



Safe from Harm Policy

This Circular substitutes Policy Circular No. 03/2024 issued on 1 April 2024.

1. Aim

Scout Association of Hong Kong (“the Association”) is committed to youth development. The Association formulates this “Safe from Harm Policy” (“the Policy”) for the purpose of providing a safe environment for Scout activities, and protecting the participants from harm during their time in the Scout Movement.

2. Effective Date

This policy was updated to become effective from 1 June 2025 onwards.

3. Principle

- Scout Association of Hong Kong Ordinance (Chapter 1005 of the Laws of Hong Kong)
- “Constitution” of the Association
- “Policy, Organisation and Rules” of the Association
- Scout Promise and Law of the Association
- Aims and Methods of the Association
- Vision, Mission and Values of the Association

4. Basis of the Policy

- “Safe from Harm World Policy” published by World Organisation of the Scout Movement (“WOSM”)
- “National Safe from Harm Policy” published by WOSM
- “Safe from Harm Self-Assessment Tool” published by WOSM

5. Definition

5.1 Abuse

It refers to any act of commission or omission that endangers or impairs the physical/ psychological/ emotional health and development of an individual. It can be broadly categorized into different typologies and take various forms which usually include the following:

- (a) physical abuse;
- (b) sexual abuse or harassment;
- (c) psychological or emotional abuse; and
- (d) neglect.

Further details of these abuses are set out in **Annex 1**.

5.2 Adults in Scouting

As defined in the prevailing “Adults in Scouting Policy” of the Association.

5.3 Adults

It includes Adult Members as defined in Rules 1.3.3(b) to 1.3.3(f) as well as those adult members of subsidiaries or associate bodies of the Association as mentioned in Rule 1.3.5 of the Association’s Policy, Organisation and Rules (“POR”).

5.4 Code of Conduct

It refers to the guidelines, as promulgated by the Association through the Policy Circular concerned, on how members of the Association are expected to behave with other Scouts, and also when attending non-Scouting events in Scout capacity.

5.5 Harm

It, in the context of this Policy, refers to any detrimental effect on the physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing and integrity of an individual.

5.6 Safe Environment

It promotes and supports wellbeing and development of participants in Scout Movement, while simultaneously working to address and prevent harmful practices. It also promotes respects for oneself and others, openness, diversity, inclusion, caring of special needs as well as equal opportunities for everyone. Ultimately, it enables the self-development of Scouts as well as the development of positive and healthy interpersonal relationships amongst Youths and Adults.

5.7 Safe from Harm

It refers to strategies, systems and procedures that aim to promote the wellbeing, development and safety of participants in Scout Movement as the priority in all Scouting-related activities for which the welfare to be safeguarded and promoted may include but not limited to:

- (a) protecting from abuse, impairment of health or development;
- (b) providing a safe environment to grow and develop; and
- (c) practising safety in Scout meetings, programmes and training, activities and events.

5.8 Youths

It includes Youth Members as listed in Rule 1.3.3(a) of POR and any other children and young people who are involved in activities of the Association.

5.9 Youth Programme

The totality of the learning opportunities from which Youths can benefit, created to achieve the purpose of Scouting and experienced through the Scout Method. More details can be found in the prevailing “Youth Programme Policy” of the Association.

6. The Policy

6.1 General

- 6.1.1 The subjects under this Policy are Youths, Adults and external stakeholders involved in supporting Scouting.
- 6.1.2 The Association accords high priority in keeping Scouts safe from harm by addressing their needs as well as promoting their well-being, development and safety in the Scout Movement. Any symptom or report of suspected abuse will be taken seriously by the Association.
- 6.1.3 Reference to and alignment with Adults in Scouting Policy, Youth Programme Policy and as appropriate other policies of the Association have been made in formulating this Policy.
- 6.1.4 The Safe from Harm practices and training will be reviewed to keep them up-to-date and relevant.
- 6.1.5 Should there be contravention between the Policy and Hong Kong legislation cum related Ordinances, the latter shall prevail.

