been involved in a boating, swimming or other sporting accident or natural disaster.
4. Reports of juveniles who have voluntarily left home (i.e., "runaways") should be classified as such only after thorough investigation.
5. Based on the outcome of initial inquiries, a decision may be made concerning the potential danger posed to the missing person and the urgency of police response.
6. When a missing person complaint is received by MECA, a patrol unit shall be dispatched. A missing person report form (PBP043) will be filled out when a person is reported missing and the complainant will sign the form. The patrol officer will collect any evidence such as notes and turn them over to the assigned detective or to evidence.

IV. PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

Any missing person case should be viewed as a potential crime against persons and therefore requires a preliminary investigation to sort out the facts of the case and to structure the remainder of the investigation.

- A. INTERVIEW RELATIVES.** Upon arriving at the scene the patrol officer should interview the missing person's relatives and determine if the person has been abducted or has left home voluntarily. The officer should always determine the legal custody status of a missing juvenile. The officer should ask the relatives "who saw the person last" and should obtain a list of the persons friends with addresses.
- B. NOTE EVERYONE PRESENT AT THE SCENE.** It is useful for the first officer arriving at the scene to write down the names of everyone present as well as those who are searching. These names may provide leads to the identity of the abductor if subsequent investigation determines that abduction took place.
- C. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION/PHOTO.** A complete description of the person should be obtained, including the clothing the person was wearing and any handicaps, scars or other identifying characteristics such as braces on the teeth or pierced ears. This information should be broadcast in a (be on the look out) bulletin as well as over the city wide police radio dispatch system.

- D. **SEARCH THE HOME.** The patrol officer responding to a missing child report should request permission to search the home. The search should be thorough including closets and piles of clothes, under beds, in crawl spaces, attics and vehicles, etc. While conducting the search, the officer should be alert for other clues that may indicate foul play or possible reasons for the child's disappearance.
- E. Family members should be instructed to contact the police department immediately if the person returns home and to relay any new information to the officer assigned to the case.
- F. The initial officer taking the missing person report shall, if possible, broadcast to all persons on duty all information necessary to identify the missing person.
- G. **FILE REPORT WITH N.C.I.C.** If the person was not located on the initial response and search, the report shall be turned in to MECA, which will assure that the necessary information is filed with N.C.I.C. This report should be filed in all missing person's cases upon confirmation that there is a missing person. All N.C.I.C. entries are to be made within one hour.
- H. If necessary request MECA to broadcast the missing persons information over the city, county, and state wide police radio dispatch system.
- I. In the case of persons designated as "missing-critical," a supervisory officer may direct that the shift commander authorize mobilization of resources necessary for an area/field search.

V. FIELD SEARCH

- A. A field operation supervisor shall be notified by the responding unit in case of missing persons involved in one of the following:
 - 1. A child age thirteen (13) or under.
 - 2. Any other person who is reported missing involving extenuating circumstances, i.e. persons with mental or physical handicaps
 - 3. When foul plan is suspected.
- B. After being notified of these circumstances, the field supervisor shall notify the detective office during appropriate hours or the on call detective. The detective shall then determine if they will respond. The field supervisor shall then make a determination if whether a field search will be conducted. If it is determined that a field search is necessary, the supervisor shall cause the search of the missing persons premises and surrounding areas by uniformed officers.

- C. All search activities shall be under the supervision of the on-scene supervisor. The supervisor shall cause the keeping of a log noting the time, date, units/officers involved in the areas search. Said log shall be passed on to relieving shift personnel for continuity of the search and review purposes, if necessary. Complete reports shall be made by officers involved in the search. The field operation supervisor shall arrange for the proper relief of uniformed personnel during shift change for continuation of search activities.
- D. All search activities shall be continued until one of the following occurs:
 - 1. Person reporting missing is located.
 - 2. On-scene supervisor has determined that all possible leads have been exhausted.

VI. INVESTIGATION OF MISSING PERSONS-DETECTIVE SECTION.

- A. If after initial response it is determined that a crime of abduction has occurred, the detective duty supervisor will be notified and they will take charge of the case. The detective section has the responsibility of investigating all missing person reports filed with the department involving suspicious circumstances. The extent of the investigation shall be determined by the detective section commander. All missing person's cases shall remain active until the person reported missing is located.
- B. When the detectives are not on duty the field supervisor will be notified and will decide if the situation warrants a detective callout.

