# 3-46 DISCIPLINE SYSTEM

**Related SOP(s):**

- 3-41 Complaints Involving Department Policy and Personnel
- 3-42 Investigation of Police Personnel
- 3-43 Relief of Duty
- 3-44 Review of Completed Administrative Investigative Cases
- 3-45 Due Process Notification of Personnel
- 3-46 Discipline System
- 3-47 Acceptance of Disciplinary Action and Right to Appeal

## 3-46-1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe how discipline will be determined and imposed in response to violations of Department policy.

## 3-46-2 Policy

The policy of the Department is to ensure that disciplinary action is taken in a consistent manner. The Department maintains rules intended to encourage professional standards. Personnel shall observe and comply with Department rules. The Department established a Chart of Sanctions and criteria to objectively classify a policy violation.

## 3-46-3 Definitions

**A. Abeyance**

A temporary hold on all or part of a suspension to be served as a result of a sustained policy violation. The holding period shall not exceed six months (Refer to City Rules and Regulations section 902.3). Once the holding period expires, the suspension can no longer be imposed; however, the sustained finding will still exist on the employee’s retention file.

**B. Aggravating Circumstances**

Factors that increase culpability of an act. Aggravating Circumstances must be objectively verifiable and credibly established in the investigation or by other means articulated by the reviewing supervisor.

**C. Chart of Sanctions**

An appendix to this policy, which identifies levels of disciplinary action to be imposed based on sanction classification and frequency of occurrence of the identified policy violations.

**D. Mitigating Circumstances**
Factors that decrease the culpability of the subject or the severity of the penalty associated with the act under the chart of sanctions. Information presented by employees and/or supervisors as justification for mitigating discipline must be verifiable and credibly established by the investigation or through other means articulated by the reviewing supervisor.

E. Non-Disciplinary Corrective Action (NDCA)

An action other than discipline taken to enable or encourage an officer to improve his or her performance. NDCA cannot be used in lieu of discipline when the chart of sanctions calls for the imposition of discipline.

F. Pattern of Misconduct

Two or more repeated actions or infractions of a similar nature over time (defined in the Collective Bargaining Agreement); or, repeated actions which, independently, may appear unrelated but when considered in totality may indicate poor decisions, negligence, or general disregard for proper procedures.

G. Pre-Determination Hearing

A hearing that allows employees who are facing suspension, termination, or demotion to present their side of the story and voice their comments in regards to the proposed discipline.

H. Progressive Discipline

The practice of elevating the level of discipline recommended or imposed on an employee based on previous sustained policy violations.

I. Sanction Classification

A level of seriousness and corresponding level of discipline designated to each type of policy violation. Sanction classifications range from 1 (most serious) to 7 (least serious).

To ensure consistent and objective application of discipline, all policies will receive a sanction classification based on the Chart of Sanctions.

a. Class 1:
   i. Any violation of law, policy, rule or regulation which:
      • Foreseeably results in death or serious physical injury;
      • Constitutes a willful and wanton disregard of Department guiding principles;
      • Involves any act or omission which demonstrates a serious lack of the integrity, ethics, or character related to an employee’s fitness to hold his/her position;
ALBUQUERQUE POLICE DEPARTMENT
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS

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Draft for OPA

- Involves egregious violations substantially contrary to the standards of conduct reasonably expected, to include those whose sworn duty is to uphold the law; or
- Involves conduct which constitutes the failure to adhere to any condition of employment required or mandated by law and City Personnel Rules and Regulations.

b. Class 2:
   i. Conduct that involves the serious abuse or misuse of authority, unethical behavior, acts that results in an actual serious and/or adverse impact on the Department’s employee(s), the public, public safety, or to the professionalism of the Department.

c. Class 3:
   i. Conduct that involves the serious abuse or misuse of authority, unethical behavior, acts that could reasonably have resulted in a serious and adverse impact on the Department’s employee(s), the public, or public safety, or to the professionalism of the Department.

d. Class 4:
   i. Conduct that is substantially contrary to the values of the Department; or that substantially interferes with the Department’s mission, operations, or public trust; or that involves a serious risk to employees or public safety.

e. Class 5:
   i. Conduct that has a pronounced negative impact on the operations or professional image of the Department, relationships with other employees, agencies, or the public; or conduct within a lower class of violations with repetitive offenses.

f. Class 6:
   i. Conduct that has more than a minimal negative impact on the operations or professional image of the Department; or conduct that negatively impacts relationships with other employees, agencies or members of the public; or conduct under Class 7 with repetitive offenses.

g. Class 7:
   i. Conduct that has a minimal negative impact on the overall operations or professional image of the Department.

