

CHAPTER 1
GENERAL
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CHAPTER 1
GENERAL

1. POLICY.

a. Authority. Government Code 19823 and The State of California Department of Human Resources are responsible for establishing policy and guidelines for the administration of the State Merit Award Program. The Merit Award Program was established in 1950 to promote employee participation and to save the state money.

(1) A Merit Award is an award for an adopted suggestion that results in an intangible benefit and/or identifiable tangible benefit. Suggestions are categorized into three types: improved procedure, improved safety, and cost savings.

(2) State Administrative Manual Sections 4700-4782 authorize awards for state employees who perform special acts or services in the public interest or who make exceptional contributions to the operation of state government.

(3) The Merit Award Program is also responsible for the administration of the Superior Accomplishment and the Sustained Superior Accomplishment Awards. These awards are for performance resulting in exceptional contributions to improving state government.

(4) In addition, the Merit Award Program is responsible for the administration of the Medal of Valor awards which are presented to state employees for Special Acts or Special Service as defined in Chapter 2 of this manual. The Medal of Valor is the highest honor that the state bestows upon its employees.

b. Departmental Policy. The Department also recognizes the need to submit award nominations and partner with externally sponsored recognition programs to honor worthy employees and departmental program achievements related to law enforcement and traffic safety. Additionally, the Department bestows appropriate internal honors to personnel and civilians who perform acts or accomplishments not within the scope of the Government Code provisions, but which contribute to the efficiency and prestige of the Department.

(1) The California Highway Patrol (CHP) shall foster and maintain a continuous program for extending official recognition to personnel who perform acts of meritorious service or accomplish outstanding achievements.

(2) The CHP shall officially recognize exceptional performance by any departmental unit which enhances the Department's efficiency and/or image.

(3) In order to attain maximum benefit of the awards program established by this manual, it is essential that all management levels within the Department understand its importance and application. The promptness and accuracy of initiating nominations for significant performances are the two essential elements in the awards process.

(4) As an integral part of this program, the CHP shall extend official recognition to private citizens who perform meritorious acts of aid to a fellow civilian or to the Department under circumstances which are within the scope of departmental responsibility.

2. CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL AWARDS BOARD.

a. Responsibilities. The CHP Awards Board was established to review all state-level valor award nominations submitted in accordance with this manual and provide recommendations to the Commissioner concerning award submissions. Additionally, the Awards Board reviews all proposals for new awards submitted for consideration.

b. Composition. The Board will consist of one nonvoting chief, who is the Executive Assistant for Assistant Commissioner, Staff (ACS) and five voting members, who are appointed by the Commissioner. The nonvoting chief will act as the Board chairperson and the five voting members will consist of the following: one captain, one sergeant, two officers, and one non-uniformed employee.

c. Term Limits. The five voting Board members will serve for the duration of the following term limits:

(1) Nonvoting chief—while assigned to ACS.

(2) Captain—four-year term.

(3) Sergeant—three-year term.

(4) Nonuniformed employee—two-year term.

(5) Officers—two-year term.

d. Meeting Frequency. The Board will convene as scheduled by the chairperson and the CSU will notify each member by e-mail.

e. Board Recommendations. The chairperson will present the Awards Board findings to the Commissioner. If approved by the Commissioner, the CSU shall

forward the award nomination(s) to the appropriate state department or private sponsor for final review and approval.

3. AWARD CLASSIFICATIONS.

a. State- and Department-Level. State- and Department-level awards, as defined in this manual, are considered prestigious awards. Nomination(s) which require review and approval by the State Merit Award Program shall be classified as state-level awards.

b. Division- and Area/Section-Level. Division- and Area/section-level awards for departmental personnel, as defined in this manual, are for commendable performances by an employee, civilian, or organizational unit which do not justify a state- or Department-level award.

c. Safety. Safety awards for employees of the CHP, as defined in this manual, are also considered prestigious awards. It is departmental policy to acknowledge the efforts of both individuals and groups who demonstrate safe work performance over time for a significant period.

d. Annual. Annual awards are sponsored by organizations outside the Department and are available to departmental employees. They do not justify a state- or Department-level award but require review by the CHP Awards Board and approval by the Office of the Commissioner. This applies to annual awards identified in this manual.

4. REQUIRED INVESTIGATION AND REPORT CONTENT.

a. Responsibilities. Commanders shall inquire when information is received regarding the performance of an act by departmental personnel and/or civilians which may possibly be a basis for departmental recognition.

b. Departmental Recognition. If the inquiry indicates departmental recognition is appropriate, the commander shall prepare a complete report of the employee's and/or civilian's actions. This report will constitute the basis for the proposed official commendation. In addition to containing the immediate commander's recommendation as to proposed final action and any other awards for which the employee and/or civilian is being submitted, the report shall also contain the information required to substantiate the proposed award. Guidelines for preparing nominations are contained in appropriate chapters of this manual.

5. DEFINITIONS OF PERFORMANCE. The following definitions shall be used to determine the appropriate level of award recognition described in subsequent chapters.

a. Call of Duty. Those acts not falling within the provisions of paragraphs 5.b. and 5.c. below are deemed within the normal call of duty.

b. Above and Beyond the Normal Call of Duty or Service. To apply when all of the following elements exist:

(1) Where the employee manifests outstanding bravery in the performance of duty under circumstances not within the provisions listed for the superior-effort act award as defined in Chapter 4, Department-Level Awards.

(2) Where the life of the employee is risked with full and unquestionable knowledge of the danger involved or where a reasonable person would assume their life was in danger.

(3) Where the objective is of sufficient importance to justify the risk.

c. Far Above and Beyond the Normal Call of Duty or Service. To apply when all the following elements exist:

(1) Exceptional acts of valor, which are above and beyond the call of duty.

(2) Where the risk of life actually existed, and the employee had sufficient time to evaluate it or where a reasonable person would assume their life was in great danger.

(3) Where the employee accomplishes the objective or is prevented from same by incurring a disabling injury or death.

(4) Where the objective is of sufficient importance to justify the risk.

6. AWARD DOCUMENTATION CERTIFICATES. Blank certificates for Department-level, Division-level, and Area/section-level awards are available in PDF or from Business Services Section, Supply Services Unit (SSU), through the standard requisition process. These certificates, which are described in subsequent chapters, include the CHP 123, Certificate of Commendation; CHP 123A, Division Chief's Commendation; CHP 123E, Commander's Certificate of Commendation; CHP 429, Certificate of Appreciation; CHP 429B, Certificate of Community Service; and CHP 429C, Certificate of Recognition. Additionally, CHP 123D, Presentation Folder, may be ordered from SSU. Certificates for State-level awards are prepared by the appropriate state agency and/or private organization. Certificates for superior accomplishment awards are prepared by Area offices.

7. PROPOSED AWARD PROCEDURES. Recommendations for new awards shall be completed and submitted on a memorandum through channels to Assistant Commissioner, Staff, CSU, to be forwarded to the CHP Awards Board for review. The proposal should include, at a minimum, the following:

- a. Justification. Explain why recognition cannot be accomplished with an existing award.
- b. Sample of Award. Prepare a sample of the proposed award and provide:
 - (1) Award description.
 - (2) Uniform accouterment description, if applicable.
- c. Approval Process. The CHP Awards Board will review and make recommendations to Executive Management concerning the proposed award. If approved, the award will be routed to CSU for inclusion in this manual.

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