



# St. Thomas Police Service

## BOARD POLICY

Subject:	Critical Points
Policy Number:	AI – 043
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Authorized:	Police Services Board

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

The St. Thomas Police Service shall maintain processes to identify, assess, communicate, and manage Critical Points in a manner that supports lawful governance, timely information sharing, organizational risk awareness, and effective operational planning.

The Service recognizes that certain matters of strategic significance may rapidly elevate operational, financial, reputational, or other enterprise risk and may therefore require the immediate attention of the St. Thomas Police Services Board. Where such matters arise or are likely to arise, the Service shall ensure that appropriate information is escalated through command and provided to the Chief of Police so that the Board may be informed in accordance with Board policy.

The Service also recognizes that, while the Board may ask questions, set objectives and priorities, and provide non-binding advice in relation to a Critical Point, the Chief of Police retains operational autonomy in determining and executing the methods by which lawful policing objectives will be achieved.

Nothing in this policy shall prevent or restrict the Service from exercising its policing powers and authorities in emergent circumstances to protect public safety.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish the operational framework through which the Service:

- identifies potential Critical Points and applies clear and consistent assessment criteria;
- supports the Chief of Police in determining whether a Critical Point has emerged or is likely to emerge;
- ensures the timely escalation of relevant information through command;
- supports information sharing with the Board in accordance with Board policy and legislative requirements;
- ensures appropriate documentation, confidentiality, and record management relating to Critical Point matters;
- supports the Chief of Police in maintaining lawful operational autonomy while enabling effective Board oversight; and

- ensures members understand their respective responsibilities in identifying, reporting, documenting, and managing matters that may constitute a Critical Point.

## **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all members involved in operational planning, command decision-making, strategic risk identification, issue escalation, governance reporting, or the documentation and management of matters that may constitute a Critical Point.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **Critical Point**

A matter of strategic significance that is time-sensitive and which rapidly elevates the Board's operational, financial, reputational, or other enterprise risk, and, therefore, calls for the Board's immediate attention and/or preparedness to take action.

For greater clarity, a Critical Point may include, but is not limited to:

- large-scale operations, investigations, or events for which advance planning and approval by Service command is required;
- events or operations that are likely to have a material impact on the Service's relationship with, and service to, marginalized or vulnerable communities;
- events or operations that raise significant questions of public policy;
- credible internal or external complaints, including complaints regarding workplace discrimination or harassment, against individual officers or the Service, and findings by tribunals or other bodies related to discrimination, where such matters raise significant systemic issues; or
- other organizationally significant matters that rapidly elevate operational, strategic, legal, financial, or reputational risk.

These examples are not exhaustive.

### **Matter of Strategic Significance**

A matter that has the potential to materially affect the Service's operations, priorities, governance relationship with the Board, financial position, public trust, legal compliance, organizational reputation, or ability to provide adequate and effective policing.

### **Command**

The Chief of Police, Deputy Chief of Police, Inspectors, and any other senior officer or designate with responsibility for organizational risk identification, operational planning, or executive decision-making.

## **LEGISLATIVE AND STANDARDS REFERENCE**

- *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019*

- *Any other applicable legal, regulatory, or governance requirements relating to Board oversight, information sharing, confidentiality, and Chief of Police responsibilities*

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Chief of Police**

The Chief of Police shall:

- ensure processes are in place to identify, assess, escalate, and manage potential Critical Points;
- determine whether a matter constitutes, or is likely to constitute, a Critical Point;
- ensure the Board is informed, through the Chair or designate, where a Critical Point has emerged or is likely to emerge, in accordance with Board policy;
- ensure relevant information is provided to the Board to support its oversight role, while protecting lawful operational confidentiality and preserving operational effectiveness;
- provide ongoing updates to the Board, through the Chair, regarding significant developments and the conclusion of a Critical Point;
- maintain operational autonomy in finalizing and executing operational plans related to a Critical Point;
- ensure appropriate internal documentation, confidentiality, and record management are maintained; and
- ensure appropriate training and awareness are provided to command and other members as required.

