



## TRANSIT POLICE

### MISSING PERSONS

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## POLICY

### SUMMARY

Protecting vulnerable persons is an operational priority of the Transit Police. Missing person investigations will be undertaken at a high standard appropriate to the risk. The Transit Police, in accordance with the operational memorandum of understanding with Jurisdictional Police, will not remain as the primary agency for missing person investigations (unless exigent circumstances exist). However, pursuant to the BC Provincial Policing Standards (“BCPPS”) section 5.1, there is an initial obligation for the receiving agency to accept a missing person report (without delay), pending confirmation of jurisdictional responsibility and file transfer. Cooperation between police agencies is crucial to missing person investigations. All missing person investigations are deemed high risk until a risk assessment is completed and file transfer to the police of jurisdiction is completed. A Transit Police Supervisor will be consulted immediately by Members with respect to the scope of Transit Police involvement in a missing person investigation. The Transit Police will comply with provisions of the BCPPS, as applicable, and missing person legislation.

### Definitions

**BCPMPC** – BC Police Missing Person Centre; a unit of the provincial police force that provides guidance and support in the province for missing person investigations, and coordinates and supports unidentified human remains investigations.

**BCPPS** – The British Columbia Provincial Policing Standards issued pursuant to the *Police Act*.

**Case Review** – An examination of the administrative management and operational aspects of an investigation including the nature and quality of the investigation and the evidence.

**Chief Officer** – The Transit Police Chief Officer or delegate.

**FOIPPA** – The BC *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, as amended from time to time.

High Risk Missing Person Investigation – A missing person investigation in which the missing person's health or wellbeing may be in immediate danger due to:

- a. Their own vulnerability (e.g., the very young and very old, persons with physical illness, disability, addictions or mental health concerns, persons who may be suicidal and persons involved in activities that may place them at increased risk of harm;
- b. Being part of an identifiable group that is at an increased risk of harm;
- c. The weather or physical conditions where the missing person is believe to be;  
or
- d. Reasonable grounds to believe that they may be the victim of a crime.  
*(Definition is as set forth in the BCPPS; not the same meaning as "person at risk" that is used in the Missing Persons Act and regulations.)*

JPD – Jurisdictional Police Department.

Member – Designated Constable (all ranks), the Chief Officer or a Deputy Chief Officer of the Transit Police.

Metro Vancouver Transit Police ("Transit Police") – The operating name of the South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Police Service.

Missing Person – Anyone reported to police or by police as someone whose whereabouts are unknown, whatever the circumstances of their disappearance, and who are considered missing until located. *(Definition is as set forth in the BCPPS; broader than that used in the Missing Persons Act and regulations.)*

Missing Person Coordinator – The police officer designated as responsible for oversight and support functions for the police force's missing person investigations, including those functions listed in BCPPS 5.1.4(1) on 'File Review and Monitoring'.

Missing Person Risk Assessment Form – A template on PRIME-BC for assessing the level of risk related to a missing person report, which includes all of the questions and instructions contained in BCPPS 5.1.2 - Appendix A.

MPA – BC *Missing Persons Act*, as amended from time to time.

OCC – Operations Communication Centre of the Transit Police.

Provincial Missing Person Intake Form – The PRIME-BC Missing Persons Detail Page and all available and relevant CPIC fields.

Safe and well check – A personal face-to-face communication with a found missing person to confirm their identity and assess their well-being.

## **Authority**

1. When conducting missing person investigations, Members will be governed by the law, including the *Police Act* and *BC Provincial Policing Standards ("BCPPS")*, *Missing Persons Act ("MPA")* and *Missing Persons Regulation ("Regulation")*, *Child*,

*Family and Community Service Act, and Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (“FOIPPA”).*

2. Members must comply with the BCPPS and policies and procedures within this policy chapter. In the event of and to the extent there is any conflict between the provisions of this policy chapter and the law, the law will supersede the policy.

