



CHEVY CHASE  
VILLAGE  
POLICE  
DEPARTMENT

GENERAL ORDER: 5-45 HOUSE CHECKS

DATE: 10/17/2016 Pages: 3 ◇ New ◇ Amended ◆ Revised—5-45

Police Chief: John M. Fitzgerald

**I. POLICY**

One of the important services provided to the residents of Chevy Chase Village is our house check program which gives homeowners a sense of security when they are away and their homes are vacant. Upon request by a Village resident for a house check, it is the policy of the Chevy Chase Village Police Department to check each house, including those homes with alarm systems, at least once each shift, subject to higher priority calls for service or other workload considerations.

**II. DEFINITIONS**

**FULL HOUSE CHECK:**

A service provided by the Police Department where an **officer walks around the entire perimeter of an unoccupied house**, making sure that ground- and basement-level doors and windows are closed and locked and the house is otherwise secure. Additionally, officers pick up **newspapers** that have been delivered and either place them in a specific location or recycle them (according to the resident's instructions), and they take any **mail** or delivered **packages** from the exterior of the house and bring them back to the Village Hall for temporary storage. Officers shall close all storm doors and fence gates before leaving the property.

**ROUTINE HOUSE CHECK:**

A service provided by the Police Department where an officer **walks to the front door** to do a thorough check for any mail/papers/packages and to detect any suspicious circumstances. Officers will handle **newspapers**, mail and packages according to the resident's instructions (often packages and mail will be brought to the Village Hall for temporary storage; newspapers are often recycled.)

**III. GENERAL PROCEDURES**

A. Residences in Chevy Chase Village that are vacant, or from which the resident(s) are away for a period of time greater than twenty-four (24) hours are eligible for house checks to be performed by Village police officers.

1. Residents who request house checks may do so in person, by telephone, or email.
2. The employee who receives the request will record the relevant information regarding the house check on the appropriate form and encourage the resident to put exterior lights on an automatic control (timer or light-sensitive switch) so that outside lights are constantly on during all hours of darkness. Additionally the resident will be encouraged to schedule a free home security survey to be conducted by officers at their residence.

a. Generally, house checks will not be done if someone will be staying overnight in the resident's home. Exceptions will only be made by the Chief or Lieutenant on a case-by-case basis. For example, if a resident says that they will be gone for 4 weeks, but a relative will be staying in the house in week #2, two house checks will be created. There will be one house check for week #1, and another for weeks #3 & #4.

b. If the resident requesting a house check provides a date of return, but cannot specify a time, the person taking the house check request will inform the resident that we will end the house check at 10:00 p.m. on the date prior to their return.

c. If the resident requesting a house check cannot provide a firm date of return, a house check will be created for the longest confirmed period of their vacation. For instance, if a resident says they will be gone for 3 weeks for sure, but they might extend for a 4th week, a house check will be established for 3 weeks and the person taking the house check will ask the resident to call if they decide to extend their vacation; we will then extend the house check.

B. House check binders are stored in the Communications Center. Communications clerks are responsible for putting all newly requested house check printouts

form is removed from a binder, the employee removing the form will write their initials, ID#, and date of removal on the house check form.

- C. A new call entry will be generated for each separate house check. Patrol officers will call out when the check begins and when they clear the residence.

#### IV. STANDARD HOUSE CHECK PROCEDURES

- A. Subject to higher priority calls for service or other workload considerations that would interrupt the house check program, house checks will be done according to the below procedure:
  - 1. **Day shift officers:** Day shift officers will do full house checks on even addresses and routine checks on odd addresses.
  - 2. **Night shift officers:** Night shift officers will perform full house checks on odd addresses and routine checks on even addresses. Night officers shall **begin house checks at the start of their shift** (as soon as they finish roll call and vehicle inspection) **and shall finish house checks as soon as time and other work allows**. This applies regardless of the number of officers on duty at the time; if there are 2 midnight officers on duty, they may do house checks at the same time in order to comply with this order.
  - 3. **All officers:** Officers performing all house checks — both full and routine — must remove newspapers, mail and packages.
- B. Officers will take the House Check binders with them when conducting house checks.
- C. Officers must either use CODY mobile or the radio to timely and electronically record house checks (and other activities).
- D. In addition to recording what is picked up during a house check (mail, paper, packages, nothing), **officers must record the type of check that was done (RT for routine; F for full)**.
  - 1. When **officers** do checks over the radio, they **must state whether they did a full or routine check. Dispatchers must include “F” or “RT” in the comment field** in CODY when making the entry.
  - 2. When using CODY mobile, officers must make the “F” or “RT” entry themselves.
- E. When inspecting houses, officers will check all reachable doors and windows to determine if they are secure. Mail boxes will be checked, and if there is

