
Personal Communication Devices

701.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the use of mobile telephones and communication devices, whether issued or funded by the Department or personally owned, while on-duty or when used for authorized work-related purposes.

This policy generically refers to all such devices as Personal Communication Devices (PCDs) but is intended to include all mobile telephones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), wireless capable tablets and similar wireless two-way communications and/or portable Internet access devices. PCD use includes, but is not limited to, placing and receiving calls, text messaging, blogging and microblogging, emailing, using video or camera features, playing games and accessing sites or services on the Internet.

701.2 POLICY

The Havre de Grace Police Department allows members to utilize department-issued or funded PCDs and to possess personally owned PCDs in the workplace, subject to certain limitations. Any PCD used while on-duty, or used off-duty in any manner reasonably related to the business of the Department, will be subject to monitoring and inspection consistent with the standards set forth in this policy.

The inappropriate use of a PCD while on-duty may impair officer safety. Additionally, members are advised and cautioned that the use of a personally owned PCD either on-duty or after duty hours for business-related purposes may subject the member and the member's PCD records to civil or criminal discovery or disclosure under applicable Maryland Public Information Act (PIA) laws.

Members who have questions regarding the application of this policy or the guidelines contained herein are encouraged to seek clarification from supervisory staff.

701.3 PRIVACY EXPECTATION

Members forfeit any expectation of privacy with regard to any communication accessed, transmitted, received or reviewed on any PCD issued or funded by the Department and shall have no expectation of privacy in their location should the device be equipped with location detection capabilities (see the Information Technology Use Policy for additional guidance).

701.4 DEPARTMENT-ISSUED PCD

Depending on a member's assignment and the needs of the position, the Department may, at its discretion, issue or fund a PCD for the member's use to facilitate on-duty performance. Department-issued or funded PCDs may not be used for personal business either on or off-duty unless authorized by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee. Such devices and the associated telephone number, if any, shall remain the sole property of the Department and shall be subject to inspection or monitoring (including all related records and content) at any time without notice and without cause.

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Unless a member is expressly authorized by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee for off-duty use of the PCD, the PCD will either be secured in the workplace at the completion of the tour of duty or will be turned off when leaving the workplace.

701.5 PERSONALLY OWNED PCD

Members may carry a personally owned PCD while on-duty, subject to the following conditions and limitations:

- (a) Permission to carry a personally owned PCD may be revoked if it is used contrary to provisions of this policy.
- (b) The Department accepts no responsibility for loss of or damage to a personally owned PCD.
- (c) The PCD and any associated services shall be purchased, used and maintained solely at the member's expense.
- (d) The device should not be used for work-related purposes except in exigent circumstances (e.g., unavailability of radio communications). Members will have a reduced expectation of privacy when using a personally owned PCD in the workplace and have no expectation of privacy with regard to any department business-related communication.
 - 1. Members may use personally owned PCDs on-duty for routine administrative work as authorized by the Chief of Police.
- (e) The device shall not be utilized to record or disclose any department business-related information, including photographs, video or the recording or transmittal of any information or material obtained or made accessible as a result of employment or appointment with the Department, without the express authorization of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.
- (f) Use of a personally owned PCD while at work or for work-related business constitutes consent for the Department to access the PCD to inspect and copy data to meet the needs of the Department, which may include litigation, PIA retention and release obligations and internal investigations. If the PCD is carried on-duty, members will provide the Department with the telephone number of the device.
- (g) All work-related documents, emails, photographs, recordings or other public records created or received on a member's personally owned PCD should be transferred to the Havre de Grace Police Department and deleted from the member's PCD as soon as reasonably practicable but no later than the end of the member's shift.

Except with prior express authorization from their supervisors, members are not obligated or required to carry, access, monitor or respond to electronic communications using a personally owned PCD while off-duty.

701.6 USE OF PCD

The following protocols shall apply to all PCDs that are carried while on-duty or used to conduct department business:

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- (a) A PCD shall be carried in a manner that looks professional and does not interfere with the regular performance of duties, i.e. firearm, magazine pouches, radio, seatbelt..
- (b) While on patrol activities, all PCDs should be set to silent or vibrate mode.
- (c) A PCD may not be used to conduct excessive personal business while on-duty.
- (d) Members may use a PCD to communicate with other personnel in situations where the use of radio communications is either impracticable or not feasible. PCDs should not be used as a substitute for, as a way to avoid, or in lieu of regular radio communications.
- (e) Members are prohibited from taking pictures, making audio or video recordings or making copies of any such picture or recording media unless it is directly related to official department business. Disclosure of any such information to any third party through any means, without the express authorization of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee, may result in discipline.
- (f) Members will limit usage of personal social networking sites via PCDs while on duty.
- (g) Using PCDs to harass, threaten, coerce or otherwise engage in inappropriate conduct with any third party is prohibited. Any member having knowledge of such conduct shall promptly notify a supervisor.

701.7 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of supervisors include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Ensuring that members under their command are provided appropriate training on the use of PCDs consistent with this policy.
- (b) Monitoring, to the extent practicable, PCD use in the workplace and taking prompt corrective action if a member is observed or reported to be improperly using a PCD.
 - 1. An investigation into improper conduct should be promptly initiated when circumstances warrant.
 - 2. Before conducting any administrative search of a member's personally owned device, supervisors should consult with the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.

701.8 OFFICIAL USE

Members are reminded that PCDs are not secure devices and conversations may be intercepted or overheard. Caution should be exercised while utilizing PCDs to ensure that sensitive information is not inadvertently transmitted. As soon as reasonably possible, members shall conduct sensitive or private communications on a land-based or other department communications network.

701.9 USE WHILE DRIVING

The use of a PCD while driving is only permitted for officers who are acting within the scope of their official duties. However, such use can adversely affect safety, cause unnecessary distractions and

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present a negative image to the public. Therefore, officers should restrict the use of these devices to matters of an urgent nature and should, where practicable, stop the vehicle at an appropriate location to use the PCD (Md. Code TR § 21-1124.2).

Except in an emergency, members who are operating vehicles that are not equipped with lights and siren shall not use a PCD while driving unless the device is specifically designed and configured to allow hands-free use (Md. Code TR § 21-1124.2). Hands-free use should be restricted to business-related calls or calls of an urgent nature.