



City of Seattle

Office of Professional Accountability

November 6, 2014

Chief Kathleen M. O'Toole
Seattle Police Department
PO Box 34986
Seattle, WA 98124-4986

RE: MANAGEMENT ACTION RECOMMENDATION (OPA 2014-0095)

Dear Chief O'Toole:

As you know, I or my representative attends every Force Review Board (FRB) session. In that context, I am able to observe the quality and timeliness of the force investigations and reviews that the chain of command conducts following every Type 2 use of force. In addition, the Office of Professional Accountability (OPA) conducts investigations into a use of force by a Seattle Police Department (SPD) officer when a complaint is filed with OPA. In such cases, OPA depends heavily on the quality and timeliness of the force investigations and reviews conducted by the chain of command. Often, the ability of OPA to conduct an objective investigation into a complaint of excessive force is directly impacted by the timely identification and interviewing of key witnesses and collection of perishable evidence by SPD supervisors and managers.

While I have noted significant improvement in the timeliness with which SPD supervisors and managers investigate and review use of force incidents, there remains room for improvement. As our investigation into the above referenced complaint pointed out, scheduled and unscheduled absences from work by supervisors and management continues to present a significant impediment to the timely completion of chain of command reviews of force. In more than one case, we, along with the FRB and members of the Monitoring Team, have noted that the review process comes to a halt for days or even weeks while a supervisor or manager is absent from work (e.g., vacation, sick leave, training, etc.). I believe this problem can be readily corrected with a few changes to the process the chain of command uses in their review of force incidents.

Therefore, it is my recommendation that SPD make the necessary process changes to ensure that pending force reviews are either completed before a supervisor goes on leave or, in the case of an unplanned absence of a supervisor, are conducted by another supervisor of the same rank.

As with other Management Action recommendations from OPA, I welcome your questions and would appreciate a response to the recommendation and notification of the final outcome of any actions taken in response.

Sincerely,

Pierce Murphy
Director, Office of Professional Accountability