mail, it will either be deposited into a mail slot if available, or brought back to the office for temporary storage to be returned to the residents upon their return. Packages that can be carried by one person and small enough to fit into a police car will be brought back to the office. If an officer encounters a package that does not conform to the above criteria, the Communications Center will contact the resident (or their designated contact) during daytime hours to determine the disposition of the package. Newspapers, unless a resident requests otherwise, will be deposited in the recycling container at the office. Outdoor workers (landscapers, exterior painters, driveway pavers, etc.) do not change the way a house check is conducted. These workers do not have access to/are not responsible for the interior of the house and the property must be checked as if they weren't there. Officers will also comply with other reasonable requests from residents that would directly impact the physical security of the residence.

- 1. When officers retrieve U.S. mail, packages, dry cleaning, etc., they will leave a mail pick-up slip at the residence, and either advise CCV Communications over the police radio, or they will note the information on CODY mobile. If the officer uses the police radio to notify dispatch, the communications clerk will note in the comment portion of the house check that U.S. mail, packages, etc., were picked up by the officer.
  - 2. When Village residents visit the station to claim their U.S. mail, packages, etc., the CCV communications clerk will create a call in CODY noting the return of mail, etc.
- F. After a house check is completed, officers shall advise the communications clerk of any circumstances discovered that he/she reasonably believes to be suspicious or important, including, but not limited to, open garage doors, broken window or door glass, property missing from the residence or yard, damage to the residence, vehicles not listed on the house check form, security alarms that have been activated, or unsecured doors or windows. As soon as reasonably possible, an officer discovering any circumstances such as those described above shall advise the communications clerks to notify either the homeowner or the emergency contact individual provided by the homeowner to ensure that the security and integrity of the residence will be maintained. The date, time, and name if the individual contacted shall be noted on the house check, as well as any response(s) by the contacted individual to resolve the suspicious or important circumstances
  - G. Patrol officers performing house checks should vary their patrol pattern, “double back” to some of the

residences, and conduct spot checks of the residences throughout the their patrol shift.

- H. More pressing police business and severe weather— such as heavy rains, high winds, snow squalls, etc.— are among the reasons which justify temporarily suspending doing assigned house checks. When the severe weather condition is over, officers will resume house checks.

## V. LEFT OVER HOUSE CHECKS

- A. When an officer is unable to complete their assigned house checks during their shift for any reason, that officer must:
  - 1. Notify the on-duty supervisor right away (an email before the end of the officer’s shift will suffice if there is no supervisor on duty). The notification must include the circumstances that resulted in the officer being unable to complete the assigned checks
  - 2. Notify the oncoming officer(s).
- B. Prior to starting their own assigned house checks, oncoming officers must first complete any house checks that the previous officer was unable to get to.

## VI. HIGH-VOLUME HOUSE CHECK PROCEDURE WHEN ONLY 1 PATROL OFFICER IS ON DUTY:

When only one officer is on duty when the number of house checks is high, completing house checks consumes the majority of an officer’s shift; this means that the officer is unable to focus on crime prevention, traffic safety, or provide better service to the Village at large. The following procedure will be adhered to when the number of house checks **reaches or exceeds 75** and there is **only one patrol officer on duty**.

- 1. On **even dates** (the 2nd, 4th, 6th, etc.), the **East side gets the standard procedure** (above), and the entire West side gets routine and ‘front door’ house checks.
- 2. On **odd dates** (the 1st, 3rd, 5th, etc.), the **West side gets the standard procedure**, and the entire East side gets routine and ‘front door’ house checks.
- 3. During months with 31 days, at the end of the month, two odd-numbered days run back-to-back (the 31st of one month is followed by the 1st of the next month). **When this occurs, officers must revert to the Standard House Check Procedures in Section IV on the 31st so that**

**all homes will receive a full check.** The High Volume procedure will re-start on the 1st of the following month.

This directive voids the previous version dated 8/24/2015 and incorporates language Memo 16-03: House Check Policy Reminders.