3-46-5 Procedures

A. Process and Criteria

1. To determine the appropriate discipline, the supervisor will:

   a. Refer to the policy to determine which sanction classification is assigned:
b. Consider the aggravating or mitigating factors including whether the conduct was intentional or unintentional and whether there was a justification for the policy violations;

4.2. Once this process is completed, the supervisor will impose the appropriate disciplinary action unless the penalty should be increased due to aggravating circumstances or reduced due to mitigating circumstances.

The supervisor must provide clear articulable facts supporting aggravating or mitigating factors.

3. On the Supervisor Recommendation Form, the reviewing commander must analyze the factors above in writing. Reviewing commanders and executive staff must explain and justify any deviation from the presumptive discipline on the Supervisor Recommendation form, Deputy Chief Recommendation form, or the Chief of Police Recommendation form.

B. Using the Chart of Sanctions

1. The supervisor will determine whether the violation is a first, second, or subsequent offense based on the officer’s retention card.

2. The chart of sanctions will provide the minimum, maximum, and presumptive discipline for the violation.

3. The presumptive penalty will stand unless there are aggravating or mitigating circumstances articulated by the supervisor. The sanction may only be reduced one level from the sanction identified in the Chart of Sanctions.

4. Time Limitations on Chart of Sanctions

a. For the purposes of determining progressive discipline, the Department will consider previous offenses. The timeline for a sustained violation will run from the date discipline was imposed on the prior violation(s) to the date the Internal Affairs investigation is initiated on the current violation(s).

b. Discipline involving a sustained violation of Class 1-3 offense shall be considered for five (5) years prior to the current offense.

c. Discipline involving a sustained violation of a Class 4 or 5 offense shall be considered for three (3) years prior to the current offense.

d. Discipline involving a sustained violation of a Class 6 or 7 offense shall be considered for one (1) year prior to the current offense.

e. When reviewing the disciplinary history of personnel to establish the number of offenses in a given time frame, only separate incidents will be counted, and the highest class offense will be used.

5. Multiple Violations
a. If multiple violations arise from the same incident or investigation, each violation will be sanctioned separately by class. Therefore, discipline can be administered for each violation in one incident or investigation.

b. Multiple violations from the same incident will be considered as an additional violations on the Chart of Sanctions.

B.C. Assignment of Classifications to Policies

1. Violations subject to disciplinary action are identified by classification and noted in the left margin next to the text it applies to in the policy. The classification will carry through the policy until a new classification is noted or “n/a” is used.

2. If a supervisor finds a violation that is missing a classification or cannot determine the classification within a range of classes, the supervisor shall contact IAPS for classification assignment.

C.D. Suspensions and Termination

1. A pre-determination hearing will be held for all employees facing suspension or termination within ten (10) business days of the completion of the chain of command review.

2. The pre-determination hearing is held to provide the employee an opportunity to present reasons, either in person or in writing, why the proposed action should not be taken.

3. The supervisor conducting the hearing will be the Chief of Police or a designee of the Chief.

4. If the Chief conducts the predetermination hearing, they make the decision on discipline. If the designee conducts the hearing, they will make a recommendation for discipline to the Chief of Police. The Chief then agrees or disagrees with the recommendation.