### **General**

3. The police of jurisdiction is responsible for investigations of missing persons, as set out in the [BCPPS 5.1 – Missing Person Investigations](#). As requested, the Transit Police will assist the JPD with a missing person investigation, and comply with any applicable requirements within BCPPS 5.1. This includes ensuring that the Transit Police will initiate a missing person investigation without delay, pending the transfer to the JPD.
4. The Chief Officer will ensure that Transit Police policies and procedures regarding missing person investigations are consistent with the BCPPS and the [Operational Memorandum of Understanding with the Jurisdictional Police](#).
5. Transit Police personnel will be mindful of the stressful nature of a missing person event for family members/reportees and the need for Transit Police personnel to treat family members/reportees with respect, compassion and empathy.
6. When a missing person is believed to be traveling within or last seen within the ‘Transportation Service Region’ and there is a nexus to the transit system, the Transit Police will ensure that its Members as well as operational communication centers of the appropriate TransLink subsidiaries (e.g., SkyTrain, Canada Line, Coast Mountain Bus Company) are notified in a timely manner.
7. Members will be required to have an operational understanding of BCPPS 5.1 and the subsequent responsibilities of the police agency receiving the report of a missing person, which includes:
  - Risk Assessment [BCPPS 5.1.2];
  - Response and Investigation [BCPPS 5.1.3];
  - File Review and Monitoring [BCPPS 5.1.4];
  - Family Members and Reportee [BCPPS 5.1.5]; and
  - Concluding a Missing Person Investigation [BCPPS 5.1.6].

***NOTE:** The Transit Police will not likely be responsible for anything beyond BCPPS 5.1.4, prior to the investigation being assumed by the JPD.*

**[See also Transit Police Policy: [OB400 – Amber Alert](#)]**

## PROCEDURES

### Acceptance of a Report of Missing Person and Initiation of Investigation

8. When a report of a missing person is received by any Member, either having been approached by a complainant on the transit system, or having received a call into the Operational Communication Center (“OCC”), the Watch Commander or their designate will be notified immediately.
9. The Watch Commander will ensure that:
  - (1) A detailed PRIME General Occurrence report (“GO”) is immediately created and assigned to an investigator;
  - (2) Enquiry has been made to determine if there has also been the same missing person report to any JPD;
  - (3) The appropriate JPD is promptly notified and requested to have a member attend the scene (where applicable) and assume responsibility for the missing persons investigation;
  - (4) The JPD file number is cross referenced to the Transit Police GO file number;
  - (5) If the missing person is believed to be traveling within or last seen within the Transportation Service Region, efforts will be undertaken to notify all on duty Members and appropriate subsidiary companies (e.g., SkyTrain, Canada Line, Coast Mountain Bus Company), while ensuring that the JPD has been informed of such actions.
10. In the event that the JPD is unable to immediately respond to the Transit Police request to attend a scene and assume control of the missing person investigation, the Transit Police will assume the responsibility for initiating the missing person investigation (including prompt initial entry of the missing person on PRIME, CPIC, and any other relevant police databases), until such time the responsibility for the investigation is transferred to the JPD.

***NOTE:** In determining which JPD is responsible for a missing person investigation, BCPPS 5.1.1 dictates that the police force for the jurisdiction in which the missing person was last seen is the police force of jurisdiction. Conversely, if the location where the missing person was last seen is not known or their presence there was transient in nature, then the police force for the jurisdiction where the missing person resides or last stayed is the police force of jurisdiction.*

*Given the regional nature of the transit system, additional assessment by the Transit Police may be required to confirm which JPD agency is to be requested to take control of the missing person investigation.*

*In the event that jurisdiction is unclear or cannot be resolved between police agencies, the Transit Police will contact the Officer in Charge of the BC Police Missing Person Centre/designate as soon as practicable, who will make the decision regarding jurisdiction.*

11. All missing person reports will be characterized by the Transit Police as “high risk” in the initial instance, until such time as a thorough risk assessment has been completed and the investigating Member has consulted with their Supervisor. Additional factors to consider during the initial assessment are identified as:
- (1) The missing person’s own vulnerability (e.g., the very young and very old; persons with physical illness, disability, addictions, or mental health concerns; persons who may be suicidal; and persons involved in activities that may place them at increased risk of harm);
  - (2) Being part of an identifiable group that is at an increased risk of harm;
  - (3) The weather or physical conditions where the missing person is believed to be; or
  - (4) Reasonable grounds to believe they may be the victim of a crime.
12. When the JPD is unable to immediately respond to the Transit Police request to attend the scene and assume control of the missing person investigation, the Transit Police will assume responsibility for the initial entry of a file into PRIME, ensuring that the missing person is added to CPIC under the Transit Police GO file number.
- (1) Once the file is transferred to the JPD, it will be documented on the Transit Police GO the time of the file transfer; the Transit Police missing person entry on CPIC will remain until such time as the JPD has added their entry.