6.2 Safe from Harm Policy Framework

- 6.2.1 This Policy comes under the jurisdiction of the Ethics Committee which is direct under the Executive Committee of the Association. Accountability for implementation of this Policy falls upon Adults, particularly those at Association Headquarters level who are responsible for leading and governing the Association.
- 6.2.2 All institutional levels of the Association viz. Association Headquarters, Subsidiary, Region, District and Scout Group are entrusted with the responsibility to strive to provide pertinent resources for implementation of this Policy, having regard to respective level and scope of their roles.
- 6.2.3 The Association will as appropriate develop and maintain networks and collaborative partnerships with internal/ external stakeholders in promoting safe from harm and/or updating the knowledge concerned.

6.3 Youth Programme

- 6.3.1 Youth Programme, in the context of Safe from Harm, should be planned and implemented to support the holistic development of Youths, with appropriate means including training, to motivate and empower them with self-awareness/ self-protection/ self-confidence in relationships with others

including Adults, to protect themselves from harm and to report any conduct that does not comply with this Policy.

- 6.3.2 Scout meetings, programmes and training, activities and events under Youth Programme should be as appropriate assessed to identify risks and develop sufficient control mechanisms and monitoring/ evaluation framework in line with this Policy.
- 6.3.3 Information on medical, dietary and developmental needs of youth individuals for the purpose of Scout meeting/ programmes and training/ activities/ event under Youth Programme should be kept in an access-restricted manner by those Adults responsible for the welfare of Youths in that Scout meeting/ programmes and training/ activities / event.
- 6.3.4 Environments of the Association's online media and communication platforms, being an integral part of Youths' educational/ creative/ social opportunities, should be safe. Some good practices for staying safe online are set out in **Annex 2** for reference.
- 6.3.5 Safety inspections of equipment and facilities should be scheduled and performed in accordance with the Association's regulations and guidelines which should be as appropriate reviewed/ updated.
- 6.3.6 Various guidelines and circulars relevant to safety in activities, which will be reviewed/ updated periodically, have been formulated and are available on the Association website.

6.4 Adults in Scouting

- 6.4.1 It is the responsibility of Adults to read and understand this Policy, thus committing themselves to protecting Youths.
- 6.4.2 Adults should comply with prevailing Code of Conduct of the Association.
- 6.4.3 The Association conducts as appropriate one or more of the following for recruitment, selection, appointment and renewal of Adult Members:
 - (a) background check;
 - (b) criminal offence declaration, including offence connected with sexual abuse and/or abuse on young person;
 - (c) interview process.
- 6.4.4 All leaders (viz. Commissioners, Scouters, Instructors or Cadets) and professional scouters/ salaried staff of the Association must receive Safe from Harm training. In this regard, persons who are to be appointed the first time as leaders or professional scouters/ salaried staff shall first complete the Association's Safe from Harm Online Self-Learning Course and obtain the Training Certificate thereof. Those already appointed before this Policy becomes effective should complete the said exercise and obtain the Training Certificate as soon as possible, with leaders to obtain the

Training Certificate in no case later than the first renewal of their appointments. When there are material revision(s) to the scope and contents of the Safe from Harm Online Self-Learning Course, all leaders and professional scouters/ salaried staff shall as required by the Association complete the new exercise and obtain the corresponding Training Certificate. Upon renewal, leaders shall make declaration that they have read and observed Safe from Harm Policy and the Code of Conduct. For professional scouters/ salaried staff, they shall make the same declaration annually.

- 6.4.5 For Lay Members, they shall be made aware of this Policy and equipped with the Safe from Harm knowledge through a self-learning information package. Given their roles different from the leaders, it is not compulsory for Lay Members to obtain the said Training Certificate although they will be encouraged to do so. On occasions where Lay Members are to have frequent close contacts with Youths and/ or to perform the duties of leaders in Scout activities, they shall obtain the Training Certificate.
- 6.4.6 For Adults other than leaders and professional scouters/ salaried staff, they shall be made aware of this Policy. This equally applies to external stakeholders.
- 6.4.7 Adults should watch out Youths' safety and welfare during Scout meetings, programmes and training, activities and events to make sure that Youths are always appropriately supervised. "Actions for Protecting Youths" at **Annex 3** in this regard is also relevant.
- 6.4.8 Adults should render assistance and support to Youths who are observed to have been possibly subject to abuse.
- 6.4.9 Elements related to Safe from Harm as appropriate form part of the performance review for Adult Members for which the implementation should be as documented in Adults in Scouting Policy.
- 6.4.10 Safe from Harm training should be included as a core component of the Wood Badge training programme. Specific training on Safe from Harm will also be conducted as necessary. To keep the Safe from Harm training and practices up-to-date and relevant, the training programme in the context including the Safe from Harm Online Self-Learning Course and the Training Certificate thereof will be managed and reviewed in a timely manner by Training Branch with input also from Programme Branch. Training Branch will from time to time upload Safe from Harm related materials to the website of the Association for updating members' knowledge in this regard. Regular Safe from Harm awareness programme will also be conducted by Training Branch for refresher purpose.

