

La Plata Police Department – General Order

	Title: Commendations and Awards		Order #: 422	
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Approved by: Chief Carl Schinner				CALEA 5 th Edition
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01 PURPOSE: The purpose of this Order is to provide submission procedures and eligibility criteria for each Departmental award, as well as to outline responsibilities of nominators, supervisors, commanders and the Commendation Board.

02 POLICY: The policy of the Department is to recognize its employees, citizens and other law enforcement professionals for exceptional performance and contributions made to the community and to the Department.

03 COMMENDATION BOARD:

- A.** The Board shall consist of four (5) members: One (1) Commander, two (2) Corporals, and two (2) officers of the rank of Police Officer First Class or below. Each division of the Department should be represented.
- B.** The Board shall be appointed by the Chief of Police on an as needed basis.
- C.** The Chairperson shall appoint a Recording Secretary.
- D.** The Commendation Board shall meet at the direction of the Chairperson of the Board.

04 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- A.** The Chairperson of the Commendation Board shall:
 - 1. Preside at meetings of the Board. In the event of his unavailability, the senior Corporal will serve as acting Chairperson.

2. Ensure all proceedings of the Board are conducted in accordance with this Order.

B. The Commendation Board shall select recipients for the following awards:

- 1. Medal of Honor;
- 2. Silver Star/Medal of Valor;
- 3. Bronze Star/Distinguished Service Commendation;
- 4. Class “1” Commendations;
- 5. Purple Heart; and,
- 6. Lifesaving Awards;

C. Every supervisor who has direct knowledge of a meritorious incident or service has the responsibility of submitting an appropriate nomination. Any other employee with direct knowledge is encouraged to submit a nomination. An employee may also nominate his/herself.

05 OTHER AWARD SELECTION CRITERIA:

- A.** The following Awards shall be determined by the Chief of Police or his/her designee:
 - 1. Unit Citations;
 - 2. Class “2” Commendation;
 - 3. Certificate of Merit; and,
 - 4. Citizen Awards.

B. Annually the Command Staff shall meet to select the following awards:

1. Police Officer of the Year; and,
2. Civilian of the Year.

C. Quarterly the Patrol Supervisors will nominate and select the Sheepdog/Officer of the Quarter;

D. The following awards may be determined and awarded by Division Commanders:

1. Letters of Commendation; and,
2. Letters of Appreciation.

06 AWARD DESCRIPTIONS:

A. THE MEDAL OF HONOR: The Departmental Medal Of Honor is the highest award the La Plata Police Department can bestow upon an officer. Before the issuance of a Medal of Honor to any officer of this Department, the Board, after a nomination is submitted, shall conduct an in-depth investigation into the incident. Oral interviews of witnesses, participants and the nominee, additional written reports and a review of events which led to the incident may be required by the Board's investigation. The award must be strictly limited so the integrity of the medal is never compromised.

1. The Medal of Honor may be awarded to an officer of the Department posthumously if the officer suffered death in the line-of-duty during any of the following circumstances:
 - a. While engaged in law enforcement activity;
 - b. While attempting to rescue other persons from imminent death.
 - c. While directly enforcing criminal laws of arrest and suffering a heart attack, stroke, or other manner of death proximally related to the engagement; or,

d. In an automobile collision while responding to a call for service or while in active pursuit.

2. The Medal of Honor will not be awarded posthumously to any member of this Department in the following instances:

- a. Death resulting from accidents in police facilities, offices, or non-incident related vehicle collisions;
- b. Death as a result of illness from heart attack, stroke or other illness not related to direct enforcement of the laws; or,
- c. Death as a result of a personal disagreement not related to performance of law enforcement duties.

