



Police Notebooks

1.0 General

- 1.1 This policy establishes a standard for the completion, maintenance, and storage of notebooks used by police officers and some civilian personnel of the RNC during the course of their duties and to maintain a standard of excellence of note keeping throughout the organization. It refers to operational notes and notebooks relating to police occurrences only.
- 1.2 The notebook is one of the most important tools an investigator has at his/her disposal. It aids memory and can be a guide when interviewing witnesses, victims and suspects. It should be used when writing reports and should be retained as a reference at court, or other proceedings.
- 1.3 A notebook should not only be a chronological record of an employee's activities, but must capture in detail his or her observations, records of interviews conducted, meetings attended, instructions and advice given or received and involvement with the arrest of accused persons.
- 1.4 Note taking is a mandatory requirement for all police officers, regardless of their level of involvement in a particular event or occurrence.
- 1.5 The procedures put in place for police officers would also apply to appropriate **civilian personnel** who are accustomed to making notes during their assigned duties (i.e., monitors).

2.0 RNC Notebooks

- 2.1 Notebooks used by officers and civilian employees of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary will be identified as and remain the property of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary.
- 2.2 RNC notebooks are available in three different formats:
 - a. pocket - Evidence Notebook, (patrol officers)
 - b. medium – Investigative Notebook, (CID officers) and
 - c. large - Project Notebook.

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- 2.3 Project notebooks shall only be used to record information relating to a single investigation.
- a. When a member is reassigned from a project they shall turn their project notebook over to the Project File Coordinator.
 - b. When the project is concluded all project notebooks shall be stored with the project file.

3.0 Principles of Note-Taking

- 3.1 Information recorded in the police notebook shall adhere to the following guidelines.

- a. Clear: Notes shall be neat, legible, and understandable. Officers should not use shorthand in the taking of notes.
- b. Complete: Notes covering all details of the occurrence and answering what, when, where, who, how, and why will provide a good report foundation. Notes should be taken on all unusual acts committed before, during or after the occurrence, and should include facts that may seem insignificant. A sketch and measurements of the crime scene can make the notes more complete.

Slang and vulgarisms should be included only if they have a direct bearing on the case. If they are entered in notes as part of a suspect's statement, they should be enclosed in quotation marks. Personal opinions should not be included in notes.

- c. Concise: Notes should be brief and should not be complicated by unnecessary and incomprehensible words, phrases, and abbreviations.
- d. Accurate: Notes should include:
 - (1) the correct time and date;
 - (2) the correct names of all persons present or otherwise involved, including members, suspects, witnesses, etc.;
 - (3) the complete and correct residence address, business address, and telephone numbers of all persons involved;
 - (4) an exact description of the crime scene; and

- (5) an accurate description of persons, property and/or motor vehicles involved.

4.0 Guidelines for Preparation and Care of Notebooks

- 4.1 Officers shall use only the official notebook supplied by the RNC. A loose-leaf notebook **shall not** be used.
- 4.2 Officers shall identify their notebook on the cover with their name, rank, badge number, platoon/Unit and the serial numbers of their issued firearm, handcuffs, baton, OC spray and flashlight as well as the date the notebook enters service. When the notebook is full, the final date shall also be entered on the cover.
- 4.3 Patrol officers shall prepare his/her notebook at the beginning and end of each tour of duty with the following information:
- a. date and hours of shift worked and coverage area or specific assignment;
 - b. vehicle operated and condition of vehicle;
 - c. start and finish vehicle odometer readings;
 - d. partner's and passenger's name(s), if applicable;
 - e. new information received on parade;
 - f. weather conditions;
 - g. road conditions; and
 - h. any additional information that may be of value.
- 4.4 Officers shall not remove pages from the notebook or make entries not relevant to matters off duty. The notebook is an official document and as such must be carefully preserved and properly used.
- 4.5 Notes made on pieces of paper should be preserved even if the information is subsequently transferred into a notebook. These pieces of paper shall also be dated and signed by the officer. As these pieces of paper contain original notes they must be included as part of the file and must be disclosed.
- 4.6 An officer's notes pertaining to a particular tour of duty shall be complete in every respect before the officer reports off duty.

