

Reading Police Department Awarded “Accreditation” Status



Pictured Above: Chief Cormier, Sergeant Segalla, Executive Director Moores, Sergeant Abate and Officer Amendola

On September 12, 2013, The Reading Police Department received state accreditation from the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission.

Accreditation is a self-initiated evaluation process by which police departments strive to meet and maintain standards that have been established *for* the profession, *by* the profession. These carefully selected standards reflect critical areas of police management, operations, and technical support activities. They cover areas such as policy development, emergency response planning, training, communications, property and evidence handling, use of force, vehicular pursuit, prisoner transportation and holding facilities. The program not only sets standards for the law enforcement profession, but also for the delivery of police *services* to citizens of the commonwealth.

“Achieving Accreditation from the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission is a very significant accomplishment and a recognition highly regarded by the law enforcement community,” said Donna Taylor Mooers, the Commission’s Executive Director.”

Under the leadership of Chief James W. Cormier, the Reading Police Department was assessed in August 2013 by a team of Commission-appointed assessors. The Assessment Team found the Department to be in compliance with all applicable standards for Accreditation.

“Going through the process initially requires intense self-scrutiny, and ultimately provides a quality assurance review of the agency,” said Mooers. To conduct the initial self-assessment and prepare for the on-site review of the Department’s standards by the Commission, in 2011, Chief Cormier appointed Detective Sergeant Mark D. Segalla and Sergeant Richard Abate to serve as the Department’s Accreditation Managers. Chief Cormier also appointed Officer Christine Amendola to assist with the Accreditation process.

The Commission offers two program awards: Certification and Accreditation, with Accreditation being the higher of the two. Accreditation has been granted for a period of three years. Participation in the program is strictly voluntary.

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission consists of an eleven member Board of Directors. Six members are appointed by the **Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association**, two by the **Coalition of Accreditation Managers of Massachusetts**, one by the **Massachusetts Municipal Association** and one by the **Massachusetts Police Association**. The eleventh member is left for the Board to elect; that member must be affiliated with an academic institution. According to Mooers, “the Commission’s primary role is to establish and administer both the standards and the assessment process by which departments meeting accreditation standards can be publicly recognized for their achievements.”

Massachusetts is one of twenty-four states that offer an accreditation process for its police departments.

BENEFITS OF ACCREDITATION

The standards for accreditation impact officer and public safety, address high liability/risk management issues, and generally promote operational efficiency throughout the agency. The benefits are therefore many and will vary among participating departments based on the *state* of the department when it enters the process. In other words, the benefits will be better known when the department quantifies the changes that it made as a direct result of achieving accreditation. Generally, these changes involve policy writing, facility improvements and equipment purchases. Listed below are some of the more common benefits.

Accreditation:

- provides a norm for an agency to judge its performance.
- provides a basis to correct deficiencies before they become public problems.
- requires agencies to commit policies and procedures to writing.
- promotes accountability among agency personnel and the evenhanded application of policies.
- provides a means of independent evaluation of agency operations.
- minimizes an agency’s exposure to liability, builds a stronger defense against lawsuits, and has the potential to reduce liability insurance costs.
- enhances the reputation of the agency and increases the public’s confidence in it.

Mooers added, “Police Certification and Accreditation serve to reassure the general public that the law enforcement profession is trained, prepared and ready to handle routine calls for service including large scale emergencies. Agency *preparedness* begins with having a current written directive system that incorporates best practices into agency policies and operational plans.”