VII. ONGOING INVESTIGATIONS

- A. **OPEN CASES.** An open case file will be maintained at MECA. MECA will file the original report in the open case file after it has been entered in to N.C.I.C. Each workday copies of the report will be made by MECA personnel and be forwarded to Juvenile Court if the missing person is a juvenile.
- B. **WEEKLY VERIFICATION.** Open missing person cases will be verified weekly. The assigned detective will contact the person reporting the missing person and verify that the missing person has not been located.
- C. **CLOSED CASES.** The MECA records clerk will assure that all N.C.I.C. records are cleared and will attach a copy of the cleared printout to the original report and forward all reports, photos, etc., to the Administrative Service Division for permanent records.
- D. **JUVENILES LOCATED.** An information report will be filed on located juveniles. The report should contain complete information on the following:
 - 1. Identification of juvenile.
 - 2. Facts surrounding the location.
 - 3. The report will then be filed with the original report in the closed file.
 - 4. Ongoing Investigation

- E. Ongoing investigations of missing persons should include but should not be limited to the following actions and activities:
 - 1. Request release of dental records and any fingerprints available.
 - 2. Contact hospitals and the coroner's office as appropriate for injured or deceased persons fitting the description of the missing person.
 - 3. Thoroughly check the location at which the missing person was last seen and conduct interviews as appropriate with persons who were with the individual or who may work in or frequent the area.
 - 4. Conduct interviews with any additional family, friends, work associates, schoolmates and teachers as well as school counselors and social case workers, as appropriate, to explore the potential for foul play, voluntary flight, or, in the case of juveniles, parental kidnapping or running away.
 - 5. Provide identification and related information to all elements of this agency, the state police missing persons' authority, neighboring police agencies and, if parental or stranger-to-stranger abduction is suspected, the FBI.
 - 6. Decisions to use local media to help locate missing persons shall be made with the approval of the police chief executive and the missing person's family.

- F. The lead investigator shall maintain routine ongoing contact with the missing person's closest relative concerning progress of the investigation. These and other relevant individuals shall be informed that they must notify the lead investigator as soon as any contact is made with the missing person.

VIII. RECOVERY OF MISSING PERSONS AND CASE CLOSURE

- A. No missing person's case is ever closed until the person is located or a body found and identified.
 - 1. **Abduction** - The assigned detective will continue to use all available resource and investigative abilities in solving the case.
 - 2. **Unknown Missing** - The assigned detective will continue to monitor and investigate the case until it is solved or the person is located.

- B. Competent adults, having left home for personal reasons, cannot be forced to return home.

- C. Officers locating such individuals shall:
 - 1. advise them that they are the subject of a missing person investigation;
 - 2. ask if they desire the reporting party or next-of-kin to be notified of their whereabouts; and

3. make provisions to transmit this information to the reporting party or next-of-kin if permitted by the missing person.
- D. In all cases, reporting parties shall be informed of the well-being of located missing persons. Unless criminal matters necessitate other action, desires of missing persons not to reveal their whereabouts shall be honored.
- E. Missing persons shall be questioned to establish the circumstances surrounding their disappearance and whether criminal activity was involved.
- F. In cases involving juveniles, officers shall ensure that:
 1. the juvenile receives medical attention, if necessary, in a timely manner;
 2. initial questioning of the youth identifies the circumstances surrounding the child's disappearance, any individuals who may be criminally responsible and/ or whether an abusive or negligent home environment was a contributory factor, and
 3. those parents, guardians and/or the person reporting the missing youth are notified in a timely manner.
 4. Upon location of a missing person, all agencies and information systems previously contacted for assistance will be notified or updated.
 5. Where indicated, follow-up action shall include filing of an abuse and neglect report with the state youth service agency.
- G. The case report shall include a complete report on the whereabouts, actions and activities of children while missing.
- H. Where indicated, criminal charges shall be filed with the prosecutor's office.