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- 4.7 In accordance with the [Criminal Reporting Procedures](#) chapter, officers must accurately and legibly record case file numbers in their notebooks.
- 4.8 The left margin of the notebook pages should be left blank except for date and time entries.
- 4.9 All notes shall be made in ink (black or blue).
- 4.10 The bulletin board pages (section) at the back of the notebook can be used for BOLO or FYI items but shall not be used for making operational notes relating to a police occurrence.
- 4.11 Officers and civilian personnel assigned notebooks are responsible for keeping them secure while signed out.
- 4.12 If a notebook goes missing or is damaged the officer or civilian member shall promptly notify their immediate supervisor, submit an Occurrence Report, and notify PCC.
- 4.13 Do not leave unnecessary blank spaces. For neatness, a line shall be left between different entries; especially those made on different dates, however, large spaces shall not be left blank.
- 4.14 Make no erasures. Such are open to the suggestion that the original entry has been altered, possibly to prejudice someone. If an alteration is necessary, cross out the wrong entry with a single line through it, initial it and write the proper one immediately after it. Original entries may be untidy, badly written or ungrammatical, but even so they should not be altered after they have been made.
- 4.15 Only professional observations shall be recorded, not personal opinions. Professional language must be used at all times except when quoting another person. Comments by a person should be taken down verbatim, in quotation marks, when possible.
- 4.16 An officer completing a notebook shall close it by noting the closure in a final entry that includes the serial number of any new notebook started, and the officer's initials.
- 4.17 Prior to entering a notebook into the PCC if an officer thinks that the notebook needs to be retained beyond the normal retention schedule they shall mark the

front cover of the notebook with a **red X**. This will alert PCC staff that this particular notebook needs to be retained beyond the scheduled destruction date and archived.

- 4.18 Police officers and civilian personnel having any involvement with a case file shall forward a photocopy of any notes contained in their notebooks relative to that particular case to the investigator.
- 4.19 Coach Officers shall inspect, sign and date the notes made by their respective trainee at the end of each block.
- 4.20 Officers shall surrender to a supervisor upon request any and all RNC notebooks in their possession.

5.0 Issue and Storage of Notebooks

- 5.1 All notebooks shall be issued by the Property Control Centre (PCC) and must be inventoried to identify notebooks issued to a specific member.
- 5.2 A new notebook may be obtained before a current notebook is full, but must not be used before the previous notebook is concluded. This does not pertain to the use of secondary notebooks for specific investigations (projects).
- 5.3 Officers are permitted to have three notebooks in their possession, two for court/investigation purposes and one for current use. Once the third notebook is complete, one of the notebooks must be entered into the PCC so another notebook can be signed out for current use.
- 5.4 If an officer is off on extended leave or reassigned to a project they shall document the reason in their regular investigative notebook to account for the inactivity in the notebook.
- 5.5 Source informant notebooks shall not be counted as one of the three notebooks an officer can have in their possession at a time. These Source notebooks will be maintained and secured in accordance with the [Informants](#) chapter.
- 5.6 Notebooks shall be treated in the same manner as exhibits and stored within the Property Control Centre (PCC). This would reduce or avoid the possibility of notebooks being lost or damaged, especially as it relates to retired members.
- 5.7 Officers and civilian staff leaving the RNC must turn in all their notebooks to PCC.

