

INCIDENT REPORTING

Report Early. Report Clearly.

PAGE 1 - REPORT WHAT HAPPENED

REPORT EARLY. REPORT CLEARLY.

An incident report creates a factual record of what occurred, what was observed, what actions were taken, and how the incident ended.

Write so someone who was not there can understand what happened without relying on assumptions or memory.

ADDRESS THE IMMEDIATE NEED FIRST

Immediate needs come before documentation.

Respond according to your role and organizational procedures. Once the situation is stable, document the incident as soon as reasonably practical while details are still fresh.

THE CORE RULE

DOCUMENT WHAT YOU KNOW - NOT WHAT YOU THINK HAPPENED.

Keep these sources of information clear:

WHAT I OBSERVED

What you personally saw, heard, or directly experienced.

WHAT I WAS TOLD

Information provided by another person. Attribute the information to its source.

WHAT ANOTHER SOURCE SHOWS

Relevant information from video, photographs, messages, records, or other sources.

If you don't know, don't guess.

SPECIFIC BEHAVIOR > DESCRIPTIVE LABELS

INSTEAD OF

"He became aggressive."

WRITE

"He struck the counter with his open hand, raised his voice, and stepped toward the greeter."

INSTEAD OF

"She was acting suspicious."

WRITE

"She attempted to open the secured children's-area door twice after being told the area was restricted."

FIELD PRINCIPLE

Specific behavior is more useful than a descriptive label.



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PAGE 2 - WHAT BELONGS IN THE REPORT

A useful incident report preserves relevant facts, sequence, actions, sources, and outcome.

INCLUDE

CONTEXT

Date, time, location, your role, and circumstances relevant to the incident.

PEOPLE

Identify involved persons and relevant witnesses as required by your organization's reporting process.

OBSERVATIONS & STATEMENTS

Record specific behavior, actions, conditions, and relevant statements. Attribute information to its source. Use quotation marks only when reasonably confident of the actual words.

SEQUENCE

Record what happened first, what changed, and what happened next. Do not manufacture precision when an exact time or detail is unknown.

ACTIONS & OUTCOME

Record relevant instructions, assistance, notifications, response actions, and how the incident ended.

EVIDENCE / SOURCES

Note relevant video, photographs, messages, records, or other sources when known. Follow organizational procedures for preserving, accessing, or handling evidence.

LEAVE OUT

ASSUMPTIONS

What you think probably happened presented as fact.

LABELS

Words such as "crazy," "dangerous," "troublemaker," or "suspicious" without describing the behavior that supports the concern.

UNSUPPORTED DIAGNOSES

Avoid medical or psychological conclusions. Describe observable behavior relevant to the incident.

RUMORS

Unverified information presented as fact.

MOTIVES

Why you believe someone acted a certain way unless the basis is known and attributable.

EXAGGERATION OR MINIMIZATION

Language that makes the incident sound more or less serious than the facts establish.

IRRELEVANT DETAILS

Do not include personal characteristics or private information unless relevant to identification, understanding the incident, the response, or required documentation.

WHEN YOU ARE NOT CERTAIN

"I observed..."

"I did not observe..."

"Smith told me..."

"The exact time is unknown..."

"I heard..."

"I could not determine..."

"According to the video..."

REMEMBER

If you know it, document it accurately. If someone told you, attribute it. If you don't know, don't guess.



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PAGE 3 - WRITE THE NARRATIVE

A strong narrative does not need complicated language. Give the reader a clear, factual account in the order the incident occurred.

SITUATION → OBSERVATION → ACTION → OUTCOME

SITUATION	<i>Where and when did this begin, and why did you become involved?</i> Give enough context for the reader to understand the starting point.
OBSERVATION	<i>What did you actually see and hear?</i> Describe the specific behavior, circumstances, statements, or changes that mattered.
ACTION	<i>What did you and others do?</i> Record relevant instructions, response actions, assistance, notifications, and significant reactions.
OUTCOME	<i>How did it end?</i> Document the disposition, injuries or property damage when relevant, responding agencies, transfer of responsibility, or needed follow-up.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

SITUATION	At approximately 10:15 a.m., I was serving as an usher near the main sanctuary entrance when I heard raised voices in the lobby.
OBSERVATION	I observed an adult male speaking loudly with a greeter and pointing toward the sanctuary doors. I heard him say, "I need to see the pastor now." He continued toward the sanctuary after being asked to remain in the lobby.
ACTION	I approached, identified myself, and asked him to return to the lobby. He complied. I notified the Security Director and remained with him until a staff member arrived.
OUTCOME	The individual spoke with the staff member and left through the main entrance at approximately 10:20 a.m. No injuries or property damage were observed.

BEFORE YOU SUBMIT

FACTS	- Is what I wrote factual?	SOURCE	- Is it clear how I know each important fact?
SEQUENCE	- Can someone follow what happened?	RESPONSE	- Did I document the actions taken?
OUTCOME	- Did I explain how it ended?		

Corrections or additions should follow your organization's reporting procedures.

FINAL PRINCIPLE

Write so someone who was not there can understand what happened, what you observed, what you did, and what happened next.

