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## Employee Honor Code

### 105.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the Employee Honor Code is to foster a commitment to moral-ethical excellence essential to peace officers.

### 105.2 GOALS

The goals of the La Grange Police Department Employee Honor Code are:

- (a) That Employees develop a strong desire to maintain an honorable lifestyle manifest in the spirit of the code. The Employee Honor Code represents the minimum ethical standard to which all Employees are expected to adhere. The code is expressed as a series of prohibitions.
- (b) That Employees achieve the level of commitment to honorable conduct necessary to prepare them for greater challenges to their integrity throughout their careers as peace officers.

The code is a simple standard by which to live. It demands strict compliance, but it does not demand ethical perfection. In order for the Code to fulfill its role in the moral-ethical development of Employees, each Employee must commit himself or herself to tirelessly exceeding this standard as a way of life. The La Grange Police Department operates under the assumption that those who have chosen to serve this community as peace officers and support staff are already instilled with a basic set of values. It is expected that all Employees will strive to live far above the minimum standard of ethical behavior defined by the Employee Honor Code; and that each Employee will develop a high personal sense of honor within the spirit of the Code. Therefore, enforcement of the minimum standard of the Employee Honor Code, coupled with training that exhorts Employees to live above the Code, strengthens each commitment to the broader ideals consistent with the spirit of the Code. In this way, the Employee Honor Code acts to achieve its most important end: ensuring that members of the La Grange Police Department are honorable men and women who are leaders of character, serving this community as peace officers.

### 105.3 THE SPIRIT OF THE CODE

The Employee Honor Code describes the minimum standard of ethical behavior by which all Employees are expected to live, not an abstract ideal toward which to strive. Easy to understand and meet, it is the expected baseline behavior of Employees.

If the Code is the minimum standard, what is the ideal that Employees should strive to reach? The ideal is the "Spirit of the Code," an affirmation of the way of life that marks true leaders of character. The Spirit of the Code goes beyond the mere external adherence to rules. Rather, it is an expression of integrity and values from within and manifested in the actions of honorable men and women. Persons who accept the Spirit of the Code think of the Honor Code as a set

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of broad and fundamental principles, not as a list of prohibitions. In deciding to take any action, they ask if it is the right thing to do.

It is the Spirit of the Code that gives rise to the specific tenets of the Honor Code itself:

- (a) The Spirit of the Code embraces truthfulness in all its aspects. The Honor Code prohibits **lying**.
- (b) The Spirit of the Code calls for complete fairness in human relations. The Honor Code prohibits **cheating**.
- (c) The Spirit of the Code requires respect for other people and their property. The Honor Code prohibits **stealing**.
- (d) The Spirit of the Code demands a personal commitment to uphold these ethical standards. The Honor Code prohibits **toleration** of violations of these standards.

The growth of each Employee as a leader of character is marked by strict adherence to the minimum standards of the Code, combined with a driving desire to progress beyond the external standards to an internalization of the Spirit of the Code. The Employee Honor Code is at the heart of each Employee's law enforcement career. When taken into context with the Spirit of the Code, the Employee Honor Code forms a part of the ethical foundation of each Employee's life and career as a peace officer.

### **105.4 THE TENETS OF THE CODE**

The Employee Honor Code states, "An Employee will not lie, cheat or steal nor tolerate those who do." To violate the Honor Code, the accused Employee must have lied, cheated, stolen, attempted to do so, or tolerated such action on the part of another Employee. The honor offenses of lying, cheating, and stealing involve acts accomplished by a specific intent to achieve a particular wrongful purpose as defined for each offense.

"Intent" does not refer to the intent to violate the Honor Code, but intent to commit the act itself. Employees, who have the intent to lie, cheat, or steal, and commit any act in furtherance of that intent, have violated the Honor Code. The fact that they fail in their attempt to lie, cheat, or steal does not exonerate them.

