



City of Eureka

Independent Police Auditor  
Quarterly Report: Q2 2025

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OIR  

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GROUP



323-821-0586

6510 Spring Street #613 | Long Beach, CA 90815

[OIRGroup.com](http://OIRGroup.com)

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# Introduction

This quarterly report provides independent oversight of the Eureka Police Department's (EPD) internal investigations, reviewing whether investigations of alleged officer misconduct were thorough, objective, and procedurally sound. The OIR Group, serving as the City of Eureka's Independent Police Auditor (IPA), has engaged closely with EPD in assessing complaint investigations and providing input throughout the review process. We publicly report these findings on a quarterly basis at the Community Oversight Police Practices (COPP) Board meeting.

During the second quarter of 2025, the IPA evaluated four complaint investigations conducted by EPD. For each case reviewed in this report, EPD provided the investigative files upon determining the inquiries were sufficiently complete. In some cases, the IPA offered feedback to strengthen investigative quality and reinforce accountability. The Department adopted these recommendations prior to submitting the cases for final disposition and closure.

The cases presented in this report are now officially closed.

This report also highlights notable developments, including EPD's facilitative approach toward First Amendment protest activity and the implementation of a standalone tactical disengagement policy. Both of these reflect ongoing efforts by EPD leadership to align policing practices with evolving public expectations and statewide reforms.

# Complaint Case Summaries & Recommendations

In the following cases, EPD provided the investigative file for our review when it determined that the investigation was sufficiently complete. After constructive dialogue, we provided feedback and recommendations, which EPD considered and often adopted before the case was sent to the Chief for final disposition and closure.

The cases reported here are now officially closed.

## Case #24-07

*Summary: A member of the public alleged that EPD officers had assaulted her and used excessive force during her arrest. EPD initiated a preliminary inquiry and framed allegations related to violations of rights, which they unfounded. The IPA found the complaint investigation to be thorough and fair. EPD also conducted a Use of Force investigation.*

EPD officers responded to a call of a felony warrant subject on scene; they received information that the subject was seen in a parked van. When they arrived, the subject refused to exit the van.

Officers engaged in verbal efforts to gain compliance, including strategic communication and warnings regarding potential use of force options that might be (but ultimately were not) used.

A supervisor arrived. The responding personnel continued to talk with the subject to gain compliance. The subject took out a kitchen knife and made threats of self-harm. When the subject dropped the knife, officers moved into the van to control the subject. In the brief struggle that ensued, officers used control holds while the subject made verbal allegations of assault. Officers were able to handcuff the subject, remove her from the van, and transport her to the jail for booking.

Later, the subject reported to jail personnel that the officers had assaulted her. Jail personnel forwarded the complaint to EPD.

EPD initiated an investigation by interviewing the complainant and reviewing all available video footage, including surveillance footage from the area. EPD found the allegations to be unfounded. EPD noted a technical malfunction with one officer's body-worn camera, which they resolved.

Consistent with internal protocol, EPD also conducted a Use of Force review regarding the control and handcuffing techniques used during the arrest. The review was sent up the supervisory chain and to the department's defensive tactics subject matter expert. The force was found to be in policy. The involved personnel also conducted an incident debrief, with attention to the tactical decision-making and handcuffing methods used during the incident.

The IPA reviewed the investigative file, including all video footage, and found the investigation to be complete and thorough and the findings to be fair and accurate.

## Case #24-12

*Summary: A member of the public reported a new allegation related to a previously filed (and closed) complaint case stemming from an incident in 2021. EPD discussed the case with the IPA and decided to conduct a preliminary inquiry of the new allegation before deciding whether a full investigation was needed. EPD found the new allegation to be unfounded. The IPA found the inquiry and findings to be sufficient and fair.*

In March of 2021, a member of the public filed a complaint stating that two EPD employees had used excessive force when they arrested her. At that time, EPD command staff had investigated the complaint and based on the police reports and body-worn camera footage, found the allegations to be unfounded.

In October of 2023, the complainant filed a complaint using California's Peace Officer Training and Standards' (POST) online misconduct reporting site. POST forwarded this complaint to EPD for further

investigation. In reviewing the complaint, EPD noted that it was for the same 2021 incident, and with nearly identical verbiage to the initial complaint. However, in this new complaint narrative, the complainant alleged that an EPD officer had broken her shoulder during the use of excessive force.

After discussion with the IPA and considering the time elapsed between the first investigation and learning of the new allegation, EPD initiated a preliminary inquiry into the new allegation. EPD re-reviewed the available video footage, police reports, and medical clearance documentation from the incident, as well as the closed investigation. EPD determined that the new allegation was unfounded, particularly emphasizing that subject was medically cleared by doctors when she was taken to the hospital immediately following the incident. EPD also noted that when the subject told the officer that she had a pre-existing shoulder injury, the officer immediately ceased using the control hold that targeted the shoulder joint.

The IPA reviewed the investigative file, including all video footage, and found the investigation to be complete and thorough and the findings to be fair.

