

Case Study: Writing Policies and Procedures for a Police Organization

by Audrey Cielinski Kessler

Unlike in the corporate world where all persons working on a given project are likely to be of one "category," in a police organization one is likely to find a mix of civilian (i.e., nonpolice officers) and



sworn personnel (police officers of various ranks) assigned to work on the project.

Another contrast with the corporate world when writing/compiling a policy manual is the need to comply not only with the legal requirements applicable in the corporate setting but also to local civil service regulations applicable to government (i.e., police) employees.

When the Houston Police Department revamped its policy manual (which it referred to as it General Orders) about eight years ago, this mix of legal requirements was the environment in which the revisions occurred.

The policies were divided into eight series, numbered from 100 to 800:

- Organization
- Administration
- Personnel management
- Equipment and uniforms
- Arrest and detention
- Operations

- Evidence control
- Information and records

The number of policies in the revised manual totaled 126. On average, each series contained 15.75 policies. Total pages was 341.

Most of the policies were in the administrative series (28) followed by the operations series (26). The fewest policies were in the organization, evidence control, and information and records series.

As editor for the project, I found the old document to be a hodgepodge of both policies and rules.

The objectives were three-fold: prepare two separate manuals, separate the rules from the procedures, and edit or rewrite the remaining text so that it complied with all legal strictures and the department's mission statement.

It proved to be an arduous task, with the document in a seemingly constant state of flux, perpetual reviews and rewrites, and lengthy discussions over individual words and phrases.

Much of the rewriting was done initially by my supervisor, a civilian planner, typically in consultation with police personnel at the rank of sergeant or higher (e.g., lieutenant, captain).

After sometimes several rounds of that process, the policy document would come to

me for what was supposed to be a final edit (though that wasn't always the case as the document would be reviewed again and it wasn't uncommon that additional changes would be made).

The final edit stage involved editing the document not so much for substance as for grammar, flow, coherence and style.

An outline style was used, starting always with an unnumbered and unlettered header called Purpose. It was treated as a main header and printed in all capital letters. From here, the adopted outline format was not entirely consistent throughout all of the policies. It was a constraint that made editing for consistency in style and format rather difficult at times.

Generally though, numbered and lettered sections followed the purpose statement. Main headers were preceded by Arabic numerals.

First-level subsections were preceded by a lowercase letter

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followed by a period. In some cases, a paragraph lead-in was used to introduce the subsection content.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to establish regulations governing the use of the police baton.

USE OF THE BATON

Houston Police Officers may use the police baton . . . to quell a violent disturbance. . . .

RESTRICTIONS

The baton shall be carried and used only . . . except the department issued baton.

Wearing of the baton is mandatory in the following cases:

- a. When responding to disturbance calls
- b. When assigned to foot patrol duties
- c. Whenever working an event where there is a large group of people

Second-level subsections were preceded by an Arabic numeral followed by a period. Again, a paragraph lead-in was used in some cases. An example of the General Orders outline format is shown below, left.

While editing each document I also formatted it in the prescribed outline style and checked for the appropriateness of subject headers and subheaders.

In some cases, new ones had to be added and existing ones revised to more clearly and accurately reflect the content covered by the header or subheader.

Each policy also was assigned

header information to be printed on the first and subsequent pages of the policy document.

The page 1 header information consisted of the following:

- Issue date
- General Order number
- Reference (e.g., Supersedes all prior departmental directives on this subject)
- Subject (i.e., title)

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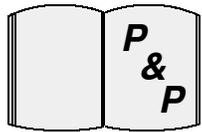
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Book Briefs

Data Displays

MacGregor, A.J. *Graphics Simplified: How to Plan and Prepare Effective Charts, Graphs, Illustrations, and Other Visual Aids*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1979.

Selby, P.H. *Using Graphs and Tables*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979.

Documentation

Horn, R.E., and Kelly, J.N. *Structured Writing: An Approach to the Documentation of Com-*

puter Software. Waltham, MA: Information Mapping, 1981.

Policies and Procedures

Wieringa, D., Moore, C., and Barnes, V. *Procedure Writing: Principles and Practices*. Columbus, OH: Battelle Press, 1993.

