



One Chief's Perspective

Roseville Police Department
9/8/2017

No Absolutes in Law Enforcement

Recently, a Roseville Police Department policy was the subject of conversation at a meeting, but I was not afforded the opportunity to explain the wording of a certain sentence in our manual. I decided to address it in this week's "One Chief's Perspective."



One of the benefits of being a law enforcement officer is the dynamic nature of this occupation; no two events are the same and variety is the nature of this job. That can also prove to be a challenge, especially when writing policies, as you cannot predict everything that may happen in an encounter. Policies should prepare employees to handle encounters correctly.

The community conversation centered on why the word "shall" was not in the policy as compared to the less restrictive words in the existing policy. When writing the policy, I specifically used the less restrictive words because of the dynamic nature of events; no one can predict future events with 100% certainty.

The [International Association of Chiefs of Police](#) (IACP) is the preeminent international leader in law enforcement. The IACP provides a wealth of information on numerous topics in law enforcement, and I trust their information to access best practices from across the world.

The IACP Model Policy section (accessible to members only) reads in part: *"It should be noted the tone of the language used in the manual subtly impacts the organizational culture...The purpose of the manual is to empower the staff. So it is important to recognize every possible scenario cannot be identified and officers should be allowed the latitude they need for making decisions in unusual circumstances. If a negative tone is used in the manual (e.g., shall not, will not, are not, forbidden) it can permeate the ranks and promote cynical attitudes in staff. Consequently, the text of the manual should avoid focusing on prohibited acts, but rather emphasize conduct the department expects and supports of officers. Finally, there are very few absolutes in law enforcement. The courts have ruled that terms such as should, are to, and directed to, are not absolute. The use of "shall" is an absolute, and means under all circumstances and conditions officers will act in the manner described or directed... Because it is difficult to identify circumstances when officers are to always act in the same exact manner, the use of absolute language should be avoided whenever possible."*

A quick word search of our 426-page manual produced a healthy dose of the word "shall". In my mind, that is too many and plan to address it soon. Many of the uses of "shall" are necessary; some are not.

Imagine Roseville

The next [Imagine Roseville](#) meeting is set for Monday, October 2, beginning at 6:30 p.m. It will be held at the John Rose Skating Center. Hope to see you there.

Service



Integrity



Respect



Innovation



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Engaging with our Community

The Night A crew recently hosted a "Dunk a Cop" night at several Roseville parks and the Roseville Fire Department helped with filling the tank. The crew brought along some donuts for the crowd.



[Roseville Police Foundation- Golf Tournament](#)

The Third Annual Roseville Police Foundation Golf Tournament will be on Monday, September 25 at Midland Hills Country Club. Registration begins at 11 a.m.



The Roseville Police Foundation's mission is to advance public safety by supporting and providing additional resources to strengthen the Roseville Police Department.

There is still room to golf, attend the banquet or give a donation.

Sincere thanks to the Foundation and members of this community for supporting the Department's mission of "*Service, Integrity, Respect and Innovation.*"

Take Care,

Chief Rick Mathwig

Service



Integrity



Respect



Innovation