## Case #24-24

*Summary: An EPD employee assigned to a joint task force self-reported that an allegation had been made against them, claiming unprofessional conduct involving a contact from a partner agency. After discussing with the IPA, EPD decided to open its own preliminary inquiry. EPD found the allegations to be unfounded. The IPA found the inquiry and findings to be sufficient and fair.*

An EPD employee self-reported to command staff that an anonymous party had alleged that the EPD employee was engaged in unprofessional behavior with a joint task force contact.

EPD learned that the lead task force agency would conduct its own investigation into this allegation. The lead task force agency investigated the matter, including interviewing the contact with whom the employee was alleged to have had unprofessional interactions. That contact denied the allegation or any involvement with the EPD employee outside of their

professional work. The lead agency forwarded all investigative material to EPD.

After discussing the matter with the IPA, EPD decided to also open its own preliminary inquiry to document the matter. Using the evidence provided by the lead task for agency and additional evidence collected during their own inquiry, EPD also determined there was no evidence of unprofessional behavior. Coupled with the fact that the employee had self-reported and had no history of any similar allegations, EPD found the allegations to be unfounded, wrote a memorandum to that effect, and closed the case.

The IPA found this outcome to be sufficient and fair.

## Case #25-06

*Summary: The Department opened an investigation into allegations of unprofessional off-duty conduct by an EPD employee. EPD conducted a preliminary inquiry and found the allegations to be exonerated. The IPA found the investigation and findings to be thorough, fair and complete.*

An EPD employee was involved in an altercation while off-duty. EPD responded, took statements from the involved employee and witnesses, and collected surveillance camera footage. EPD initiated a preliminary investigation that included this evidence and the body-worn camera footage of all responding officers.

EPD determined that the employee's actions did not violate any Department policies related to unprofessional off-duty conduct. EPD found the allegations to be exonerated.

The IPA reviewed the investigative file, including all video footage, and found the investigation to be complete and thorough and the findings to be fair and accurate.

# Notable Developments

## First Amendment Activity

Throughout this period, and like other cities in California and throughout the nation, the City of Eureka experienced an increase in protests and demonstrations. EPD reported collaboration with event organizers, including receiving advanced notice of dates, times, and planned routes. This coordination reflects the current best practices in protest response and demonstrates EPD's commitment to facilitating constitutionally protected activity while prioritizing public safety. By maintaining open lines of communication with event organizers, EPD was able to anticipate logistical needs, minimize disruption, and reduce the potential for conflict.

For example, in June 2025, EPD played a visible but restrained role during the large-scale "No Kings" protest in downtown Eureka.<sup>1</sup> The event drew an estimated 3,000 participants and remained peaceful. EPD officers managed traffic disruptions as demonstrators temporarily spilled into Fifth Street and the Chief of Police monitored the event on site. EPD did not intervene in the protest's core activities; their involvement focused on crowd safety and logistical support.

Compared to larger metropolitan areas in California, where recent protest responses have at times involved arrests and uses of force, EPD's approach has been notably restrained and facilitative. This difference is, of course, partly attributable to the nature of the local protest crowd, which has been predominantly peaceful, organized, and civically engaged. This dynamic underscores how crowd behavior and local context can shape law enforcement posture in meaningful ways. We are encouraged by these outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> The "No Kings" movement refers to a nationwide series of protests organized in response to President Donald Trump's administration. These were held on June 14, 2025, to coincide with President Trump's military parade and birthday.

# Tactical Disengagement Policy

Tactical disengagement is the deliberate decision by law enforcement to withdraw from an encounter, particularly with a barricaded or isolated subject, when continued engagement would pose unnecessary risk to officers, the individual involved, or the public. It is a form of de-escalation that prioritizes safety, strategic planning, and the preservation of life over immediate enforcement action. Tactical disengagement represents a critical evolution in how agencies manage these often volatile or uncertain situations.

In this last period, EPD leadership drafted and implemented a stand-alone Tactical Disengagement policy that reflects a forward-thinking and responsible approach to this tactic. It clearly defines when disengagement is appropriate, outlines the roles of officers and supervisors, and emphasizes the use of strategic communication, containment, and crisis intervention before force is considered. The policy also incorporates safeguards such as supervisory oversight, documentation requirements, and advisement to affected community members. By recognizing that some incidents do not always require immediate action, and by including disengagement within a broader framework of de-escalation and public safety, the policy aligns with emerging best practices across California and the nation.

This policy demonstrates a commitment to thoughtful, measured policing that values officer safety and community trust. It serves as a model for how agencies can operationalize discretion and restraint without compromising public safety.

# Conclusion

The investigations summarized in this report illustrate EPD's ongoing commitment to timely and comprehensive case review, as well as its responsiveness to input from outside oversight. Each complaint, regardless of outcome, was met with a structured internal process, followed by collaborative evaluation with the IPA. While these investigations were resolved with findings of no misconduct, the review process yielded meaningful opportunities to reinforce performance expectations.

In addition to case reviews, EPD's approach to First Amendment activity and its adoption of a standalone tactical disengagement policy reflect positive institutional development aligned with modern policing principles.

Looking ahead, the IPA remains committed to working collaboratively with EPD to support its continuous improvement.