6.5 Reporting and Handling of Incident

- 6.5.1 Whilst observing the requirements of confidentiality under the Policy, any person who is aware of any suspected incidents of abuse or neglect should report, by submitting a duly completed “Safe from Harm Incident Report Form” at **Annex 4**, without delay. If the incident obviously involves criminal offence, it should also be reported to the Police as soon as practicable.
- 6.5.2 Chief Scout Executive is designated as the Safe from Harm Officer. During the absence of Chief Scout Executive or as considered appropriate by Chief Commissioner, Deputy Chief Scout Executive will assume the role.
- 6.5.3 For incident or alleged incident in Scout Group, it should be reported to the Group Scout Leader (or the Scouter-in-charge as appropriate) who should without delay refer the incident to District Commissioner concerned. Where circumstances warrant, the incident can be reported direct to District Commissioner. For other Scout Units, the incident should be reported to the Assistant Chief Commissioner concerned or, where circumstances warrant, direct to the supervisor of the Assistant Chief Commissioner concerned. For incident involving professional scouter/ salaried staff, it should be reported to Deputy Chief Scout Executive/ Assistant Chief Scout Executive concerned. For incident involving senior ranks of the Association, the reporting arrangement are as follows:

Key post holders involved in incident	To be reported to
Chief Commissioner	President of the Association
Deputy Chief Commissioner, Assistant Chief Commissioner, Chief Scout Executive	Chief Commissioner
Deputy Chief Scout Executive, Assistant Chief Scout Executive	Chief Scout Executive

- 6.5.4 All reported incidents should be referred to Safe from Harm Officer immediately.
- 6.5.5 Upon receipt of the incident referral, Safe from Harm Officer should arrange the following:
- to acknowledge the person reporting the incident in writing within 3 working days;
 - to conduct a preliminary assessment regarding the safety and well-being of the victim(s);
 - to take all measures necessary to prevent further harm to the victim(s) as well as to avoid the incident from worsening, including but not limited to, as agreed by Chief Commissioner, immediately requiring the person(s) being alleged/ the suspect(s) to take leave or temporarily change post(s), or suspending their memberships;

- (d) to provide immediate and continuous support to the victim(s);
- (e) to review the history of the victim(s) and/or suspects in the Association as necessary;
- (f) to inform parent(s)/ guardian(s) of the Youths involved in the incident if they are under the age of 18;
- (g) to provide necessary information to Assistant Chief Commissioner (Communications and Public Affairs) for formulating responses to public or media enquiries; and
- (h) to set up an inquiry panel as necessary to investigate the incident.

Where considered necessary, views from Legal Advisor(s) of the Association should be sought. If it is apparent that the incident involves criminal offence, arrangement shall be made for reporting to the Police.