5. IAPS staff will send Payroll/Personnel a copy of the memorandum.

6. The employee may have up to two representatives during the pre-determination hearing.

D.E. Imposing Discipline For Sanction 7 Policy Violations

1. At times during their normal course of business, supervisors will become aware of minor misconduct for which there is little or no investigation needed to sustain the
employee for the violation. An inquiry by a supervisor establishes the violation without the need for a formal notice of an investigation. The following process shall be used for such violations:

a. To request a verbal or written reprimand through use of an IA Request in BlueTeam:
   i. The supervisor will document the specific facts and circumstances leading them to determine a specific SOP was violated by the employee. The SOP section will be listed, and the language of the section will be included.
   ii. The supervisor will complete the text of the reprimand in memorandum form attached to the BlueTeam entry.
   iii. The supervisor will forward the BlueTeam entry through the chain of command to the Division Head, who will review the facts and recommendations.
   iv. The Division Head will state whether they concur with the findings and recommended discipline (or override the supervisor’s recommendations).
   v. Once the Division Head is satisfied, the entry will be forwarded to IAPS.
   vi. IAPS will review the complaint to verify it does not require further investigation prior to moving to discipline.
   vii. IAPS will draft any official documentation (such as a letter of reprimand) needed and forward it back to the Division Head for issuance and signatures.

2. Administrative Closure for Sanction 7 Policy Violations

   a. At times, supervisors will discover or become aware of sanction 7 policy violations, that is better dealt with through performance improvement than with formal discipline. Supervisors shall document the occurrence as an NDCA. NDCA’s will be considered for progressive discipline. When determining whether to administratively close a violation, the following criteria apply.
      i. The allegations must not constitute a pattern of misconduct.
      ii. The employee must still receive sufficient notice of the supervisor’s identification of the violation and intent to close it, as well as any needed coaching on the matter.
      iii. Supervisors are prohibited from administratively closing any civilian complaint (Refer to SOP – Complaints Involving Department Policy and Personnel).

3. IAPS will determine whether a case is too complex for any division or area command to investigate, in which case, IAPS will investigate and the formal process of issuing target letters and scheduling interviews will be followed through the IAR process.

E.F. Suspensions Held in Abeyance
1. When a final decision to discipline is made and the discipline involves a suspension, the executive staff may elect to hold some or all of the suspension in abeyance for a period of no more than 6 months.

2. At the completion of the abeyance period, if the employee has not had any further allegations of misconduct, the discipline held in abeyance will expire and cannot be imposed.

3. Holding any part of a suspension in abeyance shall only be allowed if:
   a. The employee willingly agrees with the findings of the supervisor and further waives any right to appeal or otherwise grieve the discipline or findings.
   b. The employee does not engage in misconduct during the period of abeyance.
      i. If an employee engages in misconduct during the period of abeyance, the full amount of the suspension held in abeyance will be imposed without opportunity for appeal even if the allegation of misconduct is sustained after the period of abeyance.
   c. The employee voluntarily signs a memo drafted by IAFD/IAPS stipulating to the above.

F.G. Demotion

1. Department supervisors of the rank of sergeant or higher (or their civilian equivalent) may face demotion when an investigation results in a sustained violation(s) of Department policy, rules, regulations, orders, and laws.

2. Any act or repeated acts that result in a presumptive suspension of 40 hours or more will require the executive staff to consider whether demotion is appropriate, along with any other discipline or NDCA imposed.

G.H. Expectations for Employees on Suspension or Terminated

1. Personnel who have been terminated or suspended who are scheduled for court are still responsible for appearing in court and will be paid for their attendance. Personnel still employed will need to adjust their schedule for court, and overtime will not be allowed.

2. Personnel are not eligible for Chief’s Overtime while serving a suspension. Upon notification, personnel scheduled for Chief’s Overtime during their suspension must notify the Chief’s Overtime coordinator that they are unable to take the assignment so that a substitute may be obtained.
3. **During a suspension, personnel will not wear any identifiable part of the official uniform.**

4. **Upon being terminated, personnel will surrender their badge of office, their take-home car, and all other Departmental property.**
APPENDIX - CHART OF SANCTIONS

The matrix below shall be used to determine the range of discipline that may be imposed for a sustained violation of a Department policy. Every Class of violation carries a minimum, presumptive, and maximum penalty. The presumptive penalty shall be imposed unless aggravating or mitigating circumstances are articulated by the recommending supervisor and the investigative file contains sufficient credible evidence of those circumstances. Use of this matrix shall ensure both fair and consistent application of discipline across the Department.

