# Parma Police Department
## Public Records Policy

**Policy**

It is the belief of the Parma Police Department that openness leads to a better informed citizenry, which leads to better government and better public policy. Therefore, it is the policy of the Parma Police Department to strictly adhere to the State of Ohio Public Records Act to comply with requests for the release of public records. Although there are legal exemptions to the release of protected information, all exemptions to openness will be construed in their narrowest sense and any denial of public records in response to a valid request will be accompanied by an explanation, including legal authority, as outlined in the Ohio Revised Code. If a record is clearly public with no applicable exceptions, it will be disclosed. If the request is in writing, the explanation shall also be in writing.

**Public Records**

The Parma Police Department, in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code Sec. 149.011(G) defines "Records" as including any document, device or item, regardless of physical form or characteristic, including an electronic record, created or received by, or coming under the jurisdiction of a public office which serves to document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office. All records of the Parma Police Department are public unless they are specifically exempt from disclosure under the Ohio Revised Code. Note: The Ohio Supreme Court has imposed an **actual use** standard in defining a **"record."**

It is the policy of the Parma Police Department that, as required by Ohio law, records will be organized and maintained so that they are readily available for inspection and copying. Record retention schedules shall be updated regularly and posted prominently.

**Record Requests**

Although no specific language is required to make a public records request, the requester must at least identify the records requested with sufficient clarity to allow the public office to identify, retrieve, and review the records. If it is not clear what records are being sought, the records custodian must contact the requester for clarification, and should assist the requestor in revising the request by informing the requestor of the manner in which the office keeps its records. Records personnel may request form RC100 be filled out to assist personnel in identifying requested records however, the requester is not obligated according to law to put a records request in writing, and does not have to provide his or her identity or the intended use of the requested public record.

**Designated Representatives**

The Record Room of the Parma Police Department and its personnel are designated as the official records administrator under authority of the Chief Records Clerk and Administrative Commander. All requests to view records or requests for a copy of records shall be processed by Record Room personnel.


**Inspection**

Public records are available for inspection during regular business hours Monday – Friday 8:30AM – 12:00PM and 1:00PM – 3:00PM with the exception of published holidays. Public records will be made available for inspection promptly and copies of public records will be made available within a reasonable period of time. "Prompt" and "Reasonable" take into account the volume of records requested, the proximity of the location where the records are stored, and the necessity for any legal review of the records requested. Routine requests for records shall be satisfied immediately, if feasible. All requests for public records must either be satisfied or be acknowledged in writing within three business days following the Record Room receipt of the request. If a request is deemed significantly beyond "routine," such as seeking a voluminous number of copies or requiring extensive research, the acknowledgement must include an estimated number of business days it will take to satisfy the request, an estimated cost if copies are requested, and any items within the request that may be exempt from disclosure.

Any denial of public records requested must include an explanation, including legal authority. If portions of a record are public and portions are exempt, the exempt portions are to be redacted and the remainder of the record released. If there are redactions, each redaction must be accompanied by a supporting explanation, including legal authority.


**Costs for Public Records**

Those seeking public records will be charged only the actual cost of making copies. The charge for paper copies is 5 cents per page. The charge for downloading computer files to a compact disc is $1 per disc. There is no charge for documents e-mailed. Requesters may ask that documents be mailed to them. They will be charged the actual cost of the postage and mailing supplies, which must be pre-paid.


**E-mail**

Documents in electronic mail format are records as defined by the Ohio Revised Code when their content relates to the business of the office. E-mail shall be treated in the same fashion as records in other formats and shall follow the same retention schedules.

Records in private e-mail accounts used to conduct public business are subject to disclosure, and all employees are instructed to retain their e-mails that relate to public business and to copy them to their business e-mail accounts and/or to the Records Custodian.

The Records Custodian is to treat the e-mails from private accounts as records of the public office, filing them in the appropriate way, retaining them per established schedules and making them available for inspection and copying in accordance with the Public Records Act.


**Failure to respond to a public records request**

The Parma Police Department recognizes the legal and non-legal consequences of failure to properly respond to a public records request. In addition to the distrust in government that failure to comply may cause, the Department's failure to comply with a request may result in a court ordering the Department to comply with the law and to pay the requester attorney's fees and damages.