- 6.5.6 The inquiry panel, as mentioned in 6.5.5(h) and with members appointed by Chief Commissioner, should be set up within two weeks after receipt of the incident referral. The investigation by the inquiry panel, to be conducted in strict confidence and in such a manner as may be justified by the circumstances of the incident, may include interviewing¹ the person reporting the incident, victim(s), person(s) being alleged and/or suspect(s). Other persons can be called upon to give evidence when appropriate, subject to agreements of the victim or the parents/ guardian. The person(s) being alleged or the suspect(s) should be given full opportunity to present their defence/ responses/ views in respect of the accusations and allegations.
- 6.5.7 Meetings with the victim(s) should be conducted in a secure, carefree and comfortable environment and in the presence of a person of the same gender so as to avoid embarrassment thus enabling a free presentation of the incident by the victim(s). Youths under the age of 18 should be accompanied by their parent(s) or guardian(s), or, in their absence, a registered social worker or an appropriate adult of gender same as the Youths.
- 6.5.8 Identities of the person reporting the incident and victim(s) shall not be revealed unless with sound justifications and consent of Chief Commissioner.
- 6.5.9 After investigation, the inquiry panel should as soon as possible submit a report to Chief Commissioner for consideration via Safe from Harm Officer. The report should include, amongst others, follow-up actions and monitoring required. Investigation of an incident should normally be completed within three months after setting up of the panel, with victim(s)/ person reporting the incident/ person(s) being alleged/ suspect(s) informed of the conclusion. Upon informed of the conclusion, parties concerned may within 30 days appeal, with concrete evidence/ substantiations, in writing to Chief Commissioner whose decision shall be final.

¹ Through face-to-face meeting and/or writing means.

- 6.5.10 For appeal submitted under item 6.5.9, the Chief Commissioner may opt to refer it to an Adhoc Investigation Panel on Conduct Matters he appoints for follow-up. The Panel should review the case, conduct as necessary further investigation and accordingly make recommendations to the Chief Commissioner, who will then make the final decision and where considered necessary inform the Executive Committee of the Association of the case.
- 6.5.11 The Chief Commissioner may, as he considers fit, refer the case and/or appeal to the Ethics Committee for advice. The Ethics Committee may invite persons concerned to attend meetings for specific discussions as and when necessary.
- 6.5.12 Case investigation and review of an appeal case should normally be completed and with written reply duly issued within three months after setting up of the Panel. If the investigation/review cum reply cannot be completed within three months (or the extended time period as approved by Chief Commissioner), the case should be immediately brought to the attention of Chief Commissioner and Safe from Harm Officer for further directive(s) until the case is completed.
- 6.5.13 If sanctions are required, relevant clauses in “Procedures for Handling Improper Acts and Complaints” should apply.
- 6.5.14 The Association reserves the right to take actions including claim for damages against any persons reporting unfounded incidents.
- 6.5.15 If the incident has been reported to Police, Safe from Harm Officer may, as agreed by Chief Commissioner, defer the inquiry panel investigation to after the completion of statutory actions or not arrange for investigation.

6.6 Confidentiality

- 6.6.1. Confidentiality of Safe from Harm cases needs to be maintained, with effort made to ensure the security of confidential information as far as possible. However, confidentiality should not be allowed to override the rights of the subject persons under the case to be protected from harm. In any case, investigation reports on Safe from Harm incidents are all strictly confidential and shall not be released.
- 6.6.2. All the disclosure, reporting and recording information of a suspected/confirmed Safe from Harm incident should be handled with utmost sensitivity. The rationale for sharing such confidential information should be on a need-to-know basis and for protecting the Scouts from abuse. Confidential information should not be discussed in any setting unless confidentiality can be ensured.
- 6.6.3. All information, records and documentation of incidents including the investigation reports should properly be kept by Safe from Harm Officer in confidential files of the Association with restricted access.

7. Administration

Implementation of this Policy is coordinated by the Safe from Harm Team, headed by Deputy Chief Commissioner (Management) with members comprising Safe from Harm Officer, Assistant Chief Scout Executive (Central Administration) and any other persons appointed as necessary.

8. Evaluation and Revision

To cater for changes in the society and needs of participants in Scout Movement, this Policy will be reviewed at least every 5 years or as required.

9. Enquiry

For enquiries, please contact Assistant Chief Scout Executive (Central Administration) at 2957 6327. For matters related to Safe from Harm E-learning exercise and Training Certificate, please contact Scout Executive (Training) at 2957 6472.



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Deputy Chief Commissioner (Management)

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Different Forms of Abuse

As a general guide, abuse is any act of commission or omission that endangers or impairs physical/ psychological/ emotional health and development of an individual. On the basis of a combination of community standards and professional expertise, such act is judged to be damaging. Abuse usually is committed by individuals, singly or collectively, who by their characteristics (e.g. age, status, knowledge, organizational form) are in a position of different power that renders the other individual vulnerable. It is not limited to parent/guardian situation but includes anyone who is entrusted with the care and supervision of an individual, and in the context of Scouting, Adults.