### **Deputy Chief of Police or Designate**

The Deputy Chief of Police or designate shall:

- support the Chief of Police in identifying, assessing, and managing potential Critical Points;
- ensure command-level coordination, risk assessment, and internal escalation occur where matters may meet the Critical Point definition;
- ensure relevant operational, financial, legal, reputational, and continuity-related information is assembled to support executive decision-making and Board reporting;
- support the coordination of updates, documentation, and follow-up relating to Critical Points; and
- assist in ensuring that matters involving significant organizational risk are reviewed for policy, planning, or governance implications.

### **Senior Leadership / Command Officers**

Command officers shall:

- monitor operational, financial, reputational, strategic, legal, and community-relations risks that may give rise to a Critical Point;
- promptly escalate through the chain of command any matter that may meet the Critical Point definition;

- ensure that available information relevant to the matter is accurate, current, and sufficiently developed to support executive review;
- support the development of operational, continuity, resource, and communication planning associated with the matter; and
- ensure that members under their supervision understand reporting expectations relating to potential Critical Points.

### **Corporate Services / Professional Standards / Appropriate Administrative Support**

The Service shall provide appropriate administrative and organizational support for:

- documentation and record management relating to Critical Point notifications, updates, and resolution;
- coordination of internal reporting and executive briefing materials;
- support for legal, financial, reputational, or policy review where required; and
- retention of records in accordance with Service records management requirements.

### **Members**

Members shall:

- report information through their chain of command where circumstances may constitute or contribute to a Critical Point;
- provide timely, accurate, and complete information to supervisors and command regarding matters that may elevate organizational risk;
- comply with direction relating to confidentiality, documentation, and operational planning associated with a Critical Point; and
- support the lawful and effective management of Critical Point matters within the scope of their responsibilities.

### **CRITICAL POINT GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK**

The Service shall maintain processes for:

- identifying matters that may constitute a Critical Point;
- escalating such matters through command for executive consideration;
- assessing the operational, financial, legal, reputational, strategic, and community impact of the matter;
- providing relevant information to the Board through the Chief of Police and Chair in accordance with Board policy;
- supporting the Board's governance role while preserving the Chief's operational autonomy; and
- documenting updates, decisions, and resolution of the matter.

The Service recognizes that effective information sharing between the Service and the Board is foundational to the Board's oversight responsibilities, particularly during times of elevated organizational risk.

The Service further recognizes that the Board is prohibited by law from directing the Chief of Police with respect to specific investigations or the conduct of specific operations. Accordingly, while the Board may set objectives and priorities, ask questions, and provide non-binding advice in relation to a Critical Point, the Chief of Police remains responsible for determining and executing the operational response.

## **IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL CRITICAL POINTS**

When a matter arises that may constitute a Critical Point, command shall consider whether the matter:

- is time-sensitive;
- is of strategic significance;
- rapidly elevates operational, financial, reputational, legal, or other enterprise risk;
- may require Board awareness, preparedness, or action;
- requires command-level planning, approval, or coordination;
- may have a material impact on the Service's relationship with or service to marginalized or vulnerable communities;
- raises significant public policy, governance, or systemic issues;
- has continuity of service implications;
- may require additional authorities, resources, or inter-agency coordination; or
- may generate significant public, media, legal, tribunal, or governmental attention.

Critical Point assessments shall be practical, timely, and risk-based. The absence of complete information at the initial stage does not prevent escalation where the known circumstances indicate a realistic possibility that a Critical Point has emerged or is likely to emerge.

## **REPORTING PROTOCOL**

Where the Chief of Police believes that a Critical Point has emerged or is likely to emerge, the Chief shall inform the Chair of the Board, or designate, and provide further information in writing, as appropriate.

Information provided in relation to a Critical Point should include, where applicable:

- the general nature of the Critical Point;
- the elevated risk or risks posed by the matter;
- relevant operational and other information necessary for the Board to understand the matter;
- an outline of the operational plan and any continuity of service planning, where appropriate;
- any plans to involve other organizations or agencies;
- any recommendations requiring Board support, including resource or coordination issues;
- an estimate of financial impact, where known or reasonably foreseeable;
- relevant legislation, legal requirements, or authority issues;
- any ongoing considerations, including resourcing, policy implications, governance implications, or operational constraints.

