



Kern County Sheriff's Office
Policies and Procedures

TITLE: COMMENDATION POLICY		NO: J-200	
APPROVED: Donny Youngblood, Sheriff-Coroner			
EFFECTIVE: August 1, 1990	REVIEWED: 05/6/2022	REVISED: 05/6/2022	UPDATED: 05/6/2022

POLICY

The Kern County Sheriff's Office expects a high level of professional conduct from all employees; however, members of the Sheriff's Office frequently perform their duties in a manner exceeding the highest standards of the agency. When such conduct occurs, it will be officially recognized, and an appropriate commendation will be made.

Additionally, the Sheriff's Office will officially recognize and commend those civilians' of the community who substantially assist the agency in a manner beyond their normal civic responsibilities.

These awards and commendations afford a means of promoting public and internal recognition of exceptional bravery, outstanding achievement, meritorious service, and exceptional skills performed by individuals.

To preserve the integrity of the commendations, they shall be awarded only to recognized acts which are clearly and distinctly outstanding by nature and magnitude. The act must place the employees', or civilians', performance significantly above that of their contemporaries.

DIRECTIVE

The types and levels of awards and commendations will be as follows:

- Sheriff's Office level awards shall be a certificate, accompanied by a letter of explanation, issued by the Sheriff-Coroner for the following:

- Valor Award:

This commendation will be awarded for acts of "exceptional bravery" above and beyond that expected in line of duty, or beyond normal civic responsibility.

- Meritorious Service/Achievement Award:

This commendation will be made in recognition of officers or citizens who have displayed dedication, outstanding achievement and/or meritorious service performed in the interest of their division and community toward the achievement of the law enforcement purpose and the furtherance of the precepts embodied in the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics.

- Sheriff’s Office awards of prestige shall be awarded to one recipient annually. Recipients of these awards shall receive a specialty “Eagle in Flight” trophy, accompanied by a letter of explanation on Sheriff’s Office letterhead, issued by the Sheriff-Coroner for the following:

- Deputy James Throne Memorial Award:

In 2007, Deputy Sheriff James Throne was involved in a fatal vehicle collision while searching for a suspect near Lamont, California. Deputy Throne was a stellar officer, one who would regularly go above and beyond the call of duty. He was actively involved in the community, working closely with youth in the Lamont Sheriff’s Activities League, and conducted himself with the utmost professionalism in all of his official duties.

In 2011, Sheriff Donny Youngblood established the Deputy James Throne Memorial Award to recognize employees of the Sheriff’s Office who best exemplify the traits of integrity, accountability, and honesty, while maintaining a commitment to the community policing and problem-solving philosophy. A perpetual plaque was created and will remain on display in Sheriff’s Administration, with the name of new recipients added each year.

- Deputy Phillip J. Campas Allegiance Award:

In 2021, Deputy Sheriff Phillip J. Campas was killed in the line of duty during a SWAT Operation in Wasco, California. Deputy Campas was part of the entry team attempting to perform a hostage rescue when he made the ultimate sacrifice answering the call of duty. Deputy Campas showed courageous valor, unwavering commitment to his team, and heroism in the face of extreme danger. When the time came for action in the face of danger, Deputy Campas said “I’ll go.”

Deputy Campas accepted every assignment in a positive manner. His outstanding work ethic served as a source of inspiration to his co-workers, established himself as a leader, and demonstrated his fierce loyalty to his chosen profession. Deputy Campas embodied these traits on a regular basis and served honorably in a variety of collateral assignments, including SWAT Operator, Recruit Training Officer, Honor Guard, and Range Instructor.

In 2022, Sheriff Donny Youngblood established the Deputy Phillip J. Campas Allegiance Award to recognize sworn personnel of the Sheriff’s Office who go above and beyond in all they do, whether it be through acts of bravery or performing various responsibilities exemplifying exceptional commitment to the Kern County Sheriff’s Office and community. A perpetual plaque was created and will remain on display in Sheriff’s Administration, with the name of new recipients added each year.