The following provides broad details on various forms of abuse:

- (a) physical abuse;
- (b) sexual abuse or harassment;
- (c) psychological or emotional abuse; and
- (d) neglect.

In that, bullying is quite a common way in perpetuating the abuse.

PHYSICAL ABUSE is physical injury or suffering inflicted on an individual by violent or other means (e.g. punching, kicking, striking with an object, poisoning, suffocating, burning or shaking), where there is a definite knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that the injury has been inflicted non-accidentally.

SEXUAL ABUSE refers to forcing or enticing an individual to take part in any acts of sexual activity for sexual exploitation or abuse and the individual does not consent to or fully understand or comprehend this sexual activity that occurs to him/her due to mental immaturity. The sexual activity includes acts that have or do not have direct physical contact with individuals. Sexual abuse may be committed inside or outside the home or through social media on the internet by perpetrators acting individually or in an organized manner, including luring an individual through rewards or other means for abuse.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT occurs when an individual:

- makes unwelcome sexual advances, or unwelcome request for sexual favors, to another person; or engages in other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in relation to that other person; in circumstances in which a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would have anticipated that that other person would be offended, humiliated or intimidated; OR

- either alone or together with other persons, engages in a conduct of a sexual nature which creates a hostile or intimidating environment for another person.

PSYCHOLOGICAL OR EMOTIONAL ABUSE is a repeated pattern of behavior, an interaction, and/ or an extreme incident that endanger(s) or impair(s) the physical and psychological health (including emotional, cognitive, social and physical development) of an individual. Examples include acts of spurning, terrorizing, isolating, exploiting/corrupting or denying emotional responsiveness. Such act damages immediately or ultimately the behavioural, cognitive, affective, or physical functioning of the individual.

NEGLECT is severe or repeated pattern lack of attention to an individual's basic needs (such as necessary food, clothing, shelter, education or medical care) that endangers or impairs the individual's health or development (including non-organic failure to thrive); or failure to prevent physical injury/suffering or the avoidable exposure of an individual to serious danger (including cold, starvation, habitually left unattended or forcing an individual to undertake duties inappropriate to his/her physical strength or age);.

For further information, the following websites are relevant:

- (a) Equal Opportunities Commission, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (<https://www.eoc.org.hk/compass/en/>)
- (b) Social Welfare Department, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (https://www.swd.gov.hk/vs/index_e.html#s7)

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Some Good Practices for Safe Online

Internet has the power to bring people closer together. It can be a great source for tools and information to make the world a better place. However, internet can also bring about unacceptable issues, like cyberbullying, harassment, identity theft and abuse. These issues may be encountered when chatting and posting on social media, gaming platforms and even Scouting channels.

Being Scouts, one should refrain from taking unacceptable online behaviour including but not limited to: stealing private information, sending/ posting/ sharing false content about someone or something, continuing to contact someone who has declined to be contacted, sending inappropriate remarks/ photos to others or asking them to do so, and sending threats or hate speech.

Other good practices for safe online are:

(a) Be respect and kind

Stay positive and always remember the Scout Promise and Law. Treat others with kindness and respect.

(b) Be mindful about what you share

Don't share your personal information online. Think about what type of information you want to share, and what you would like to keep private. Check your sources and make sure any news or information you share are true and factual.

(c) Don't meet in-person with people you encounter online

People you only meet online are still strangers – even if you have been talking with them for a long time. If you consider meeting with netizens, you should be very careful in doing so and best be accompanied.

(d) Keep your personal information private

Never post personal information on internet. Check also the “Privacy Settings” on your social media channels and make them private so that your personal information is only shared with those you choose and consider safe.

(e) React properly

Protect yourself from upsetting or distressing content and leave unpleasant conversations. Also steer away from violence or sexual content. If a post online makes you feel uncomfortable, take the responsibility to report to the administrator of the social media channels concerned. Also take same action for bad behaviour.