The Honor Code is a minimum standard of ethical behavior for Employees and is to be embraced by each Employee as an internal self-enforcement mechanism. Therefore, the Code is not constrained by any geographical boundaries. Employees should embrace the code both at and away from the La Grange Police Department in their professional and personal lives. One must avoid the attitude that what the Honor Code does not prohibit constitutes acceptable behavior. This is not the case. It bears repeating that the Employee Honor Code represents the minimum standard of ethical behavior by which each Employee is expected to abide. This standard is meant to be exceeded because of a desire to "do what is right" always. Every Employee should embrace the spirit of the code daily and find acting in accordance with its ideals a matter of one's daily lifestyle.

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### 105.4.1 LYING

Description: Employees violate the Honor Code by lying if they deliberately deceive another by stating an untruth. Employees also violate the Honor Code when they communicate in a partial truth or through the vague or ambiguous use of information or language with the intent to deceive or mislead.

An Employee's Word: An Employee's word is accepted without challenge until significant evidence exists to prove otherwise. Although accepted at their word, there may be occasions when Employees are questioned as to performance, behavior, conduct, or to the accuracy or completeness of submitted work. In any such case, Employees are required to answer directly and truthfully. The questioner may be trying to clarify a particular point or issue. Generally classifying all such questioning as "doubting an Employee's integrity" is unprofessional and should be avoided. Experience demonstrates that human communication is imperfect at best, and actions are often misinterpreted. To desire clarification in such instances does not always indicate doubt about one's personal integrity.

Trust is linked to one's integrity, and that trust must be earned. Only through consistently accurate oral and written statements can one earn the trust of another. Trust comes from a commitment to truthfulness, being completely candid and forthright in all instances. Employees are reminded that in all instances they must be truthful in all oral and written statements.

Accuracy of Reports: Whether oral or written, reports are official statements and must always be complete and accurate. Employees are individually responsible to ensure the correctness of a report both before and after it is rendered. Additionally, if a report is given and is later found to be incorrect, the Employee rendering the false report must make the error known as soon as possible.

Implications of the Signature: An individual's signature or initials affirm a written communication as having been reviewed or written by them. In this way, when Employees affix their signature or initials to a document they make an official statement that, to the best of their knowledge, the document is true and accurate; verified by the signer. Additionally, Employees are never authorized to sign another person's name.

Equivocation: To be equivocal is to use purposely vague, misleading, or ambiguous language. Equivocation is dishonorable and would be a violation of the Honor Code.

Other Direct Forms of Communication: Direct communication that creates an impression or conveys a message to someone else, in lieu of an oral or written statement, must be truthful. The Honor Code offense of lying includes nonverbal actions that are substitutes for oral or written statements. Examples include: nodding one's head, raising one's hand, or giving a "thumbs-up."  
" All such nonverbal actions must be truthful.

Remember that verbal and nonverbal communications carry the same weight. Each is intended to communicate an idea or thought to another person. Employees should strive at all times to make their communication clear and unambiguous.

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### 105.4.2 CHEATING

Description: Employees violate the Honor Code by cheating if they wrongfully act out of self-interest, do work or obtain results with the intent to gain or to give unfair advantage, or with the intent to deceive or mislead. Actions, which assist another Employee to do these things also, constitute cheating.

Cheating includes such acts as, for example, intentional plagiarism (presenting someone else's ideas, words, data, or work as one's own), misrepresentation (failing to document the assistance of another in the performance of an assignment), using unauthorized references (crib sheets, notes, texts) or intentionally attempting to circumvent a regulation or a commonly accepted procedure.

Basic Principles: The principle of integrity demands that Employees complete their work correctly and completely and, when appropriate, attribute the contributions of information and ideas by other Employees. Through the process of documentation, writers identify contributing sources used and acknowledge any assistance received. Although different disciplines adopt different systems, all adhere to the basic principle that writers must document all sources and assistance.

Frequently an Employee is required to perform work in conditions where he or she cannot be observed or monitored by a superior. Employees must be aware that taking credit for the work of another is improper and may constitute an honor violation.

### 105.4.3 STEALING

Description: Employees violate the Honor Code by stealing if they wrongfully take, obtain, or withhold, by any means, from the possession of the owner or any other person any money, personal property, article, or service of value of any kind, with the intent permanently to deprive or defraud another person of the use and benefit of property or to permanently appropriate it to either their own use or the use of any other person other than the owner.