3. The Medal of Honor may be granted to living officers of the Department who:

- a. Unavoidably, and with knowledge of risks, find themselves in a situation dangerous to life;
- b. Knowingly place themselves in danger or jeopardy of loss of life or grievous bodily injury, wherein any alternative course of action would not have caused anyone to criticize their lack of courage or dedication to duty;
- c. Intelligently committed themselves to danger and were successful in completing the objective. They cannot have failed except if physically unable to do so otherwise;
- d. Acts in the only way open to them to accomplish their objective, and where there was no other reasonable, safer way to accomplish their objective; and,
- e. All applicable requisites under "3" a, b, c, and d must be met.

4. The Medal of Honor cannot be received by a living officer of the Department if:

- a. As a result of an ambush or sniper attack where the officer's action is not meritorious or heroic;
 - b. The officer's actions were irresponsible and endangered the life of anyone else, or caused injury to innocent uninvolved person; or,
 - c. If the action of the officer was a direct violation of a direct order by a higher ranking officer, without good cause for violating the order.
5. The decision by the Board must be a two-third majority.
 6. In order for any living officer of the Department to qualify for the Medal of Honor, all of the requirements for the Silver Star must have been met by the nominee and all requisites for the lesser medals would apply in addition to the requirements and requisites for the Medal of Honor.
 7. The officer receiving the Metal of Honor will be issued the following:
 - a. Plaque;
 - b. Medal (Class "A" Uniform);
 - c. Gold Cross (Work Uniform);
 - d. Departmental Certificate; and,
 - e. Letter in personnel file.

B. THE SILVER STAR: The Silver Star is the second highest award given to an officer of the La Plata Police Department. This award is in recognition of service to the Department and the citizens of La Plata wherein valor, courage, intelligence and bravery are shown and demonstrated over and above that normally demanded and expected of dedicated police officers. The prerequisites for the medal must be met beyond any doubt, and may be granted only upon a majority decision of the entire Commendation Board or approval by a number of Board members present, which

would constitute a majority of the Board if all had been present (three members out of five).

1. The Silver Star may be awarded to an officer who was involved in apprehending a violator of any criminal law, was enforcing the law or was attempting to maintain the peace; and,
2. Was aware of the danger present and took subsequent action with full knowledge of the hazard involved; and,
3. Was in danger of being slain or seriously injured as evident by:
 - a. Deadly weapons directed at the officer with a subsequent successful effort by the officer to conclude the incident either by the fatal wounding or the arrest of the suspect;
 - b. Wounding of the officer by deadly weapons, with a subsequent successful effort by the officer to conclude the incident either by the fatal wounding or the arrest of the suspect, if the officer was physically able to do so; or,
 - c. Direct evidence from involved persons who may have witnessed the incident and would set forth the opinion that the officer was indeed in grave danger as to loss of life or serious injury and can support that opinion with sound, logical reasoning.
4. The Silver Star may be awarded to an officer, who is involved in a lifesaving effort at the risk of the officer's life, if:
 - a. There was no other reasonable way for the officer to effect or attempt the saving of the life of another;
 - b. Immediate and positive action had to be taken; and,
 - c. The officer would not have been criticized had he/she not undertaken the effort.

5. All the applicable requirements for the Bronze Star must be met in addition to the Silver Star in order for an officer to be awarded the Silver Star.
6. The officer receiving the Silver Star will receive the following:
 - a. Plaque;
 - b. Medal (Class "A" Uniform);
 - c. Red Ribbon (Work Uniform);
 - d. Departmental Certificate; and,
 - e. Letter in personnel file.

C. THE BRONZE STAR: The Bronze Star is the third highest award given by the La Plata Police Department. The Bronze Star will be awarded in those instances wherein the officer has shown courage, intelligence or devotion to duty in the apprehension and arrest of the perpetrator.