The supervisor must determine whether a violation is a first, second, third, or subsequent violation based on time limitations prior to using the matrix to recommend discipline:

Min = Minimum Discipline      VR = Verbal Reprimand      Max = Maximum Discipline
Pres = Presumptive Discipline  WR = Written Reprimand   DS = Dismissal from Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS</th>
<th>FIRST OFFENSE</th>
<th>SECOND OFFENSE</th>
<th>THIRD OFFENSE</th>
<th>FOURTH OFFENSE</th>
<th>FIFTH OFFENSE</th>
<th>SIXTH OFFENSE</th>
<th>SEVENTH OFFENSE</th>
<th>EIGHTH OFFENSE</th>
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- When conduct falls within the “Dismissal” range, the minimum discipline imposed must be a 120-hour suspension. If the Chief or designee chooses not to dismiss the employee, the maximum allowable suspension is 90 Calendar Days per City Rules and Regulations Section 902.3
- Whenever a supervisor’s conduct falls within a presumptive discipline of 40 hours or more, demotion will also be considered by executive staff.
3-46 DISCIPLINE SYSTEM

3-46-1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe how discipline will be evaluated and imposed in response to violations of department policy.

3-46-2 Policy

Department policy is to ensure that disciplinary action is taken in a prompt, resolute, fair, and consistent manner. To provide a framework for this approach, the Department established a Chart of Sanctions. Using the chart as a benchmark will enable the Department to retain discretionary authority for imposing individualized disciplinary action while ensuring a systematic and equitable administration of discipline for all employees.

3-46-3 Definitions

Aggravating Circumstances

Aggravating circumstances are factors related to the officer, his or her conduct, or the effect of the conduct on others, that serve to increase the seriousness of the conduct and the severity of the discipline imposed pursuant to the Chart of Sanctions. Aggravating circumstances cannot be defined for every possible incident; therefore, it is necessary that the reviewing supervisor fully articulate the significant factors that increase the seriousness in the investigations they review.

For example, consider two employees driving city vehicles who become distracted by their mobile data terminals. One employee strikes a curb while the other runs over a pedestrian within a cross walk. Both violations are technically the same; however, the circumstance of running over a pedestrian would be aggravating, justifying more severe discipline in addition to that noted in the Chart of Sanctions.

An employee’s past disciplinary history, liability exposure, intent, injuries caused, Department exposure to liability or damage to its reputation comprise some of the conditions which may be considered when determining aggravating circumstances.

Chart of Sanctions

The Chart of Sanctions is the appendix to this policy, which identifies levels of disciplinary action to be imposed based on sanction classification and frequency of occurrence of the misconduct.

Mitigating Circumstances

Mitigating circumstances are accompanying events, facts or conduct that do not justify, exonerate, or excuse the act, but should be considered in potentially reducing the
culpability of the actor or the severity of the penalty associated with the act under the Chart of Sanctions. Mitigating circumstances cannot be defined for every possible incident; therefore, it is incumbent upon reviewing supervisors to fully articulate the precise mitigating circumstances in the investigations they review.

For example, consider two employees who miss court. One employee misses court because his or her child was in the hospital overnight with pneumonia while the other employee misses court because he or she forgot to set the alarm clock. Both violations are technically the same; however, staying up all night with a sick child would be mitigating, justifying less severe discipline from that noted in the Chart of Sanctions.

An employee’s past disciplinary history, liability exposure, intent, injuries caused, Department exposure to liability or damage to its reputation comprise some of the conditions which may be considered when determining mitigating circumstances.

Sanction Classification

A sanction classification is a level of seriousness and corresponding level of discipline designated to each type of misconduct. Sanction classifications range from 1 (most serious) to 7 (least serious). Sanction classifications form the rows of the Chart of Sanctions.

3-46-4 Rules and Responsibilities

Observation of Department Rules

The Department maintains rules intended to encourage professional standards. Personnel will observe and comply with Department rules. Fair, neutral and impartial enforcement of the rules serves as a cornerstone for the operation of an efficient and transparent police department, and the systemic and equitable application and enforcement of discipline.