Found Property: If an Employee finds property of another person, the Employee has a duty to attempt to identify the owner. If an Employee keeps the property rather than turning it in or returning it to the owner, then the Employee is subject to a violation of the Honor Code.

### 105.4.4 TOLERATION

Philosophy: Perhaps the most difficult standard is the Honor Code's non-toleration clause. The non-toleration clause serves as an Employee's daily reminder that he or she is charged with an awesome duty. This is a duty far superior to his or her personal feelings or friendships. The non-toleration clause preserves the ethical community in which peace officers must live and work. The non-toleration clause represents the codification of the concept of "policing the ranks" within the profession. In any profession, it is the responsibility of its members to maintain the standards that have been set. No longer is an Employee limited to maintaining personal integrity. That responsibility has expanded to include maintaining the integrity within the profession. When another member of the profession compromises his or her integrity, it is imperative that action be dealt with in order to restore the integrity of the profession.

Description: Employees violate the Honor Code by tolerating if they fail to report an unresolved incident with honor implications to proper authority within a reasonable length of time. "Proper Authority" will usually be the

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Employee's immediate supervisor. However, unusual circumstances may arise when such an incident should also be reported to a higher-ranking command officer, the Chief of Police or the Village Administrator. A "reasonable length of time" is the time it takes to approach the Employee suspected of the honor violation and clarify whether the incident was a misunderstanding or actually a possible violation of the Honor Code. A reasonable length of time is usually considered not to exceed 24 hours. Here, Employees should keep in mind that speedy resolution of the issue is in the best interest of all concerned. In the event that an Employee witnesses what he or she knows to be a questionable act in his or her presence, a "reasonable length of time" may be much shorter. One should seek to clarify a questionable act made in one's presence as soon as possible. Approach for Clarification: Approaching an Employee whom you have reason to suspect of an honor violation is a difficult duty, but an inescapable responsibility never to be avoided. When attempting to resolve a question of honor, keep two things in mind:

- That the honor violation must consist of both the act and the intent to commit the act.
- That because the Employee's integrity is being questioned, one must be prepared for a defensive or negative initial response.

An Employee who believes an honor violation may have occurred will approach the individual and give the suspected Employee an opportunity to explain his or her actions. When approaching an Employee for clarification, one should point out in a non-accusatory manner the exact action that is considered improper and request an explanation. If at all possible, give the Employee an opportunity to explain the situation before alleging it to be an "honor violation." Such an allegation is serious and, therefore, should be made only after considering both sides of the incident. Resolution: The obligation of Employees not to tolerate violations of the Honor Code requires that an Employee who is aware of a suspected violation report it within a reasonable time to the proper authority unless he or she is successful in resolving the apparent violation in one of two ways, as follows:

- (a) Seek clarification. Ask the suspected Employee to explain the circumstances that raised suspicions to see whether misunderstanding or mis-perception is involved. If suspicion remains, take the following step.
- (b) Encourage the suspected Employee to report him or herself. If the suspected Employee fails to do so in a reasonable time, consider asking him or her about the matter again to ensure that the suspected Employee understands the importance of personally reporting the incident. If he or she still does not report the incident in a reasonable time, report the incident.

Situations will sometimes arise which at first glance may appear to be violation so the Honor Code, but upon closer examination prove to be nothing more than misunderstanding or mis-perceptions. In this eventuality, the Employee should drop the matter. It is important to recognize that the presence of any doubts regarding the matter necessitates the continued pursuit of proper resolution. Giving the Employee "the benefit of the doubt" is not in keeping with proper reporting procedures and may constitute toleration. The resolved approach for clarification should

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be brought to the attention of the Employee's immediate supervisor and explained as "clarified." This procedure lets the supervisor know that the Employees are living according to the spirit of the non-toleration clause. This procedure also covers the approacher in the event of an investigation resulting from someone else's unresolved perspective of the same act.

***The essence of non-toleration is the seeking of resolution of acts that may be honor violations and/or the clarification of questionable acts with honor implications.***