	<b>Abilene Police Department Operating Procedures</b>		
	Subject: Mounted Patrol Unit	Issued: 03/15/2022	Number: <b>D-35</b>

## **Purpose**

This policy is set forth to establish standards and guidance for the Mounted Patrol Unit that provides quality service to citizens of the community in cases where it is necessary to supplement standard police training and equipment with the specialized skills of mounted officers.

## **Policy**

To provide the best possible training, standards, and guidance for officers assigned to the Mounted Patrol Unit in order to assist in the prevention and detection of crime, provide crowd control, assist in locating persons sought by the police, promote a favorable public image through interaction with the community, and perform other such duties as may be directed by the Mounted Patrol Supervisor or Chain of Command.

## **Philosophy**

The Abilene Police Department is dedicated to service and partnering with our community to maintain a safe environment with a high quality of life. This mission is furthered by a commitment to high levels of Community Policing, and in cases where it is necessary to supplement standard police training and equipment. The specialized training and skills of the Mounted Patrol Unit will be utilized to further the mission of the Department. To properly function, members of the Mounted Patrol Unit must be able to perform all tasks expected of patrol officers while maintaining proficient horsemanship and providing for the health and well-being of their mounts.


## **Organization, Staffing, and Responsibilities**

The Mounted Patrol Unit is under the command of a designated supervisor.

All members of the Mounted Patrol Unit shall be full-time, sworn police officers.

The Mounted Patrol Supervisor's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- A. General supervision of the operations of the Mounted Patrol Unit, including daily activities and personnel matters; and
- B. Scheduling all personnel and equipment to properly address the Unit's responsibilities, which includes:
  1. Preparing riding schedules,
  2. Planning and scheduling mounted demonstrations for civic, church, or public groups as requested,
  3. Planning and scheduling deployment for special events,
  4. Performing regular inspections of uniforms, equipment, horses, vehicles, and daily training logs, and
  5. Ensuring that all personnel, training, equipment, and supply records are maintained.

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Mounted Patrol Unit Officer's responsibilities shall include, but are not limited to:

- A. Taking general law enforcement action while on-duty or during deployment at special events;
- B. Active suspect and scene searches;
- C. Skill demonstration and participation at community events;
- D. Proper use, care, and maintenance of all mounts and equipment under the officer's care;
- E. Providing routine exercise, training, and health needs of assigned horses; and
- F. Maintaining a proficient level of riding skill.

A Mounted Patrol Unit Trainer (Unit Trainer) shall be selected from the Mounted Patrol Unit based on prior training, experience, and the ability to train others in mounted skills. The duties and responsibilities of the Unit Trainer shall include, but are not limited to:

- A. Training, preparing lesson plans, and evaluating the Mounted Patrol Unit and any newly selected mounts and riders;
- B. Updating TCOLE accredited training;
- C. Regularly evaluating the abilities of the selected horses;
- D. Maintaining the training records of all horses and riders;
- E. Maintaining accurate records of equipment and supplies; and
- F. Performing patrol duties, mounted demonstrations, and attending special events.

## **Deployment and Utilization**

### General Conduct

- A. With the use of police horses, it is vital that all officers maintain the highest level of discipline in the treatment of the animals and during their interaction with citizens. Therefore, all officers shall adhere to all policy guidelines while assigned to the Mounted Patrol Unit.
- B. Horses shall be groomed prior to an event and will be regularly inspected for injuries, physical abnormalities, or other health issues.
- C. Loading, unloading, or tying horses should be done away from pedestrian or vehicular traffic to avoid unnecessary disturbances to the horses.
- D. Horses shall be haltered before removal from trailers. They shall only be tied with a lead rope, head high or above, and only to a stationary object that would be unlikely to cause an injury.
- E. The rider should be aware of pedestrian traffic when utilizing pedestrian areas.
- F. If the officer's horse leaves manure in a pedestrian traffic area, it shall be the officer's responsibility to properly dispose of it.
- G. Officers should remain in the saddle at all times when coming into physical contact with citizens; i.e., shaking hands, etc.
- H. No civilian, including children, shall be allowed to sit upon, feed, or place their hands near the mouth of a Mounted Patrol Unit horse.