Travis, A.B. *The Handbook Handbook: The Complete How-to Guide to Publishing Policies and Procedures*. New York: R.R. Bowker, 1984.

Zimmerman, C.M., and Campbell, J.J. *Fundamentals of Procedure Writing (2nd Ed.)*. Columbia, MD: GP Publishing, 1988.

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An example of this page is shown at the right (top).

Subsequent pages also used a preformatted form with similar header information:

- General Order number
- Issue date
- Page number

An example of this page is shown at the right (bottom).

The rules manual contained a total of 81 rules divided into seven sections:

- Obedience to orders, rules and laws
- Attention to duty
- Restrictions on behavior
- Identification and recognition
- Maintenance of property
- Relationships with courts and attorneys

Preformatted paper was not used for this document. Section headers were printed in all capital letters and underlined. A decimal numbering system was used to identify the individual rules in each section. For exam-

General Order Houston Police Department	ISSUE DATE:	NO.
SUBJECT:	REFERENCE:	

Headers on first page of Generals Orders form

General Order#	ISSUE DATE:	PAGE #
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Headers on subsequent pages of Generals Orders form

ple, the first rule in section 1 was labeled 1.1, the second rule 1.2, the third rule 1.3 and so on.

Each rule number was followed by the name, or title, of the rule in initial capital letters and underlined. A paragraph explaining the rule followed the numbered rule title. An example is shown below.

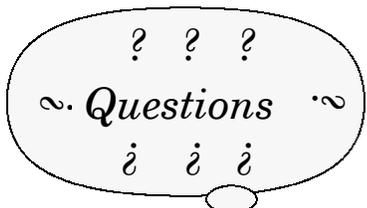
SECTION TWO: IDENTIFICATION AND RECOGNITION

5.1 Giving Name and Badge Number
Officers shall give their names, badge number . . . of a police assignment.

5.2 Carrying Official Identification
Officers shall carry their official identification . . . all times.

5.3 Exchange, Alteration or Transfer of Badge
The badge shall not be altered or exchanged . . . Chief of Police.

Audrey Cielinski Kessler is the owner of *The Write Hand*, an editing and desktop publishing company in Kent, Ohio, and a member of the Northeast Ohio chapter of STC.



The **STEPS & SPECS** newsletter still needs—and wants—your input. If you would like to write an article, have an idea for one, or have a comment, a



question or other information related to policies and procedures, please let me know. The range of topics is wide

open. Some suggestions:

- Online P&Ps
- P&P quality control
- Revision tracking
- Book reviews
- P&P-related seminars and workshops
- Academic research in P&P

Call or write today with your ideas and suggestions.

Members' Forum

How do YOU define policies and procedures?

Editor's Note: Members' Forum is a feature highlighting P&P PIC reader input on a question posed in this column. Send your definition or comments to the newsletter editor. We will print them in the next issue of STEPS & SPECS.

P&P PIC members, was mailed November 6. The deadline for returning the completed form is November 30. If you did not receive one, call **Jerry Laing** at 818/454-1010.

Other News

- A welcome letter was created and is being sent to new members.
- Discussions have begun on ways to work with other PICs and non-STC organizations. 

PIC Briefs: Business and Activities Update

Membership Count

Between April and August of 1995, P&P PIC membership increased 24 percent, from 170 persons in April to 210 four months later. In the nine months that the P&P PIC has been in existence, membership has increased 200 percent.

The surge in membership resulted in the PIC's being 12 percent over budget for fiscal year 1995-1996. Donations are being sought to help defray publishing costs.

Member Survey

A membership survey, to be used in compiling a directory of

Any Experience With . . .

IBM's AS/400 Office Visions word processing for producing online P&P documentation?

If so, PIC member **Eleanor Orthun** would like to hear from you. She can be reached at 310/551-5941.

STEPS & SPECS

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The mission of the Policies and Procedures professional interest committee is to assist STC members in developing, implementing and managing policies and procedures communication through educational and networking opportunities, STC conference sessions and publications, and communication with other STC PICs and professional organizations in areas of common interest.