***NOTE:** Pursuant to the BCPPS, the transfer of the investigation is not complete until the police force of jurisdiction has confirmed its receipt of the report and responsibility for the investigation, and generated a file number.*

### **Risk Assessment**

13. Where the Transit Police has assumed responsibility for taking the initial report of a missing person (pending transfer to the JPD as outlined in ss. 9, 10 and 12 of this policy), the investigating Member will be responsible for interviewing the complainant to obtain as much detail as possible in order to complete the “Missing Persons Risk Assessment” template (on PRIME) in their GO, which includes:
- a. Is the person the subject of a crime in progress (e.g., Abduction)?
  - b. Are there suspicious, dangerous or unknown circumstances surrounding the person’s disappearance which suggest the person may be the victim of a crime?
  - c. Is this person suicidal or likely to cause harm to self or others?
  - d. Has the person been involved in a violent or threatening incident prior to going missing (e.g., domestic violence)?
  - e. Is the person part of an identifiable group that is statistically at an increased risk of harm (e.g., Indigenous women)?
  - f. Is the person vulnerable due to age, addiction to drugs/alcohol, infirmity, inability to communicate or other factors?
  - g. Are there inclement weather conditions, terrain, inadequate clothing or lack of proper equipment that would seriously increase risk to health?

- h. Does the person require essential medication?
  - i. Does the person have any physical illness, disability or mental health problems?
  - j. Has the person been subject to bullying/elder abuse?
  - k. If previously missing, did they suffer any harm at that time, or were they designated as a high risk missing person by the Transit Police or another agency?
  - l. Is this behavior out of character (e.g., overdue or personal property hasn't been taken)?
  - m. Is this person scheduled to testify in court either as a witness or victim?
  - n. Is this person involved in the sex trade, hitchhiking, gambling, and/or transient lifestyle?
  - o. Is the person associated to Gang Members or other Organized Crime?
  - p. Is the person is an 'elope' from a mental health facility? If "yes", has a Director's warrant been issued for his/her apprehension?
  - q. Do you believe that the person is at increased risk due to the length of time that they have been missing?
14. If the response to all the questions on the *Missing Person Risk Assessment Template* is "NO", the investigating Member must consult with a Supervisor to confirm the screening results. If the results to any of the questions on the *Missing Person Risk Assessment Template* is "YES", the matter requires immediate review and consultation with a Supervisor to assess (and approve) the appropriate response.

### Investigation

15. As part of the initial investigation, having completed the *Missing Person Risk Assessment Template*, investigators will also look to follow the *Missing Persons Investigative Checklist* as an aid to their investigation, which includes the following:
- (1) Complete the Provincial Missing Person Intake Form, if not already done when creating the GO;
  - (2) Interview relevant persons, including the complainant, witnesses, friends and family members of the missing person, and the person who last saw or had contact with the missing person;
  - (3) Determine:
    - a. Where the missing person was last seen or last known to be;
    - b. Whether it is out of character for the person to go missing;
    - c. Possible reasons why the person may have gone missing; and
    - d. Possible destinations or location(s) where the missing person may be found;
  - (4) Conduct a search of relevant locations, which may include the missing person's residence, point last seen and/or point last known, possible destination(s) or other locations the Member considers relevant (obtaining consent or authority to conduct the search is required);