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## Deployment

- A. Members of the Mounted Patrol Unit shall be deployed in numbers no less than two (2) officers and horses as dictated by the needs of the assignment. The Mounted Patrol Unit Supervisor must approve any exception to the standard deployment procedures.
- B. A sworn supervisor at a scene requiring a Mounted Patrol Unit may contact the Mounted Patrol Unit Supervisor through the Communications Center in order to obtain assistance.

Utilization – the Mounted Patrol Unit may be utilized for the following:

- A. Patrol – During situations where both high visibility and a concentration of a uniformed presence would assist in the deterrence and/or detection of crime.
- B. Search and Rescue – During any situation requiring a search for lost, injured, disabled, or fleeing persons where the terrain or size of the area to be searched inhibits the use of conventional modes of transportation.
- C. Mounted Demonstrations – Any situation where public or private sector organizations, such as schools, libraries, businesses, etc., have requested an educational demonstration regarding the Mounted Patrol Unit or the Department.
- D. Special Events – During special operations, events, or Department approved off-duty employment.
- E. Crowd Control – During any situation requiring the control, movement, or dispersal of a large group of people for the purpose of maintaining peace and order.

The Mounted Patrol Unit shall not be used for the following:

- A. Prisoner transport
- B. Routine or enforcement calls for service that would require the officer and mount to be out of service for long periods of time.
- C. As a substitute unit on a scene requiring a marked unit with emergency lights.

## **Selection of Mounted Patrol Unit Horses**

The selection of the Mounted Patrol Unit horses should be approved by the Mounted Patrol Unit Supervisor and Unit Trainer. The selection of the horse should be based on the following:

- A. The horse should be of sound mind and calm temperament.
- B. Be at least fifteen (15) hands high.
- C. If at any time a horse displays behavior that may affect its safe deployment, it will not be utilized.

All documentation regarding the acceptance or retirement of police horses shall be maintained by the Mounted Patrol Unit Supervisor and the Unit Trainer.

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## **Selection and Training of Mounted Patrol Unit Officers**

Officers selected for the Mounted Patrol Unit must be in good physical condition and free of physical restrictions that would inhibit the ability to train and work from a police horse.

All Mounted Patrol Unit Officers are required to successfully complete an approved basic mounted patrol course. All members of the Mounted Patrol Unit shall qualify on an annual basis through an accredited training program.

In addition to the initial training, the Mounted Patrol Unit will train as a unit at least once a month, but preferably twice a month, while in an on-duty status. Officers will qualify annually for riding skills and horsemanship. This training will be documented and maintained by the Unit Trainer. Mounted Patrol Officers are required to attend this monthly training or participate in a mounted assignment in order to maintain eligibility as a Mounted Patrol Unit member. The Mounted Patrol Unit Supervisor may grant exceptions for illness, vacation, or other scheduled training. Officers who do not complete at least 75 percent of the annual training must requalify with the Unit Trainer in order to be redeployed.

A Safety Officer from the Mounted Patrol Unit shall be designated by the Unit Trainer to ensure all safety measures are followed during any training exercise.


## **Equipment Inventory, Records, and Reports**

The Mounted Patrol Unit Supervisor shall be responsible for maintaining accurate records of inventoried equipment and reports produced by the Unit.

## **Documentation**

The Unit Trainer shall maintain the following documentation on each horse utilized by the Department:

- A. Monthly training reports, activity records, horse inspection, vaccinations, farrier, and medical records; and
- B. Annual reports including unit operation expenses and equipment inventory.

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## **Vehicles and Equipment**

The Mounted Patrol Unit will maintain the following equipment including, but not limited to:

- A. Mounted Patrol Unit uniforms as approved by the Chief of Police;
- B. Saddle, breast collar, saddle pad, halter, lead rope and bridle with bit, and a marked "POLICE" insignia identifying the horse as a police service animal; and
- C. Truck and trailers necessary for deployment throughout the City.

The above-listed equipment shall be regularly inspected by the Unit Trainer.

All equipment specific to the Mounted Patrol Unit shall be inventoried annually to ensure the safety, proper fit, and any possible need for replacement.