Reviewing Supervisors’ Responsibilities

The reviewing supervisors’ responsibility is to ensure fair, impartial, consistent, enforcement of the rules.

Disciplinary and Grievance Systems

Disciplinary and grievance systems are designed to promote the fair, equitable and consistent enforcement of rules and imposition of discipline.

Personnel are to familiarize themselves with the policies and procedures outlined in the City Merit System Ordinance.
3-46-5—Procedures

Chart of Sanctions

The Chart of Sanctions identifies levels of disciplinary action to be imposed based on class designation and frequency of occurrence of the misconduct. The Chart of Sanctions is appended to this policy.

Process and Criteria

A supervisor considering imposition of discipline will consult the Chart of Sanctions. To determine the appropriate discipline, the supervisor will:

Determine from the Chart of Sanctions the minimum and maximum disciplinary action applicable for the violation;
Consider the seriousness of the violation;
Consider mitigating and aggravating circumstances;
Consider the disciplinary record of the individual involved;
Consider whether the conduct was intentional or merely negligent;
Consider whether the violation caused injury to another; and
Consider whether the conduct damaged the department’s reputation.

Supervisor will identify the violation and will charge the employee with the SOP violation that covers the highest class violation applicable to the act or omission. Lesser SOP violations, which are included in the highest class violation, should not be considered when identifying the level of sanction.

Once this process is completed, the supervisor will impose the appropriate disciplinary action unless the penalty should be increased due to aggravating circumstances or reduced due to mitigating circumstances.

Reviewing supervisors must explain and justify any deviation from the Chart of Sanctions on a supplemental narrative addendum and attach the explanation for the deviation to the Supervisor Recommendation form.

Using the Chart of Sanctions

Supervisors will determine the class designation of the offense(s) from the Chart of Sanctions.

The supervisor will then determine whether the violation is a first, second, or third offense within the class, based on the officer’s record in the officer’s internal affairs file. The applicable sanction for the offense is found at the intersection of the offense column and the class row on the Chart of Sanctions.
Examples:

The sanction for the second offense of a Class 5 violation is suspension for 40-80 hours; for the third offense of a Class 7 violation suspension will be for 8-32 hours.

A fourth offense within the same class will be sanctioned as a third offense of the next higher class; a fifth offense within the same class will be sanctioned as a third offense, two classes higher. For example, a fourth offense, Class 7 would move up one class on the third offense column and be sanctioned as a suspension for 40-80 hours. A fifth offense, Class 7 would move up two classes on the third offense column and be sanctioned as a suspension for 88-160 hours.

Time Limitations on Chart of Sanctions

Class 1, 2, 3, and 4 offenses are considered when using the Chart of Sanctions throughout an officer's career with no time restrictions on prior offenses.

For class 5 and 6 offenses: If two years have passed since the last offense within these classes, a subsequent offense will be considered a first offense for determining sanctions.

For class 7 offenses: If one year has passed since the last offense within this class, a subsequent offense will be considered a first offense for determining sanctions.

Whenever violations of any class are still within time guidelines, and a subsequent violation of any class occurs, the subsequent violation will be considered as the next higher sanction.

Examples:

An employee with previous offenses in Classes 6 and 7, still within those time guidelines, and who commits a second offense, Class 7 violation would be sanctioned as a second offense, Class 6 (suspension for 8-32 hours).

Given the same circumstances, if the offense is a first offense, Class 5, it would be sanctioned as a first offense, Class 4 (suspension for 40-80 hours).

Multiple-Offenses

Multiple offenses occur when an employee commits more than one act or omission that violates department policy.

If multiple offenses arise from the same incident or investigation, each offense will be sanctioned separately by class. Therefore, both reprimands and suspensions can be administered for two or more violations in one incident or investigation.

If multiple offenses from the same incident are within the same class, each will be considered as an additional offense on the Chart of Sanctions.

Examples:

Three offenses, Class 7 in a single incident would be sanctioned with a suspension 8-32 hours.
Two offenses, Class 7 and one offense, Class 5 in the same incident (assuming no prior offenses) would require a written reprimand for the two Class 7 offenses and a suspension of 8-32 hours for the Class 5 offense.