- (5) Obtain a detailed description and recent photograph(s) of the missing person;
  - (6) Request the OCC to conduct checks of the missing person on CPIC, PRIME, LIEP or other police information systems;
  - (7) If the missing person is Aboriginal, ensure that this is highlighted to the JPD member who assumes responsibility for the investigation so they can advise the JPD's Indigenous Liaison Officer or Missing Person Coordinator;
  - (8) Provide the family and/or reportee of the missing person with the information about:
    - a. Support services available;
    - b. The investigative process;
    - c. Actions they may take or information they may seek or provide to assist in the investigation;
    - d. Information to assist them in dealing with the media; and
    - e. The Transit Police file number.
16. By the time that Transit Police investigators get to this point in any missing person investigation, it is expected that the JPD will be involved. In the unlikely event that the JPD is still not available to assume responsibility for the investigation, the Watch Commander or their designate may consider the additional investigative actions such as:
- (1) Issuing a CPIC 'BOLO' to lower mainland police agencies, with a notation that the (identified) JPD agency will be assuming control of the file at some point (if the criteria for an Amber Alert is met, immediately contact the duty officer for the Jurisdictional Police);
  - (2) Neighborhood/CCTV canvassing;
  - (3) Securing of physical evidence (e.g., surveillance footage, computers, bank records, phone records), biological evidence (e.g., personal items of the missing person that may contain a biological sample, such as toothbrush or hair brush); Obtaining consent or authority to secure the evidence is required;
  - (4) Notification of taxi companies, airport authorities, Canada Border Services Agency, Department of Homeland Security;
  - (5) Pursuant to BCPPS 5.1.3, consider adding details to the Transit Police website, social media platform(s), utilizing NCMPUR (Canada's missing website) and notifying the local media. While media/public appeals will usually be left to the investigating JPD once they assume control of the investigation, in urgent situations the Transit Police may take action. Further, any public release of personal information related to missing person will be as permitted by s. 21(3) of the MPA.

### **File Review, Monitoring and Oversight**

17. The Watch Commander, in consultation with the assigned Supervisor, will ensure that all missing person investigations initially undertaken by the Transit Police are given priority attention in terms of supporting the assigned investigator. The Watch Commander will assume responsibility for contacting the JPD Watch Commander or Duty Officer in the event that, in their opinion, there is significant delay of the JPD in responding to the Transit Police request to attend and assume responsibility.
18. Initial file review for any missing person file will consist of a Supervisor review of the initial risk assessment, in consultation with the investigating Member, and a review of pages on the GO as they are submitted. The Patrol Supervisor will ensure that they keep the Watch Commander informed of the investigation status, up to and including when the JPD has assumed responsibility for the investigation.

*NOTE: BCPPS 5.1.4 outlines rigid guidelines for the Supervisor review and oversight of missing person investigations; however, any investigation that is initially undertaken by the Transit Police will likely have been transferred to the JPD within hours therefore, with the exception of initial file review, the remaining time lines will not be applicable.*

19. The Supervisor will ensure that the primary investigating Member thoroughly documents their actions in the GO, including completion of the relevant templates, and when the transfer of responsibility occurs.
20. Where the Transit Police initially assumes a missing person investigation, it will be carded as such; however, once responsibility has been transferred to the JPD, the Transit Police file will be changed to an assist file.

### **Foul Play Suspected**

21. If the initial or ongoing risk assessment determines that, in addition to the high risk missing person investigation, foul play is suspected, the Watch Commander must be promptly notified. Members will follow investigation protocol for crime scene containment and evidence preservation, pending transfer of the scene and file to the JPD.

### **Locating of a Missing Person**

22. When Members locate a missing person in the course of their duties, the OCC will generate a CPIC reply to the originating agency and, if necessary, request direction on what to do with the missing person. Members will take direction from the JPD with respect to follow up actions, if required.
23. In all instances where a missing person is located, the assigned Member will generate a GO and submit a detailed report.
24. As outlined in BCPPS 5.1, there are some instances where going missing is not related to any crime.



- (1) Prior to the police of jurisdiction closing a missing person file, the Transit Police may be required to complete a 'safe and well check' of the located missing person [BCPPS 5.1.6(1)]. As set out in the BCPPS, this includes personal face-to-face communication with the found missing person to confirm their identity and assess their well-being. A 'safe and well check' may be completed by a police officer or an approved verifier (as listed below).
  - a. A parent or caregiver;
  - b. A social worker, youth/child protection worker or group home worker;
  - c. A transition house worker or anti violence worker;
  - d. A doctor, psychiatrist, counsellor or other health care provider;
  - e. A victim services worker;
  - f. A shelter or outreach worker;
  - g. A lawyer or legal advocate; or
  - h. An Indigenous support worker.

