



SACRAMENTO POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDERS



GO 532.14 SURVEILLANCE AND UNDERCOVER OPERATIONS 09-09-2026

PURPOSE

The purpose of this order is to provide operational planning guidelines when conducting surveillance or undercover (UC) operations.

POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Sacramento Police Department to ensure surveillance and UC operations are safely conducted using established practices.

PROCEDURE

A. DEFINITIONS

1. CASE AGENT: Officer who is responsible for developing, planning, and implementing the surveillance or UC operation.
2. INCIDENT ACTION PLAN (IAP): A written, or unwritten plan developed for a limited operational period for the execution of a specific type of operation. Written plans shall be prepared using the Investigations IAP (SPD Form 898A) which is available on Automated Manual System (AMS).
 - a. Officers assigned to a partner agency as a task force officer can utilize that agency's form in lieu of the SPD Form 898A.
3. OPERATIONAL BRIEFING: A meeting of personnel involved in an operation to discuss the details of the IAP.
4. OPERATION SUPERVISOR: Sergeant or designee who is responsible for oversight and management of the surveillance or UC operation.
5. SURVEILLANCE OPERATIONS: Use of non-uniform UC personnel to covertly monitor a suspect or a location to obtain intelligence or evidence of criminal activity. Surveillance operations can be of a fixed location or mobile.
6. UNDERCOVER OPERATIONS: Use of non-uniform UC personnel to proactively seek and establish a relationship or make contact with a subject or group to gather evidence or intelligence while concealing the UC personnel's identity as a police officer.
7. WESTERN STATES INFORMATION NETWORK (WSIN): Intelligence clearinghouse which serves as a secure means of inter-agency information sharing and for deconfliction of active field operations.

B. GENERAL

1. Surveillance and UC operations are an effective means of furthering an investigation. Operations can be of short duration concluding after a single event or last several months for more complex cases. Non-uniformed personnel can use a variety of techniques to obtain intelligence or evidence of criminal activity. Effective operational planning, supervision, and timely notification of effected personnel are key components to a successful outcome.
2. Whether in an informal or formal setting, officers who are assigned to surveillance or undercover operations should obtain training from officers experienced in these disciplines prior to operating in this capacity.
3. Case Agent Responsibilities
 - a. Develop an IAP and conduct a briefing that:
 - (1) Is attended by all employees involved in the operation.
 - (2) Provides background of the case.
 - (3) Identifies the mission, execution, and objectives of the operation.
 - (4) Provides information on location(s), suspect(s), vehicle(s), known hazards and communication methods.



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- (5) Lists involved employees, contact information and assignment.
- (6) Provides trauma center locations, discusses contingency plans, and includes a critical incident checklist.
- (7) In the case of critical, time-sensitive incidents or any crime needing immediate attention, a verbal operation plan may be communicated to all involved employees to expedite their response. However, a written plan shall be completed as soon as feasible.
- b. Notify WSIN pursuant to General Order 532.01 (Critical Pre-Planned Events).
- c. Make timely case decisions in response to developments of the operation.
- d. Participates in the operation but does not take on a primary UC role unless they delegate their responsibilities first.
- e. Should conduct an informal after-action debriefing of the event to identify issues or concerns from the participants.

4. Operation Supervisor Responsibilities

- a. Review and approve the IAP mission, execution and objective prior to the briefing.
- b. If an officer did not attend the briefing and prior to joining the operation, the operation supervisor shall ensure the officer is fully briefed and understands their role.
- c. Enter a Computer Automated Dispatch (CAD) event pursuant to General Order 532.07 (Planned Police Operations).
- d. Ensure that notifications of the operation are made to:
 - (1) their office chain of command.
 - (2) the patrol sergeant and watch commander in area the operation is occurring.
 - (3) the communications division.
 - (4) the outside agency if occurring in another jurisdiction.
- e. Coordinate with the case agent for additional officers or resources as needed.
- f. Continuously evaluates the progress of the operation and addresses potential safety concerns.
- g. Participates in the operation with surveillance but does not take on a primary UC role.
- h. On a case-by-case basis, the operation supervisor, with management approval, may deviate from notifications only when such notifications could compromise a long-term or confidential investigation.

5. Operational Deviations

- a. Deviations are often necessary given the fluid and rapidly evolving nature of law enforcement events and the environment in which they occur.
- b. With the approval of the operation supervisor, case agents can deviate from the stated mission, execution, and objectives of the IAP as circumstances change.
- c. If a deviation occurs, the operation supervisor will ensure all participants are aware of the change(s) and that an amended written IAP will be submitted as soon as feasible.

C. OPERATIONAL SAFETY

- 1. Officers involved in surveillance and UC operations can place themselves into an area without compromising their identity based on a modified personal appearance and civilian clothing. This appearance can be valuable for operational success, but it can pose an officer safety concern if immediate enforcement action becomes necessary or if encountered by uniformed officers unfamiliar with the operation. With a transition to wearing identifying police attire, surveillance or UC officers can take enforcement action as needed. However, the use of dedicated, uniformed arrest teams should be utilized whenever enforcement action is likely.
- 2. Supervisors shall ensure that officers not involved in the operation are made aware that UC personnel are working in the area.

D. REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

- 1. Officers involved in surveillance or UC operations are not required to wear identifying police attire during covert intelligence gathering or covert suspect interactions. Officers shall have the following items readily available:



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- a. Body armor, body worn camera (BWC) and police markings.
- b. If not carried on a load bearing vest:
 - (1) handcuffs.
 - (2) portable radio.
 - (3) additional pistol magazine(s).
 - (4) conducted energy device (CED).

E. ENFORCEMENT ACTION

- 1. During surveillance or UC operations, the incident may transition to a proactive event such as making an arrest, search warrant service or observing unrelated criminal activity that requires immediate enforcement action. Prior to taking direct enforcement action, officers should consider coordinating with uniformed officers, if available. If uniformed officers are unavailable, prior to initiating suspect contact, surveillance or UC officers shall:
 - a. Don their body armor to aid with their identification as law enforcement.
 - b. If working on an alternate radio channel, move the event to the main radio channel for the area, and provide an update to the channel dispatcher of the circumstances.
 - c. Coordinate with the patrol supervisor if additional resources are required.
- 2. Under exigent circumstances to save a life or prevent the escape of a violent suspect who poses a threat to the community, this order does not preclude surveillance or UC officers from taking enforcement action with limited police attire (badge and/or ID) displayed. However, the officers shall consider the following before doing so:
 - a. Officers may have limited personal protection, force options or communication abilities available to them.
 - b. Officers may not be readily recognizable to the suspect or responding officers as a law enforcement officer.
- 3. If enforcement action is taken under these circumstances, operation supervisors shall:
 - a. Rapidly direct surveillance or UC resources to the officer that are readily identifiable as law enforcement.
 - b. Ensure the main radio channel is aware of the activity and provides a description of the officers involved in the contact.
 - c. Request uniformed resources as necessary.