1. The Bronze Star may be awarded to those officers whose arrest of an armed and dangerous person(s) provided:
 - a. The suspect must have been armed;
 - b. The person was armed by such means that the officer could have been harmed if the arrested person so chose at the time of arrest; and,
 - c. The circumstances of the arrest/suspect fatality contained an inherent element of danger to the officer;
 - d. The subject must have been armed with a rifle, pistol or edged weapon and the arrest was made at close range;
 - e. The arrested person had the capacity and mental attitude to harm the officer and attempt to do so (lunging at the officer with a knife, club, bottle, or other dangerous or deadly weapon, other than a firearm);

- f. The apprehension of a subject while in the act of committing a crime such as armed robbery, assault with a deadly weapon, assault with intent to murder when a deadly weapon is used or the apprehension of a subject attempting to evade capture and fleeing the scene of a criminal act as forth;
 - g. Any other situation comparable to those listed above;
 - h. The officer making the arrest must have known the person was armed before the actual arrest of the person; and,
 - i. The officer was exposed to and aware of an element of danger, prior to taking any action.
2. The Bronze Star will not be awarded in the following instances:
 - a. For the arrest of a subject carrying a concealed deadly weapon; or,
 - b. For the arrest of a person fleeing a crime scene who disposes of a weapon before the officer comes into range;
 - c. The subject throws away a pistol or rifle before being stopped by the officer; or,
 - d. The subject drops a knife or club before the officer comes near enough to be injured.
 3. The officer receiving the Bronze Star will receive the following:
 - a. Plaque;
 - b. Medal (Class "A" Uniform);
 - c. Gold Ribbon with blue stripe and three silver stars (Work Uniform);
 - d. Departmental Certificate; and,
 - e. Letter in personnel file.

D. CLASS “1” COMMENDATION:

1. The Class “1” Commendation may be awarded under the following circumstances:
 - a. The employee displays courage in the application of the laws of arrest which would not otherwise qualify the employee for the Medal of Honor, Silver Star or the Bronze Star, of a subject fleeing from the scene of an Armed Robbery, Assault with intent to Murder, Rape or having committed some other deadly offense;
 - b. Display courage and devotion to duty in the application of the laws of arrest over and above that usually required of a law enforcement officer;
 - c. Display intelligence and devotion to duty in unusual circumstances; or,
 - d. Show initiative, intelligence, expertise and self sacrifice over and above that required by rules and regulation in the solution of crimes and the apprehension of offenders.
2. The Class “1” Commendation will not be awarded if any of the following conditions exists.
 - a. If the officer’s actions were a violation of a direct order from an officer of higher rank, without good reason for violating the order; or,
 - b. If the officer’s actions were a violation of Departmental Rules and Regulations, without good reason for the violation.
3. The officer receiving the Class “1” Commendation will receive the following:
 - a. Gold Ribbon with blue stripe and two silver stars;
 - b. Departmental Certificate; and,

c. Letter in personnel file.

E. THE PURPLE HEART: The Purple Heart shall be awarded to recognize the personal sacrifice made by an officer of the Department in the line of duty.

1. The Purple Heart may be awarded in the following instances:
 - a. The officer must suffer a wound which is significant; and;
 - b. Requires sutures, surgery or significant medical treatment; and,
 - c. The injury was substantiated by independent witnesses, physical evidence or other police officers as to the facts to the occurrence.
 - d. The officer is confined to home or hospital because of:
 - (1) Serious internal injury requiring extensive medical treatment; or,
 - (2) Broken bones set and placed in a cast by a physician, and such injury was inflicted in the line of duty.
 - e. The Purple Heart may be awarded to an officer for injuries received while on duty or off duty, provided the officer was actively engaging their official duties.
 - f. The Purple Heart may be awarded as a result of injuries in a traffic accident; if,
 - (1) The officer is not in violation of the Rules and Regulations of the Maryland Transportation Article and his/her actions are not in conflict with the Department’s Rules and Regulations;
 - (2) The officer is trying to apprehend and arrest a lawbreaker (felony or misdemeanor) and is in hot pursuit; or,