### Minors

25. In cases involving found a missing person under the age of 19, there is extra standard of care required. Consideration must be given to conducting an interview with the found missing person to determine requirements for follow up investigation (e.g., whether the minor was exploited or harmed leading up to or during their absence) or any resources or assistance that could be offered to help promote the minor's safety or prevent them from going missing again. While not common, the Transit Police may be requested by the JPD to assist with this requirement when it is the Transit Police who located the missing person.

### **Unescorted Persons/Children**

26. When a Member believes an unescorted person on the transit system should be in the care of a guardian (e.g., children or mentally disabled), and the guardian or other responsible adult cannot be readily identified and located, the Member will consult with their Supervisor on the appropriate course of action. Members may consider contacting the Ministry of Children and Family Development ("MCFD") and liaising with their staff to determine an appropriate course of action. If circumstances are such that the investigating member believes that any child is at risk, they should consider utilizing their authorities under the *Child, Family and Community Services Act* to apprehend the child and turn the child over to the custody of the Ministry.

**[Refer to Transit Police policies: [OD180 – Young People](#) and [OD160 Vulnerable Persons – Violence in Relationships](#)]**

### **Missing Person – CPIC 'Be On Lookout For' ("CPIC BOLO")**

#### General Request / No Nexus to Transit

27. The Transit Police frequently receives CPIC messages from an investigating JPD with details about a missing person, along with a request that the missing person details be broadcast to on duty Members. Where the CPIC BOLO is addressed to "All Lower Mainland Agencies", or perhaps a province wide distribution, the OCC will do the following:

- (1) Generate a CAD file;
- (2) Broadcast information to Members (all radio channels);
- (3) Re-broadcast, as requested by the JPD;
- (4) The Team Lead will contact the Watch Commander or delegate, who will, as appropriate, seek clarification from the JPD if any nexus to the transit system exists and whether they wish for TransLink operating companies to be informed and any limitations to what information is to be disclosed;
- (5) When directed by the Watch Commander or delegate, provide information to the TransLink operating companies (SkyTrain, Canada Line, Coast Mountain Bus Company); and
- (6) Conclude the file in CAD, no PRIME GO is required.

*NOTE: If there is any concern regarding limitations of disclosure to non-police personnel, clarification will be sought from the investigating JPD. (Also, refer to s. 21(3) of the MPA.)*

#### Request for Transit Police Specific Assistance

28. Where the Transit Police receives a CPIC request from a JPD agency, having recognized a transit nexus, and they are requesting that the Transit Police take action with respect to their missing person (e.g., conduct patrols around a transit station/facility), the OCC will do the following:

- (1) Generate a CAD file;
- (2) Broadcast information Members (all radio channels);
- (3) Assign a Member to complete the requested task;
- (4) If applicable, provide the necessary information to the TransLink operating companies (SkyTrain, Canada Line, Coast Mountain Bus Company) and consult with the Watch Commander or delegate if there is any questions/concern on what information is to be disclosed;
- (5) Send CPIC correspondence back to the JPD, on behalf of the Member, outlining the outcome of their action and referring the JPD to the Transit Police PRIME assist file number.

*NOTE: If there is any concern regarding limitations of disclosure to non-police personnel, clarification will be sought from the investigating JPD. (Also, refer to s. 21(3) of the MPA.)*

29. The assigned Member will be required to submit a detailed GO report for a missing person file as the JPD has identified a nexus to transit and requested specific action of the Transit Police in relation to their missing person investigation.

