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March 22, 2018

Chief Craig Meidl
Spokane Police Department
1100 W. Mallon Avenue
Spokane, Washington 99260

RE: R18-2 – Evidence Release Procedure

Dear Chief Meidl,

My office received a complaint from a citizen who was upset after the Property Unit contacted her to pick up a package containing clothing evidence they had on hand after an incident several years ago. The complainant was concerned with the process of how evidence is released. In this case, the citizen received a letter from the Property Unit informing her there were items of evidence she could pick up. The information provided was unclear to her so she called Property, but they would not disclose any further information over the phone. It was only when she picked up the items that she learned the date the items were collected from her. This process inadvertently caused the citizen to relive previous trauma.

After discussing the citizen's complaint with Internal Affairs (IA), we determined there was no investigable policy violation; however, the procedure could be updated to provide more information to citizens prior to picking up any property. Property could also provide an option to destroy and discard the items. Any update of information must be balanced with privacy concerns, should the information letter fall into the hands of someone other than the intended recipient.

Lt. Stevens, from IA, agreed to contact Sgt. McNab from the Special Victims Unit to revise the applicable Standard Operating Procedure. Please see the email attachment between Lt. Stevens and the Property Units supervisor for more detail. This recommendation memorializes the steps already taken to remedy the situation. I recommend the Property Unit update its standard operating procedures to call the affected citizen, let them know the property being released, and give them an option of picking it up or having it destroyed. Further, I recommend the form letter sent to citizens be updated to include the date of the incident to provide additional context, while not providing confidential information. I anticipate these changes will deter similar situations like these from occurring again in the future.

Sincerely,

Bart Logue
Police Ombudsman
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