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First time in 40 years: Cops' rule book gets a makeover

'IT'S A MESS' | 16-inch stack to be thinned down

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March 14, 2010

BY **FRANK MAIN** Staff Reporter

Back in 1924, the Chicago Police Department's rule book could fit in the palm of an officer's hand.

Now the rules are compiled in six ring binders -- a 16-inch stack of paper.

"It's a mess," said Rachel Johnston, director of research and development.

For the first time in 40 years, a team of officers and civilian employees is busy cleaning it up.

The team is eliminating earlier versions of general orders that have been modified over the years and removing other nonessential things such as the annual explanation of daylight-saving time.

The goal is to reduce the stack of paper by about two-thirds.

"Instead of patching things together, we are starting over," said James Hickey of research and development.

The streamlined directives will go online this fall with a better index system. Officers and supervisors can search the revised department orders on computers at home or at the police station, Johnston said.

Some things in the 1924 rulebook have never changed over the years.

Police vacations always have been called "furloughs."

And officers arriving at a crime scene always have been instructed to "render aid to the injured" before doing anything else.

Other orders have faded into obscurity, such as the 1924 rule that "linen collars shall be worn with the uniform." Or the order for sergeants to "march their commands [officers] in military order to the lieutenant's desk" after roll call.

One district sergeant hailed the project, saying he refers to the department's general orders nearly every day to instruct his officers on how to do things properly.

"I use it as a teaching tool to help the officers understand the policies regarding arrests and proper police procedure. I'll read it to them. I'll print the order. And I will go over it with them."

His one suggestion: that the department liven up the writing a bit.

"You read these general orders, and your eyes start bleeding," he said. "They're so boring."

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From EBB: UMBC ebiquity research blog

The views expressed in these blog posts are those of the author and not of the Chicago Sun-Times.

joe raines wrote:

Now a days departments are turning to the computer age to get everything they need from their department, at their finger tips. Our department does the reports on the compter and email it to the supervisor. All the rules on and off duty should be available to the officer so he or she can review them in case there is any questions. Large departments such as the CPD have their share of nepotism, favoritism, as well as corruption. Building moral is important because it keeps the officers doing the job they get paid to do, and it also lets them know that the department will back them whenever it becomes necessary. When a few bad cops are tolerated, or covered up by other cops, the rotten apples tend to spoil the rest of the barrel.

3/15/2010 3:17 AM CDT on suntimes.com

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scott a. wrote:

It also corrupts police officers.

3/14/2010 7:53 PM CDT on suntimes.com

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scott a. wrote:

@das geiss: "Today's legal system it ridiculous!"A convoluted and ambiguous legal system generates a huge amount of profit for government institutions and private companies at the citizen's expense.

3/14/2010 7:51 PM CDT on suntimes.com

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disgusted w/city wrote:

this incredible administration in cpd has been continually "writing up"-disciplining officers for rule infractions we don't know exist!!!! After 24 years as a po, i thought i knew all of them. then you get some smart-_____ new sgt or liet. who decides they're going to discipline you for some nonexistent garbage so they can get promoted! Yes boys and girls, that's how screwed up this cpd is! the more negative, the easier the promotion-and lawsiuts for not making these new rules/gen. orders available to the membership!

3/14/2010 6:06 PM CDT on suntimes.com

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deadfish wrote:

War on crime means as much as War on terror. Nothing! This is another vehicle to fleece the taxpayers. Lawyers are the only people that profit. If you are in Law Enforcement go through the motions and collect your check. The real criminals have been in charge for some time.

3/14/2010 1:38 PM CDT on suntimes.com

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das geiss wrote:

If you really want to bring down the cost of law enforcement then start with the judicial system. Kill the plea bargaining...mandate full term incoseration...forget the good behavior stuff...dump the technicality BS... Keep the bad guys in jail and stop the need to re-arrest...re-arrest...re-arrest crapola! Then watch the need for more policing go down.

3/14/2010 11:47 AM CDT on suntimes.com

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das geiss wrote:

Great! Now if we only get the 500,000 federal, state, county, city township laws reduced to a reasonable size as well. Throw out all the laws since 1865; dump 80% of the lawyers; and start over with a maximum limit to laws. Today's legal system it rediculous!

3/14/2010 11:43 AM CDT on suntimes.com

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cindr wrote:

What Cops Know"For many decades we have watched the Gestapo refuse to abide by the laws and the Constitution. Police cars and sheriff's cars have been used for illegal activity. I have never stated that all cops are bad. Some of them get just as frustrated as the victims/targets get. What we have also seen are detectives that play double roles. "Good Cop Bad Cop", cops who have bizarre behavior who will even use fear, terror, and intimidate the victims/targets. One who caters to Columbo who cannot even do honest investigations and his insanity. It is illegal for any cop to hand victims/targets over to those who endanger the lives of innocent people.I have even heard "If I punish her maybe she will see things "My Way".What I discovered this detective was demanding that the child's statement read his way and that she had better testify to his way in court. The refusal to prosecute the alleged perpetrator, those who were harassing, intimidating, threatening, stalking, perjury, insanity, etc. He and others also into interfering with the testimony of victims/witnesses, etc. Abusing their positions of power, Fraud-

visited 9/28/2010

