



GENERAL ORDER

GENERAL ORDER 690.01

METERS/NCIC Access

Office of the Fire Marshal

Issue Date: November 01, 2019

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1 APPLICABILITY

2 Fire and explosive investigators

3 POLICY

4 It is the policy of the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (Department) that criminal
5 information systems, as defined below, are accessed and utilized by authorized members in accordance
6 with applicable Federal and State laws, and all guidelines, rules, and regulations issued by the Maryland
7 State Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

8 DEFINITIONS

- 9 ➤ **Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS)** – A computerized criminal justice information system
10 that is a counterpart of the FBI’s National Crime Information Center and is maintained by the
11 Department of Justice (DOJ) in each state. It is available to authorized local, state, and federal law
12 enforcement and criminal justice agencies via law enforcement communication systems.
- 13
- 14 ➤ **Maryland Telecommunications Enforcement Resource System (METERS)** – This is the gateway
15 through which all Maryland agencies have access to NCIC, Maryland Hot Files, the MVA database,
16 NLETS, etc.
- 17
- 18 ➤ **National Crime Information Center (NCIC)** – A computerized database of documented criminal
19 justice information available to virtually every law enforcement agency. It is maintained by the
20 Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and is interlinked with federal, tribal, state, and local
21 agencies and offices.
- 22
- 23 ➤ **National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS)** – access a wide range of
24 information, from standard driver license and vehicle queries to criminal history and Interpol (the
25 International Police Agency) information.
- 26
- 27 ➤ **Originating Agency Identification (ORI) Number** – A nine-character identifier assigned to an
28 agency by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
- 29
- 30 ➤ **Terminal Agency Coordinator (TAC)** – An individual assigned by the Department to serve as the
31 liaison between the Department and Maryland State Police.

33 The Public Safety Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland empowers the Maryland State Police (MSP)
34 to establish rules concerning the use of METERS, and sanction those agencies that violate the rules.
35 Section 2-304 of the Public Safety Article states that: "Violation of a rule adopted under this subsection is
36 a sufficient basis to withdraw permission to connect with and use the computer or communication
37 system."

38 39 **USE OF METERS, NCIC, AND CJIS SYSTEMS:**

- 40 • The use of METERS, NCIC, and CJIS systems are for official Department business or
41 communications and legitimate law enforcement purposes.
- 42 • These systems are not to be used for political announcements and/or the dissemination of
43 personal viewpoints. Any use of these systems by Department members for any personal reasons
44 or for any other purposes other than those authorized by the MSP and the Department is
45 prohibited.
- 46 • When certified METERS/NCIC operators run a criminal history, they shall record:
 - 47 ○ The Originating Agency Identifier (ORI);
 - 48 ○ The following information regarding the subject of the inquiry:
 - 49 ▪ First/middle/last name;
 - 50 ▪ Race, sex, and date of birth;
 - 51 ▪ FBI and State ID number of the requested record.
 - 52 ○ In addition, the operator shall document:
 - 53 ▪ Name, address and/or department of the person making the request;
 - 54 ▪ The operator entering the request;
 - 55 ▪ The purpose code; and
 - 56 ▪ The reason for the request, i.e. incident report number, CAD record number,
57 citation number, or traffic stop. The operator and requestor must be able to
58 articulate just cause for the query.

59 60 **TERMINAL AGENCY COORDINATOR (TAC):**

- 61 • The MSP, NCIC Audit Unit conducts audits every three years of each agency's use of METERS/NCIC
62 to verify that each requested criminal history has been run for a legitimate law enforcement
63 purpose.
- 64 • The Office of the Fire Marshal shall designate one METERS/NCIC Operator as the Terminal Agency
65 Coordinator (TAC) and one assistant TAC who will be responsible for facilitating the audit process.
- 66 • The TAC will also be responsible for the monthly NCIC validation process and ensuring that all
67 entries are validated, and that the validation process is documented as required.

68 69 **PHYSICAL SECURITY:**

- 70 • Unauthorized access to METERS/NCIC terminals must be prevented.
- 71 • The location of METERS/NCIC terminals and associated peripherals will be restricted to authorized
72 personnel only.
- 73 • Vehicles assigned to the Fire Investigations Division with equipment which provides access to
74 METERS/NCIC must have adequate physical security at all times to protect against unauthorized
75 access or viewing.

79 **UNAUTHORIZED USE:**

- 80 • Any Department member found to be using, or assisting another individual in using METERS,
81 NCIC, or CJIS systems for personal reasons or for any purposes other than those authorized by the
82 MSP and the Department shall be subject to disciplinary action up to termination and/or criminal
83 charges.
- 84 • Examples of misuse includes, but is not limited to:
 - 85 ○ Checking on a friend or neighbor to see if the individual has a criminal record.
 - 86 ○ Performing a background check for non-law enforcement investigations.
 - 87 ○ Any other use that does not have a legitimate law enforcement purpose.

88 **REFERENCES**

- 89 • MD. Code Ann., Public Safety §2-304

90 **SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT CHANGES**

91 New General Order

92 **FORMS/ATTACHMENTS**

- 93 • None

94 **APPROVED**

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