When reviewing the disciplinary history of personnel to establish the number of offenses in a given time frame, only separate incidents will be counted, and the highest class offense will be used.

Assignment of Sanction Classifications to Policies

Violations subject to disciplinary action are identified by sanction classification and noted in writing located to the left of the text, next to applicable subsections in the SOP manual.

All of the material within a subsection will be subject to the same sanction classification unless otherwise noted.

The employee who drafts or revises an SOP subsection will assign a sanction classification as part of the revision. Both the revision and the sanction classification will be appraised during the review process. The SOP Review Committee will ensure that the Internal Affairs Division reviews the sanction classification to evaluate the consistency and appropriateness of the classification prior to the policy being reviewed and approved by the Policy & Procedures Review Board.

Sanction classifications noted by a particular SOP subsection may be inadvertently omitted. If this occurs and a sanction classification is needed, the immediate supervisor of the employee being disciplined will:

Select a sanction classification from a subsection with a sanction classification notation which most closely approximates the SOP subsection with no sanction notation.

Document that the unsanctioned subsection was used to determine the sanction classification and forward this documentation up the chain of command.

If the appropriate Deputy Chief, Major, or Executive Director, concurs with the proposed sanction level, the SOP Liaison will be notified in writing and given the responsibility of appending the sanction classification notation to the unsanctioned section. The SOP Liaison then ensures the Policy & Procedures Review Board re-reviews the policy and sanction classification.

Procedures for Imposing Discipline

Verbal Reprimands

All supervisors may give verbal reprimands to employees for minor infractions. When a verbal reprimand is given, the supervisor will explain that the action is a verbal reprimand.

The supervisor will note and initial the verbal reprimand and applicable policy violation on the employee card. Personnel are instructed that more severe disciplinary action will be taken for repeated infractions or omissions of the same policy violation.

Written Reprimands
The following steps are taken when supervisors give written reprimands to their subordinates:

Supervisors will write a memo containing the text of the reprimand and will forward it to Internal Affairs Division. The letter of reprimand is drafted by Internal Affairs Division and forwarded through the appropriate chain of command. With input from the chain of command, the Commander of the reprimanded employee will approve the letter and will forward a copy of the letter to the employee receiving the written reprimand and to Internal Affairs Division.

Suspensions and Termination

A pre-disciplinary hearing will be held for all employees facing suspension or termination. The pre-disciplinary hearing is held to provide the employee an opportunity to provide comments about the proposed discipline. The supervisor conducting the hearing will be the Chief of Police or a designee of the Chief. The Chief or designee will write a memo to Internal Affairs Division indicating their final decision with respect to discipline, including the date any suspension will be served or the effective termination date. Internal Affairs Division administrative staff will send Payroll/Personnel a copy of the memorandum. The employee may have legal and/or union representation during the pre-disciplinary hearing.

Non-disciplinary corrective action

In order to promote positive, professional behavior from employees, reviewing supervisors should identify whether any non-disciplinary corrective action is appropriate in addition to any applicable discipline.
### Expectations for Employees on Suspension or Relieved of Duty

1. Personnel relieved from duty or on suspension who are scheduled for court are still responsible for appearing in court and will be paid for their attendance.

2. Personnel are not eligible for Chief's Overtime while serving a suspension. Personnel scheduled for Chief's Overtime during their suspension must notify the Chief's Overtime coordinator in a timely manner that they are unable to take the assignment, so that a substitute may be obtained.

3. During a suspension, personnel will not wear any identifiable part of the official uniform. Upon being relieved from duty, personnel will surrender their badge of office, their take home car, and all other departmental property. Personnel will not act in any official capacity, nor represent themselves as police officers in any manner.
# Appendix

## Chart of Sanctions

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS</th>
<th>FIRST OFFENSE</th>
<th>SECOND OFFENSE</th>
<th>THIRD OFFENSE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SUSPENSION/ DISMISSAL</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SUSPENSION 168–240 HOURS</td>
<td>SUSPENSION/ DISMISSAL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SUSPENSION 88–160 HOURS</td>
<td>SUSPENSION 168–240 HOURS</td>
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<td>VERBAL REPRIMAND</td>
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