

SANTA CLARA POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER 21.7

BODY MODIFICATIONS

ISSUED APRIL 2006

21.7.1 Introduction

Many factors influence the community's confidence in our Department. The image we present to the community must be one of professionalism. Our appearance is of utmost importance. It is the preference of the Department that should personnel obtain any tattoo, scarification, branding or piercing, it should be located in an area that can be covered with a Department-approved uniform or appropriate business attire.

This order establishes specific guidelines concerning the display of tattoos, scarifications, brands and piercing by members of the Department. It places accountability for compliance not only upon each employee, but also upon their supervisors and commanding officers.

21.7.2 Definitions

Tattoo – the act or practice of marking the skin with indelible designs, forms, figures, art, etc., by making punctures in the skin and inserting pigment.

Scarification – the act of intentional cutting of the skin for the purpose of creating a design, form, figure or art.

Branding – the act of intentional burning of the skin for the purpose of creating a design, form, figure or art.

Piercing – the act of creating a hole in any part of the body for the purpose of inserting an object, jewelry or ornamentation.

Uniformed personnel – includes sworn police officers, Community Service Officers, Records Specialists and Supervisors, Reserve Officers, Cadets and Explorers.

Non-uniformed sworn personnel – includes investigative, administrative and all other non-uniformed assignments.

Unauthorized tattoos, scarifications or brands – Unauthorized is defined as any tattoos, scarifications or brands considered inappropriate, unprofessional or offensive.

21.7.3 Tattoos, Brands, Scarifications

Uniformed Personnel, as defined in this order:

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- Except as provided in [21.7.6](#), any tattoos, scarifications or brands worn by uniformed Police Department personnel shall NOT be visible while on duty or representing the Department in any official capacity. Tattoos, scarifications or brands must be covered with a Department approved uniform including but not limited to a long-sleeve shirt, jacket, sweater, turtleneck sweater, or pants.
- Uniformed personnel can apply for and may be granted a one-time exemption by the Chief of Police for tattoos, scarifications, or brands already in existence on the date of this order that cannot be covered by a Department approved uniform, pursuant to this order.
- No exemption will be granted for any unauthorized tattoos, scarifications or brands considered inappropriate, unprofessional or offensive as outlined in this order.

Non-uniformed SWORN personnel

- Except as provided in [21.7.6](#), any tattoos, scarifications or brands, worn by sworn personnel working plain-clothes assignments shall not be visible while on duty or representing the Department in any official capacity. Tattoos, scarifications or brands will be covered with approved clothing.
- Non-uniformed sworn personnel can apply for and may be granted a one-time exemption by the Chief of Police for tattoos, scarifications, or brands already in existence on the date of this order that cannot be covered by Department approved business attire, pursuant to [21.7.7](#).
- No exemption will be granted for any unauthorized tattoos, scarifications or brands considered inappropriate, unprofessional or offensive as outlined in this order.

Non-uniformed CIVILIAN and VOLUNTEER personnel

Civilian and volunteer personnel may not display tattoos, scarifications or brands, except as outlined in [21.7.6](#).

ALL Police Department personnel

The display of any unauthorized tattoo, scarification or brand considered inappropriate, unprofessional or offensive, regardless of its location, by any member of the Department while on duty, or representing the Department in any official capacity is prohibited.

- The following includes, but is not limited to, the types of unauthorized tattoos, scarifications or brands prohibited by this order:
 - Depictions of nudity or violence.
 - Sexually explicit or vulgar art, words, phrases or profane language.
 - Symbols likely to incite a strong reaction in the workplace, i.e., swastikas, pentagrams or similar symbols.

- Initials, acronyms or numbers that represent criminal or historically oppressive organizations, i.e., AB, KKK, SS, MM, BGF, HA, 666 or any street gang names, numbers and/or symbols.
- Any member of the Department who obtains an unauthorized tattoo, scarification or brand considered inappropriate, unprofessional or offensive, shall:
 - Remove the tattoo, scarification or brand at their own expense; or,
 - Cover the tattoo, scarification or brand with a Department-approved uniform or appropriate business or casual attire, as appropriate.

21.7.4 Piercings

While on duty, all uniformed female personnel, sworn and civilian, may only wear one set of stud-type or small hoop earrings with only one earring per ear. Earrings may only be worn in the earlobes. Stud earrings shall be plain and no more than ¼ inch in diameter, while hoops may be no larger than ½ inch. The piercing and wearing of associated jewelry in all other visible parts of the body is prohibited.

While on duty, all male personnel, sworn and civilian, (except as listed below) will not wear any visible type of jewelry designed for display through the act of body piercing.

While on duty, non-uniformed sworn female personnel, may wear two sets of earrings per ear. Earrings may only be worn in the earlobes. The earrings shall be no more than one inch in diameter and extend no further than one inch from the bottom of the ear. Earring styles and colors should not be excessive or offensive.

21.7.5 Mutilation

Intentional body mutilation, piercing, branding/intentional scarring that are excessive or eccentric are prohibited. Some examples are:

- a split or forked tongue;
- foreign objects inserted under the skin to create a design or pattern;
- enlarged or stretched out holes in the ears (other than a normal piercing).
- intentional scarring that appears on the neck, face, or scalp.

21.7.6 Exceptions

- When deemed operationally necessary, sworn Department members in undercover assignments may display tattoos, scarifications, brands or jewelry otherwise prohibited by this order with approval of their commanding officer.

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- Jewelry, tattoos, scarifications or brands that are a required part of a recognized religious organization or practice.

21.7.7 Exemptions

Uniformed personnel and non-uniformed sworn personnel can apply for, and may be granted a one-time exemption by the Chief of Police for tattoos, scarifications, or brands already in existence on the date of this order that cannot be covered by a Department-approved uniform or business attire.

Members requesting this exemption must submit their request in writing to the Chief of Police with photographs documenting the tattoos, scarifications, or brands for which they are requesting exemption. A decision will be rendered granting or denying the exemption within thirty (30) calendar days from receipt of the request by the Chief of Police. The final authority for granting any exemption will rest with the office of the Chief of Police or an appointed designee.

No exemption will be granted for any unauthorized tattoos, scarifications or brands considered inappropriate, unprofessional or offensive as outlined in this order.