The following should also be observed by Adults:

- (a) Don't place yourself in situations where your actions and communications could be misinterpreted by others particularly Youths. To protect yourself, you should always include another Adult when communicating with Youths online.
- (b) Avoid interacting privately with Youths in any form of social media.
- (c) Always remind Youths of the dangers in sharing personal information with persons only known online.

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Actions for Protecting Youths

As an Adult, you are the mentor to Youths and as such, your conduct must be trustworthy as well as meeting the expectations of parents and society. It is also your duties to protect Youths safe from harm. For the purposes, the following guidelines should be observed.

- (1) During Scouting activities or in daily contact with Youths, you should be alert to any signs of abuse (e.g. abnormal behavioural or emotional change, physical injury such as bruises and lacerations, etc) and report such to authority concerned as appropriate.
- (2) You should teach Youths to protect themselves by:
 - (a) Understanding what abuse means, and be vigilant to protect themselves; and
 - (b) Voicing their concerns to parents or Scout Leaders whom they trust if they are abused.
- (3) When supervising and conducting Scout activities involving Youths, at least two Adults should be present, except in unexpected, unusual and unforeseen circumstances. Don't place yourself in situations where your actions, behaviours and communications, particularly body contact, could be misinterpreted or misconstrued by Youths.
- (4) Do not have one-to-one isolated encounters with Youth.
- (5) Respect Youth's right to personal privacy.
- (6) For each Section of a Scout Group, there shall be at least one Sectional Scout leader who is of the same gender as the Youths; except as otherwise permitted in accordance with POR.
- (7) You should adhere to the following rules during scouting activities (including meetings, training and all types of outdoor activities):
 - (a) For overnight activities:
 - Participation of male/ female Youths is strictly prohibited if there is no presence of Adult of the same gender.
 - Sharing accommodations or tents with Youths is strictly prohibited, unless special care or supervision is necessary.

- Male and female participants must sleep in separate accommodations or tents, and male participants are not permitted to enter the accommodations or tents of female participants and vice versa. For camping, whenever possible, male and female participants should have separate tent areas. Participants who violate this rule must be cautioned from doing so and dealt with immediately.
 - Male and female participants must have separate bathroom and sanitary facilities. If circumstances do not allow separate facilities, suitable arrangements must be made to avoid any misunderstanding or embarrassment.
 - Avoid being present when Youth of age below 18 is changing clothes or bathing unless it is necessary for special care or supervision of underage which should be undertaken by Adult of the same gender.
 - Participants should not use recorders of any kind in sleeping, changing or bathing areas.
- (b) Prior approval from Sectional Scout Leader or Group Scout Leader/ Scouter-in-charge followed by a written record must be obtained for patrol camp, hiking or other outdoor activities.
 - (c) All participants should wear appropriate clothing, avoiding any inappropriate body exposure.
 - (d) Corporal punishment and any acts or dialogue which are disturbing, agitating, embarrassing, insulting are strictly prohibited.
 - (e) Adults must not induce or force Youths to perform any acts which are not appropriate to their age or physical strength, or to perform any illegal acts.
 - (f) Comply with all the guidelines of the Association relevant to safety in activities.

Confidential

Annex 4

**Scout Association of Hong Kong
Safe from Harm Incident Report Form**

Received by:

Name:

Signature:

Date of Receipt:

Details of the affected individual:

Name:	Date of Birth or Age:
Gender:	Scout ID (<i>if known</i>):
Scout member & unit information:	Name of Parent/ Guardian (<i>if known</i>):
Contact Number (<i>if known</i>):	Email Address (<i>if known</i>):
Address (<i>if known</i>):	

Details of the report:

Please provide a detailed account of the incident/disclosure

Any other pertinent information:

Details of the individual(s) alleged:

Name:	Scout member & unit information:
Gender:	Relationship with the affected individual:
Contact Number (<i>if known</i>):	Email Address (<i>if known</i>):
Address (<i>if known</i>):	

Details of the reporting individual:

Name:	Scout member & unit information:
Contact Number (<i>if known</i>):	Email Address (<i>if known</i>):
Address (<i>if known</i>):	

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Reporting Individual

[To be completed by Safe from Harm Officer]

Date of receipt:
Actions taken:

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Safe from Harm Officer

*Note: The completed form should be kept in file by **Safe from Harm Officer**.*