- (3) The officer is seriously injured while working traffic details, traffic direction, etc. in an approved manner.
 - g. The Purple Heart may be awarded in non-criminal matters if all the applicable requirements in this Section are met and the officer is directly involved in a lifesaving effort, whether successful or not in the endeavor.
2. The Purple Heart may not be awarded to officers injured on duty due to:
 - a. Accidents as a result of carelessness, ineptness or personal disagreement with other persons;
 - b. Automobile collisions which are determined to be preventable;
 - c. Accidents in the station or satellite offices or any other place if the officer is not actively attempting to apprehend an offender or maintain the peace;
 - d. Horse play, falling out of a chair, equipment malfunctions, improper use of equipment, etc; or,
 - e. Heart attack, stroke, pneumonia, diabetic coma or other physical condition or dysfunction.
 3. The Purple Heart may be awarded to any officer killed on duty, accidental or otherwise, at the discretion of the Commendation Board, after due deliberation.
 4. The officer receiving the Purple Heart will receive the following:
 - a. Purple Ribbon;
 - b. Departmental Certificate; and
 - c. Letter in personnel file.

F. THE LIFESAVING AWARD:

1. When an employee attempts to save a human life by his/her direct efforts and resourcefulness, a lifesaving award will be issued (i.e., performance of CPR, the Heimlich maneuver, etc).
2. The officer receiving the Lifesaving Award will receive the following:
 - a. Commendation Ribbon;
 - b. Departmental Certificate; and,
 - c. Letter in personnel file.

G. THE UNIT CITATION:

1. The Unit Citation may be awarded to all officers of any organizational component, squad, unit, Departmentally approved Task Force etc., for superior performance on a calendar year basis, or the duration of the Task Force, when such performance is clearly exceptional and worthy of commendation.
2. For a specific incident or event in which a unit has excelled as a whole, above and beyond what would normally be expected of the unit under their current assignment.
3. There must be a written recommendation from a Division Commander, or a squad/unit supervisor.
4. The Unit Citation will not be awarded for the following:
 - a. To those members of the unit serving less than six months with the unit under the conditions of G.1; or,
 - b. Incidents in which less than one half of the unit or squad participated.
5. Only those members of the squad/unit on duty at the time of the incident under the conditions of G.2.

6. The Unit Citation may be awarded in addition to any individual commendations or awards that may be given in connection with the incident or event.
7. The officers receiving the Unit Citation will receive the following:
 - a. Gold ribbon with three blue stripes;
 - b. Departmental Certificate; and,
 - c. Letter in personnel file.

H. CLASS “2” COMMENDATION:

1. The Class “2” Commendation may be awarded under the following circumstances:
 - a. The officer displays intelligence and devotion to duty in unusual circumstances, over and above that usually required of the employee in their present assignment and which reflects highly upon the officer and the Department.
2. The Class “2” Commendation will not be awarded if any of the following conditions exists.
 - a. The officer was in violation of Departmental Rules and Regulations, without good cause for the violation; or,
 - b. The officer’s actions were in violation of a direct order from a higher ranking officer, without good cause for the violation.
3. The officers receiving the Unit Citation will receive the following:
 - d. Gold ribbon;
 - e. Departmental Certificate; and,
 - f. Letter in personnel file.

I. LETTER OF COMMENDATION:

1. The Letter of Commendation may be given for excellence in the

performance of duty where no other awards or commendations apply.

2. The Letter of Commendation will not be awarded when the facts do not support the commendation.

J. CERTIFICATE OF MERIT:

1. The Certificate of Merit may be given when any of the following conditions exist:
 - a. Saves money;
 - b. Saves time;
 - c. Increases efficiency; or,
 - d. Improves morale.
2. The submitted presentation must be adopted as Departmental policy or procedure. The adoption of the basic theme is all that is necessary, provided that the idea for change or improvement originated with the proposal submitted by the nominee.

K. LETTER OF APPRECIATION: The Letter of Appreciation may be given for excellent work performance for a specific event or incident where other awards or commendations do not apply, such as letters of praise from citizens, and professional handling of an incident, assistance with a special event/detail etc.