6.0 Use of Notebooks in Court

- 6.1 When in court to give evidence in any case, officers should always have the notebook containing notes on the case in their possession.
- 6.2 Police reports **shall not** be used in place of note books for the purpose of giving evidence in court.
- 6.3 Witnesses may refresh their memory about a particular case by the use of anything they wrote, or directed to be written at the time when the incident occurred, immediately thereafter, or at any time when the occurrence was still fresh in their memory.
- 6.4 When two officers are investigating an incident, it is permissible for only one officer to make notes as long as the notes apply to what both officers observed, did, and heard while together. Both officers must read and initial the notes at the time they are made in order to preserve their competency to testify from the notes if required.
- 6.5 An officer may be required to produce his notebook in Court. Generally, unless the officer has referred to his/her notebook on the stand, the presiding Judge will not compel him to produce it. Officers shall not object when a Judge requests the notebook be produced, regardless of the circumstances under which the request is made. Any objection to the Judge's order can be made only by the Crown Prosecutor. If the Crown Prosecutor does not object, the officer must comply with the order. If Defense Counsel requests a member to produce his/her notebook for perusal, the officer shall look to the Crown Prosecutor to object or to the Judge for direction. If neither party responds, the officer shall respectfully address the Judge, ask for direction and then act accordingly.

7.0 Recording No Report Occurrences in Notebook

- 7.1 In accordance with the [Criminal Reporting Procedures](#) chapter, calls for service which do not require a paper file are concluded on ICAN after little or no follow-up. The File Management Unit reviews these files electronically.
- 7.2 Responding police officers shall note the action taken in their notebooks and advise the dispatcher of same. The officer shall update the cleared remarks via MDT/MRE with a summary of the action taken, along with the corresponding notebook page number.

8.0 Signing out Notebooks from the PCC

- 8.1 Notebooks required for court or any other purpose shall be signed out by the officer removing the notebook using the Property Receipt RNC-334 form. The R12 will also be updated at this time.
- 8.2 When returning a notebook to the PCC the officer shall complete the bottom portion of the Property Receipt RNC-334 and also update the R12 form and sign it. The Property Receipt will be attached to the R12.
- 8.3 Notebooks shall be returned to the PCC within 30 days. If an officer needs to keep the notebook out beyond 30 days, s/he shall notify PCC personnel and a 30 day extension shall be granted and noted on the written and electronic notebook ledger.
- 8.4 If an officer has a notebook signed out beyond the 30 day sign out period and does not contact the PCC requesting an extension, the NCO in charge of the PCC shall inquire as to its status through the officer's supervisor.

9.0 Responsibilities of Property Control Centre (PCC)

- 9.1 PCC personnel shall be responsible for ordering, issuing, tracking, storing, and the retention of police notebooks.
- 9.2 PCC personnel shall:
- a. store each officer's notebooks within separate containers marked with the officers name, badge number, box number and bar code;
 - b. maintain a written and electronic ledger of all notebooks issued and returned;
 - c. sign out notebooks to officers for court or investigative purposes when required;
 - d. Inventory the notebooks and store them in sequential order, starting with the date the first notebook enters service until the date of the last entry;
 - e. store each container in alphabetical order in a secure location under the control of the Property Control Centre.
- 9.3 Project notebooks shall be stored in the PCC with the exhibits associated to the project.

10.0 Supervisor's Responsibility

- 10.1 It is the responsibility of Supervisors to continually monitor member's notes for completeness and adherence to policy.
- 10.2 The supervisor will conduct notebook inspections on a quarterly basis and at the time of inspection sign and date the officer's notebook.
- 10.3 The supervisor will include in his quarterly report, officer names and dates of inspections.
- 10.4 Supervisors shall ensure an officer whose notebook is missing or damaged promptly submits an Occurrence Report and notifies the PCC.

11.0 Notebook Retention

- 11.1 Notebooks shall be retained for 15 years after an officer's retirement or longer if the notebook is marked to indicate that it needs to be retained beyond the normal retention time. If this is the case that notebook will be archived.
- 11.2 Prior to retiring or leaving the RNC officers must return all of their notebooks to the PCC where they will be archived in a secure manner according to the retention schedule. Under no circumstances are notebooks to be destroyed or disposed of in any manner by the officer.