

Maple Shade Police Department

Citizen's Guide to OPRA Requests and Accident Reports

- The Open Public Records Act (OPRA) and other state laws provide public access to government records including accident reports and other police department documents.
- Not **all** documents are available to the public. Listed on the Government Records Council (GRC) web site (<http://www.state.nj.us/grc/public/exempt/>) are the 25 exemptions under OPRA and the Executive Order Exemptions issued by the GRC. These exemptions are self-explanatory but keep in mind that both the GRC and Superior Court rule on a regular basis on what can and cannot be released.
- When you make a request, please use the designated form to do so. All requests must be specific and clearly identify the items you are requesting. OPRA requires the production of identified documents; it does not require the Police Department to perform research. Vague requests will likely be denied. We will do our best to guide you in the process of your request but ultimately, the request must come from you.
- **The department has 7 business days to respond to your OPRA request.** The first day begins the day AFTER it is received by the custodian of records. Weekends and holidays do not count into this total of days.
- **Accident and other Non-OPRA reports will take 5 business days to complete before they are ready for pickup by you.** Weekends and holidays do not count into this total of days.
 - **You do not need to file an OPRA request to obtain an accident report.**
- If your OPRA request is not clear or there is a question regarding the request, the Police Department may request an extension of time to respond to your request so it may consult with the County Prosecutor or Township Attorney regarding the request. Similarly, if you request documents that are not readily available, the Police Department may request an extension of time to respond. In both instances, you will receive notice in writing from the Department requesting the extension and outlining the time frame needed to respond to your request.
- If you have requested an accident report (NJTR-1) and need assistance interpreting this form, please request from the record's clerk, the NJTR-1 guide sheets which will help you understand and interpret your report. Should you have any questions regarding your report, please contact the officer that handled the accident as their name and badge number will appear at the bottom of the report. **Records personnel are NOT permitted to make any changes to your report.**

- When you receive your documents, you may notice that certain sections of the documents have been blacked out. The Department cannot release certain information (other than to parties involved in an accident N.J.S.A. 39:4-131) such as dates of birth, social security numbers, driver's license numbers, credit card numbers and unlisted telephone numbers. GRC and court decisions dictate the limitations of this information and it will be noted on your OPRA response as to what was redacted and why.
 - A recent example would be when a neighbor dispute took place between two neighbors and one neighbor signed a noise complaint against the other. The neighbor receiving the complaint summons (defendant) requested the information from the records department on exactly who filed the complaint against them. This exact scenario happened in a local nearby town and it was ruled that the person who signed the complaint was entitled to have their personal information blacked out (redacted) as a means of protecting them from retaliation.
- **If you make an anonymous request, we will require you to leave a deposit based upon the estimated costs for your request and there is no guarantee that the request will be approved.**
- Examples of information that the Police Department will not release:
 - We do not give out copies of sensitive police information such as Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) information;
 - Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) information;
 - Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) information;
 - Internal Affairs Investigations;
 - Administrative Office of the Court (AOC) information; or
 - Sex Offender information.
- If you are requesting information on registered sex offenders, you can go to the New Jersey State Police website (www.state.nj.us/njsp/) and locate the available public information there.
- Generally speaking, police **Uniform Investigative Reports (UIR's)** are not given out in accordance with established rulings and exemptions, but we do try to work with the public to give out the associated **incident reports**. When you request a record, please make sure you identify the incident number you are requesting.

- If a crime (i.e. theft, burglary) was committed against you and/or your financial interests and an arrest was made, the charges may be considered indictable. If this is the case we will have to refer you to the Burlington County Prosecutor's Office to file your OPRA request.
- Current law dictates that the Maple Shade Police can only charge you \$.05 cents a copy for regular sized copies and \$.07 cents a copy for legal sized copies. You will be charged the actual estimated cost for any VHS tapes and/or CD's/DVD's that we are required to recreate should your request for those items be approved. You will also be charged for the postage on those items (if applicable) and that will be included in your estimated bill.
- A Special Service Charge can be imposed for extraordinary requests such as converting mediums (i.e. VHS to DVD, audio edits...) in accordance with N.J.S.A. 47:1A-5c. You will be given an estimate of the cost before the work is completed to ensure you want to proceed.
- Should you have any questions, please contact the Government Records Council at #866-850-0511 or Lieutenant Jeffrey Hoch of the Maple Shade Police Department at #856-779-9499.