L. CITIZEN AWARD: Whenever a citizen renders valuable or courageous assistance to officers of the Department, particularly in cases in which a criminal is seized and detained until arrival of the police, an involved supervisor shall submit a detailed memorandum, via chain of command, of such fact to the Office of the Chief of Police. Upon review by the Chief of Police or his/her designee, if deemed worthy of commendation, a Citizen’s Award shall be presented to the citizen involved.

M. POLICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR: Annually, the Command Staff of the Department shall meet after soliciting recommendations for the Police Officer of the Year. Once the deadline has been

reached, the Command Staff will select the La Plata Police Officer of the Year.

1. The criteria to meet are the following:
 - a. The officer has to have demonstrated the ability to perform the day-to-day functions of a police officer with demonstrated empathy towards the community he/she serves; and,
 - b. The officer is devoted to duty beyond the requirements of the job which include enforcement, community activities and enhancing the Department; and,
 - c. The officer has above average supervisory performance evaluations for the year under consideration; and;
 - d. The officer produces quality work and demonstrates above average initiative in the performance of his/her duties; and.
 - e. The nominee will be considered for a year's worth of work, not just one particular incident.
 - f. All ranks of the Department are eligible for this award.
2. The recipient will receive the following:
 - a. Plaque;
 - b. Commendation Ribbon;
 - c. Departmental Certificate; and,
 - d. Letter in personnel file.

N. SHEEPDOG/OFFICER OF THE QUARTER: The sheepdog/officer of the quarter will be selected by the Patrol Supervisors. The procedure for selection includes the following:

1. The Chief of Police shall solicit nominations from the Patrol Supervisors;

2. Patrol Supervisors may consider any member in the organization for either a specific event, work ethic during the specified timeframe or other dedicated actions towards the citizens of the Town of La Plata.
3. Once each supervisor has nominated an officer, the Chief will forward the names of the nominees back to the Patrol Supervisors for selection.
4. Should a tie in voting occur the Command Staff will make the final selection; and,
5. The Chief of Police will announce the winner and present the member with the following:
 - a. Sheepdog statue;
 - b. Gift card to a selected restaurant;

O. SERVICE AWARD (ribbon): The Service Award shall be awarded to officers when they have served the Citizens of La Plata for five (5) years. The award will be updated every five years with the officer receiving a new set of numeric pins.

P. CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR: The Civilian Employee of the Year Award shall be presented to a civilian employee who has:

1. Demonstrated above average initiative in the performance of his/her duties.
2. Demonstrated above average devotion to accomplishing his/her assigned tasks and providing quality service to the Department and thereby to the community.
3. Was rated above average in supervisory performance evaluations.
4. The recipient of the Civilian of the Year Award will receive the following:
 - c. Plaque;
 - d. Departmental Certificate; and,
 - e. Letter in personnel file.

07 AWARD PROCEDURES:

- A.** Nominations for all commendations shall be submitted in Memorandum format via the chain of command and should contain:
 - 1. Detailed statements of facts applicable to the nomination, including those that may not be contained in an incident report.
 - 2. Diagrams, drawings or photographs may be attached to the recommendation if the writer feels such additions would be useful.
 - 3. A brief statement as to why the writer of the recommendation for commendation feels the nominee should earn a particular award.
 - 4. The excessive use of superlatives is not encouraged.
 - 5. The original reports, and all supplementation attached thereto, shall become part of the deliberation.
 - 6. The incident report must substantiate the recommendation.
 - 7. Facts as stated in the incident report cannot be changed or altered by the verbiage contained in the commendation recommendation.
 - 8. The original incident report will have great impact on the decision.
- B.** The selection of commendations, awards or honor by the Commendation Board will be based upon the guidelines for the individual award.
- C.** The Commendation Board will be the sole judge as to the meaning, interpretation and applicability of the guidelines to a particular recommendation for commendation.
- D.** The Commendation Board may reject, accept, upgrade or downgrade a recommendation for commendation.
- E.** The Commendation Board will consider the duty assignment, the requirements of the assignment, the specialty of the nominee and

the performance expected and required of the nominee when deliberating a commendation recommendation.