J-200-2

EFFECTIVE: August 1, 1990	REVIEWED: 05/6/2022	REVISED: 05/6/2022	UPDATED: 05/6/2022
-------------------------------------	-------------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------------

- Bureau level commendations shall be a letter-issued by the Sheriff’s Office Chief Deputies and will consist of the following:
 - Commendations for Bravery

This commendation will be issued for individual achievements and/or service records that are significant but not of such “exceptional” magnitude to justify the Sheriff’s Office meritorious service/achievement commendation.
 - Commendation for Meritorious Achievement/Service

This commendation will be issued for individual achievements and/or service records that are signal but not of such “exceptional” magnitude to justify the Sheriff’s Office meritorious service/achievement commendation.
- Division level commendations shall be letters issued by the Sheriff’s Office Division Commanders. The letters will be issued to individuals for acts or achievements which are outstanding within divisional boundaries but do not justify bureau level commendations.
- Unit or supervisory level commendations shall be office memorandums issued by the Sheriff’s Office Sergeant to individuals for remarkable performance in specific areas of responsibility or on specific occasions or assignments.
 - This level of commendation may be issued on the initiative of the supervisor and does not require approval as described below. However, a copy of the memorandum shall be forwarded to the appropriate Chief Deputy through the chain of command.
- Specialty skills commendations shall be a letter issued by the Sheriff’s Office Training Section Lieutenant to individuals demonstrating exceptional skill in utilization of De-Escalation and Crisis Intervention Team Training. The Training Section Lieutenant oversees the Training Committee and also serves as the CIT Coordinator. Recommendation and approval procedure outlined below.
 - Commendation for Exceptional Skills in De-escalation

This commendation will be awarded for the employment of exemplary de-escalation tactics resulting in the significant stabilization of a volatile situation threatening human life or great bodily injury. De-escalation tactics include, but are not limited to, warnings, verbal persuasion, tactical repositioning, any attempt to increase the amount of time until utilizing force, attempts to increase available force options for the encounter or the request for additional resources (e.g. CIT Trained Deputies, MET/JET Teams, Tactical Communication, etc.).
 - Commendation for Exceptional Skills in Crisis Intervention Team Training

J-200-3

EFFECTIVE: August 1, 1990	REVIEWED: 05/6/2022	REVISED: 05/6/2022	UPDATED: 05/6/2022
-------------------------------------	-------------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------------

This commendation will be awarded for the employment of exemplary CIT skills. CIT is an innovative collaborative approach to safely and effectively addressing the needs of people with mental health illnesses or substance abuse issues by linking them to appropriate services and diverting them from the criminal justice system, when appropriate. The primary goal of CIT is to improve safety while reducing injuries to officers and individuals with mental illnesses during law enforcement contacts. This can also be accomplished by developing partnerships between law enforcement, mental health, other government agencies, and community organization to identify a way to put individuals in touch with services aimed at addressing the root cause of the law enforcement contact, potentially reducing the number of contacts or diverting them for the criminal justice system altogether.

PROCEDURE

Any employee may recommend another employee or citizen for an award or commendation. Any employee wishing to do so will:

- Prepare a memorandum directed to:
 - The supervisor of the employee to be commended, or;
 - The recommending employee's supervisor if the recommendation involves a citizen.
- Include full documentation of the incident such as:
 - Reports
 - Diagrams
 - Photographs
 - Witness Statements
 - Include statement of why the commendation is deserved.

Any supervisor who receives such a memo will:

- Within three (3) working days:
 - Review recommendation;
 - Investigate the incident;
 - Determine if commendation is warranted.
- Within two (2) working days after the review, forward the original recommendation to their Lieutenant and Commander.

J-200-4

EFFECTIVE: August 1, 1990	REVIEWED: 05/6/2022	REVISED: 05/6/2022	UPDATED: 05/6/2022
-------------------------------------	-------------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------------

- Include the results of their investigation;
- Include their recommendation.

Any Lieutenant and Commander who receive such recommendation within three (3) working days will:

- Review the original request and the supervisor’s recommendation;
- Determine if a commendation is warranted.
 - If not warranted, return to the employee who made the request with an explanation;
 - If commendation warranted, forward to appropriate Chief Deputy with recommendation as to level.
- If a Specialty Skill Commendation for CIT or De-Escalation is warranted, forward to the Personnel Division Commander.
 - If not warranted, return to the employee who made the request with an explanation.
 - If warranted, the Personnel Division Commander will cause the Training Section Lieutenant to issue the commendation and enter it into the employee’s personnel file.
 - The Training Section will serve as the custodian of records for all commendations requested and issued for CIT/De-Escalation Skills.

Any Chief Deputy receiving such request with three (3) working days will:

- Make a final determination as to the appropriate commendation or award;
- Cause the appropriate commendation to be prepared;
- Cause the appropriate service of the commendation;
- Cause the commendation to be entered into the employee’s personnel file.

Whenever possible, the entire process should be completed within 15 working days.

J-200-5

EFFECTIVE: August 1, 1990	REVIEWED: 05/6/2022	REVISED: 05/6/2022	UPDATED: 05/6/2022
-------------------------------------	-------------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------------