### Compass Data Requests

30. The Transit Police may receive a request from a JPD requesting assistance with initiating a travel history query of the Compass database, in an effort to assist in tracking the movements of a missing person/high risk missing person. The Transit Police will accept the risk assessment of the JPD and will, wherever possible, facilitate contacting of the Compass Operations Department and take the following actions, as applicable:
- (1) If the request is received during normal business hours and non-urgent, the Supervisor may simply forward the compass disclosure form to the JPD investigator to complete and submit;
  - (2) When the request is received after business hours or, at the discretion of the Supervisor the request is deemed urgent, the Supervisor (or designate) may assist the JPD in the completion of the disclosure form and follow up directly with internal Compass management contacts in order to expedite the request;
  - (3) In the event that a Member provides assistance to a JPD beyond providing the disclosure form, the Transit Police will generate an assist file and a GO will be submitted to PRIME.

**[Refer to Transit Police [SOP65 – Compass Data Disclosure Requests](#) and [Form OZ660 – Compass Data Request Form](#)]**

### Missing Person Coordinator

31. Unless otherwise so determined by the Chief Officer, the Inspector Operations (West) will be designated as the Transit Police Missing Person Coordinator [BCPPS 5.1.4(1)].
32. The Watch Commander will notify (by email) the Missing Person Coordinator of all missing person reports received by the Transit Police when the Transit Police is the lead investigator, as soon as is practicable. (The Reader will also notify the Missing Person Coordinator during their processing of the file.)
33. The Missing Person Coordinator will be responsible for:
- (1) Knowing the status of all open missing person investigations being handled by the Transit Police;
  - (2) Ensuring that there is always an active primary investigator for all missing persons investigations being handled by the Transit Police;
  - (3) Maintaining and making available to Members, a list of local resources and suggested checks to assist with missing person investigations;
  - (4) Liaising with the BCPMPC; and

- (5) Providing Strategic Services Section with the annual reporting information regarding any emergency demands for records.

### Emergency Demands for Record

34. The *MPA* and *Regulation* provides additional provisions to assist police officers in investigation, for example, making of emergency demands for records or conducting a search for a missing person (refer to **Appendix “A”** for samples of provincial forms) as follows:
  - Record Access Demand;
  - Third Party Record Access Order;
  - Search Order (for missing person);
  - Emergency Demand for Records;
  - Order to Comply with an Emergency Demand for Records.

*NOTE: Fillable forms can be copied from OWL using these links: [Form 1 – Emergency Demand for Records](#) (s. 6 MPA) and [Form 2 – Emergency Demand for Records Written Report](#) (s. 8 MPA).*

35. The mechanisms outlined above will be treated like search warrants, and as such, all applications for an order or a non-judicial order (Emergency Demand for Records) must be approved by a Supervisor. Information in a record accessed under the *MPA* and *Regulation* is only to be used for the purpose of locating a missing person or a use consistent with that purpose.

- (1) It is unlikely that the Transit Police will still be the lead investigator in a missing person file when a possible demand/order under s. 34 is pursued. However, in a situation where the Transit Police remains the lead investigator, it is important that Members are aware of these investigative options and their authority.

36. Where an emergency demand for records was made, the request must be documented by the investigating Member in the GO, with the necessary information set out in **Appendix “B”** of this policy.

- (1) The Transit Police is required to comply with an annual reporting requirement to the Director of Police Services regarding annual emergency demands for records [s. 18 of the *MPA* and Ministerial Order 353].

37. The Transit Police will retain and dispose of any records obtained under the *MPA* and *Regulation* as set out in s. 13 of the *Regulation*.

### PRIME Records

38. When assisting JPDs with missing person investigations and Members attend, a PRIME assist file is generated and one of the following two UCR Codes will be used: 8190 Z03 – Missing Persons or 8190 Z33 – High Risk Missing Persons. No assist file will be created when Members are cancelled by the JPD as a result of the missing person being found either prior to Member dispatch or while on route for patrols.

**References:**

BC Ministerial Order M353 re s. 18 of the *MPA*

BC *Missing Persons Act* [SBC 2014, c. 2]

BC *Missing Persons Regulation* [B.C. Reg. 111/2015]

BC Provincial Policing Standards – 5.1 Missing Persons Investigations

BC Provincial Policing Standards – 5.2 - 5.3 Major Case Management

Operational MOU between Transit Police and Jurisdictional Police (2018)

High Risk Missing Person Template Checklist (PRIME-BC)

**APPENDICES FOLLOW ON NEXT PAGE**