



# VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT PLANNING AND RESEARCH SECTION

## POLICY REPORT

**REPORT DATE:** June 13, 2006  
**BOARD MEETING:** June 14, 2006  
**BOARD REPORT #** 0648

**TO:** Sam Sullivan, Chair, Vancouver Police Board  
Vancouver Police Board Members  
Vancouver Police Union

**FROM:** Daryl Wiebe, Inspector 1162  
i/c Planning and Research Section

**SUBJECT:** Amendments to the Regulations and Procedures Manual (RPM)

### **RECOMMENDATION(S):**

THAT, as presented in Report #0648, the Vancouver Police Board approve the following amendments to the Regulations and Procedures Manual:

#### Overdose Policy

- 11.04 Guidelines for Police Attending Illicit Drug Overdoses

### **POLICY:**

THAT, the Vancouver Police Board approve the amendments to the Regulations and Procedures Manual pursuant to Section 28 of the *Police Act*.

### **PURPOSE:**

THAT, the following amendments to the Regulations and Procedures Manual be submitted to the Vancouver Police Board for their consideration and approval, and subsequent forwarding to Police Services as required by Section 28 of the *Police Act*.

## DISCUSSION/ IMPLICATIONS/ ALTERNATIVES

### Overdose Policy

In December 2003, the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) approved an interim overdose response policy, to be reviewed and evaluated after a one-year trial period. This response policy was based on research from Australia, and recognized the occurrence of drug overdoses as medical emergencies. It showed that the incidents of drug overdose deaths can decrease if the police do not lay charges for the drug use.

The intent of the VPD procedure was to reduce deaths by not having police regularly attend all overdose incidents with Emergency Health Services (EHS). Police still attend all fatal overdoses and incidents where there is a safety risk to EHS personnel and/or the public. Orientation/information sessions were conducted with front-line police members, E-Comm, EHS, community stakeholders and drug user groups. Eventually police non-attendance at "routine" overdose calls became an established practice and procedure by the end of 2004.

It is recommended that the interim overdose response policy under Section 11.04 of the RPM be amended and adopted as the regular procedure/policy for the Vancouver Police Department.

### CONCLUSION:

The Executive Committee of the Vancouver Police Department has approved the proposed amendments outlined in this report and request that the Vancouver Police Board approve and adopt these procedures.

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Submitting Executive Member (signature):

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This report has been prepared in consultation with the Sections/Divisions listed below, and they concur with its contents.

Concurring:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 1

### EXISTING/PROPOSED PROCEDURE

#### 11.04 Guidelines for Police Attending Illicit Drug Overdoses

##### Policy

Recent research has shown that though many drug overdose cases are witnessed, there is often reluctance in calling for emergency medical assistance for fear that police will also attend, resulting in prosecution. A drug overdose is by its very nature a medical emergency requiring rapid medical intervention to preserve life.

There is little value in police attendance at a routine, non-fatal overdose. It would be a rare circumstance for criminal charges to arise from attendance at a routine overdose call. In order to encourage a witness to a drug overdose to access emergency medical aid without delay, it is necessary to establish policy with respect to police attendance at overdose calls. Policy should tend to restrict police attendance to drug overdose calls only in the event there is a specific need for public safety.

The primary reason for police attendance at a non-fatal drug overdose call is to assist with life saving measures, and to assist with public safety.

##### Procedure

##### Non Fatal Drug Overdose Calls

1. When a member is advised of a drug overdose while in the performance of their duties, they shall immediately notify EHS through ECOMM and attend to the location of the victim until EHS arrives.
2. When EHS receives a call of "a possible drug overdose" EHS dispatch will notify Police Dispatch, through ECOMM, who shall, by way of a general broadcast, advise District Units that "EHS is responding to a possible drug overdose", the location and "assistance not requested."
3. Police will not normally attend EHS calls for a routine drug overdose unless EHS has advised ECOMM that "Assistance is Requested", for any or all of the reasons below:
  - a) Death of a person from an overdose is likely; or
  - b) EHS personnel request police attendance to assist with public safety;  
or
  - c) EHS personnel request police attendance because there is something suspicious about the incident; and
  - d) In each instance when police assistance is requested, the reason for the request will be broadcast to police units by the district dispatcher.

##### Fatal Drug Overdose Calls

4. In the case of a drug overdose death, the member will fully investigate the incident as a sudden or suspicious death (refer to: Section 15.09- Sudden Death; Section

26.13-Drugs-Handling Procedures and Section 18.02-Crime Scene Responsibilities).(link)

5. The assigned unit shall notify their Supervisor of the fatal overdose, and record the details of the incident in the District Overnight Book for discussion at the Daily Operations Management Meeting. The assigned patrol unit will ensure that a copy of the General Occurrence Report is routed to the Inspector i/c of the Drug Squad for follow up consideration.