The Chief shall continue to provide updates to the Board, through the Chair, regarding significant developments, including when the Critical Point has concluded.

## **IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL CRITICAL POINTS BY THE BOARD**

Where the Chair believes, or is advised by one or more Board Members, that a planned or anticipated event, or an unplanned or unanticipated matter, may constitute a Critical Point, the Service shall support the Chief of Police in considering whether the matter meets the definition of Critical Point and in responding to the Board in accordance with Board policy.

Where the Chief determines that the matter does not meet the definition of Critical Point, the Service shall support the Chief in providing reasons to the Chair accordingly.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Information relating to a Critical Point may include sensitive operational, legal, personnel, financial, reputational, or security information.

Members shall ensure that information relating to a Critical Point is disclosed only to those persons authorized to receive it and only for lawful policing, governance, or administrative purposes.

The Service shall support the Chief and Board in maintaining strict confidentiality over Critical Point information, subject to law, operational considerations, and any authorized public disclosure process.

Nothing in this section prevents lawful disclosure where required by legislation, court process, Board process, labour process, or other lawful authority. However, members shall not disclose Critical Point information outside authorized channels.

## **CHIEF'S AUTONOMY AND OPERATIONAL EXECUTION**

Once the Board has been given the opportunity, where applicable, to set objectives and priorities, ask questions, and provide non-binding advice in relation to operational matters arising from a Critical Point, the Chief of Police shall maintain the autonomy to finalize and execute the operational plans.

If, during the course of a Critical Point, the Board concludes that its objectives are not being achieved, the Board may communicate that conclusion to the Chief of Police. The Chief of Police nevertheless remains responsible for determining the appropriate operational methods required to achieve the mission, objectives, and priorities lawfully and effectively.

## **PUBLIC REPORTING CONSIDERATIONS**

Subject to operational considerations and the advice of the Chief of Police, the Service shall support the Board in publicly disclosing, where appropriate and where it is possible to do so without compromising safety, operational effectiveness, confidentiality, or any other lawful operational consideration:

- the general nature of the operational matter related to a Critical Point; and
- any directions given by the Board to the Chief of Police related to the Critical Point.

Members shall ensure that public communication relating to a Critical Point is coordinated through appropriate executive and authorized communication channels.

## **TRAINING AND AWARENESS**

The Service shall provide training and awareness to ensure that all command members and other members, as appropriate, understand:

- the definition of a Critical Point;
- the criteria and risk indicators that may give rise to a Critical Point;
- escalation and reporting expectations;
- the respective governance and operational roles of the Board and the Chief of Police;
- confidentiality obligations; and
- documentation and record management requirements associated with Critical Points.

Training may be provided through policy education, command briefings, orientation, executive updates, or other approved methods.

## **DOCUMENTATION AND RECORD MANAGEMENT**

Records relating to the identification, notification, assessment, reporting, updating, and resolution of a Critical Point shall be maintained in accordance with Service records management requirements.

Documentation should include, where applicable:

- the nature of the matter;
- the basis for determining whether it did or did not constitute a Critical Point;
- internal escalation and briefing records;
- information provided to the Chief and Board;
- updates and significant developments;
- any associated resource, financial, continuity, or legal considerations; and
- the date and basis upon which the matter was concluded.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE AND REVIEW**

The Service shall periodically review Critical Point processes to ensure effectiveness, timeliness, consistency, and alignment with governance expectations, legislative requirements, and organizational needs.

Where a Critical Point reveals issues relating to policy, planning, continuity, governance support, risk identification, or communication, the Service shall consider whether improvements to policy, training, or internal practice are required.

## **POLICY REVIEW**

This policy shall be reviewed in accordance with the Service policy review cycle or when legislative, governance, operational, or organizational changes require amendment.

## **POLICY INTERRELATIONSHIPS**

This policy should be read in conjunction with related St. Thomas Police Service and St. Thomas Police Services Board policies, including those respecting:

- Board governance and information sharing;
- risk management and continuity planning;
- major incident or major case response, where applicable;
- media and public communications; and
- records management and confidentiality.