- F.** The Commendation Board will provide a disposition (approval or disapproval) on each nomination within 30 days to:
 - 1. The nominee's commanding officer and supervisor;
 - 2. The person recommending the commendation;
 - 3. The involved officer;
 - 4. The Chief of Police; and,
 - 5. The Commendation Board will retain a copy of their records.

NOTE: The above will apply only to officers and civilians of the Department and shall not apply to officers or citizens not employed by the Department.
- G.** The following circumstances will exclude an officer from being awarded any commendation:
 - 1. If the officer's actions were in violation of Departmental Rules and Regulations, wherein such violation was likely to cause injury to the officer or others;
 - 2. If the officer's actions deliberately or ineptly caused an escalation of a particular incident to the point the officer or others were placed in jeopardy, caused firearms to be used, caused injury to other persons who were uninvolved or caused a more critical situation to arise as a result of the officer's actions;
 - 3. If the officer violated a direct order of a higher ranking officer and becomes involved in a serious situation as a result of that violation, without valid reason for violating the order.
 - 4. If the officer's duty assignment requires the performance of dangerous and hazardous tasks specific to that assignment, unless the officer's

performance is above and beyond the call of that duty;

5. If the official report or other documentation does not substantiate the recommendation or commendation;
6. If the officer was not successful in completing his/her objective even though he was physically able to do so;
7. If the officer exposes him/herself to danger without due care;
8. If the officer irresponsibly endangered the life of anyone else by his/her actions, or caused injury to innocent, uninvolved persons; or,
9. Whose actions were specially directed by Rules and Regulations, that would have resulted in disciplinary action had he/she not followed those Rules and Regulations.

08 APPEALS OF COMMENDATION BOARD DECISIONS:

The Commendation Board will, upon appeal of their decision, grant a review under the following guidelines:

- A. The appellant should advise the Chairperson of the Board in writing via Memorandum;
- B. All appeals must be filed within 30 days after notification of a Commendation Board decision;
- C. The Board may grant hearings on appeals only when it is shown that there is newly found evidence, or to right a blatant injustice;
- D. The appellant may be required to appear in person before the Board to set forth the reason for the appeal;
- E. Only one appeal of a Commendation Board decision will be heard;
- F. Failure of the appellant or his designee, to appear after notification, before the Board as scheduled without good cause or without notifying the Board of a relevant reason for being unable to appear may cause a rejection of the appeal;

- G. The Commendation Board's decision on an appeal is final; and,
- H. The appellant will receive a written reply to his appeal.

09 OFFICERS FROM ALLIED AGENCIES:

- A. On occasion, officers from allied agencies have participated in the apprehension of dangerous felons while on and off-duty within the City, as well as become involved in joint endeavors with the City. Therefore, officers from allied agencies may be recommended for any Department Awards by any officer of the Department. Such nominations for commendations shall be considered by the Commendation Board, using the same standards and criteria employed in deliberating commendation recommendations for officers of the Department.
- B. Officers from other jurisdictions receiving an award shall receive a framed certificate issued for the appropriate award and Citation Bar, if applicable.
- C. Section 09 does not preclude the Chief of Police or a Division Commander to send a Letter of Appreciation or Commendation to an allied agency for assistance in a particular incident or event.

- 10 SPECIALIZED AWARDS:** The Chief of Police may, at any time, establish a new commendation ribbon. (i.e., National Defense Ribbon-officers working on 9-11, etc.).

- 11 AWARDS RECEIVED WHILE WORKING FOR AN ALLIED AGENCY:** La Plata officers who have received awards while working for an allied law enforcement agency may display the award ribbons on their uniforms. LPPD award definitions will take priority over those of the allied agencies.

- 12 RIBBONS:** See Addendum for Current Ribbons.

- 13 RIBBON WEAR:** See Order 410-Uniform Wear.

