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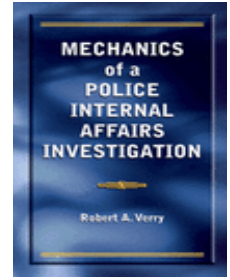
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Robert is **not** a lawyer. If you need legal advice, please contact a lawyer. (^-Retired SBB-NJ)

NJ Police Officer Discipline: Lessons from the 2025 Major Discipline Report¹

By Dr. Robert A. Verry (Chief-ret.)²

For those who work in Internal Affairs, disciplinary reports are far more than collections of sustained charges and imposed sanctions. They provide a window into the recurring vulnerabilities of police organizations, the effectiveness of supervisory systems, and the types of misconduct that continue to challenge public trust. The New Jersey Attorney General's 2025 Major Discipline Report is particularly valuable because it captures disciplinary outcomes across municipal, county, state, corrections, prosecutor, parole, and specialized law enforcement agencies throughout the state.

Viewed collectively, the cases reveal a profession confronting both traditional forms of misconduct and modern accountability challenges. While the report contains familiar allegations of excessive force, neglect of duty, and criminal conduct, it also underscores the growing importance of digital evidence, body-worn camera compliance, database access controls, documentation practices, and truthfulness in administrative investigations. In many instances, the ultimate disciplinary outcome was driven not by the original misconduct but by the officer's response once it came under scrutiny.

The Misconduct Categories That Appear Most Frequently

A review of the report reveals several recurring themes. Conduct unbecoming, neglect of duty, insubordination, misuse of authority, attendance violations, confidentiality breaches, truthfulness violations, and off-duty criminal conduct recur across agencies of all sizes.

One important observation is that major discipline is not reserved solely for dramatic incidents. A substantial portion of the cases involve failures to perform routine responsibilities. Officers were disciplined for sleeping while on duty, abandoning assignments, failing to respond appropriately to calls for service, neglecting prisoner-security responsibilities, and failing to adequately supervise

¹ <https://www.njoag.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Major-Discipline-01-01-25-to-12-31-25.pdf>

² I conduct all proofreading myself; therefore, I utilized OpenAI (comparable to Grammarly) for assistance with language, grammar, and punctuation refinement. Please excuse any inadvertent omissions, additions, or typographical errors that may remain.

subordinates. These cases demonstrate that organizational accountability is often built around everyday performance expectations rather than extraordinary events.

For Internal Affairs professionals, this serves as an important reminder. The conduct most likely to undermine organizational effectiveness is not always the conduct that generates headlines. Small failures, repeated over time, often evolve into major disciplinary matters when supervisors fail to intervene early or when officers develop patterns of misconduct that become impossible to ignore.

Truthfulness as the Central Accountability Issue

If one lesson emerges more clearly than any other, it is the continuing importance of truthfulness. Integrity-related allegations appear throughout the report in various forms: false reports, altered records, forged documents, misleading statements, omitted information, falsified overtime records, inaccurate leave submissions, and dishonesty during Internal Affairs interviews.

Experienced investigators understand that many disciplinary cases have two separate stages. The first involves the underlying incident. The second begins when investigators start asking questions. The report repeatedly shows that officers often face greater consequences for dishonesty during the investigative process than for the original misconduct.

This pattern carries significant implications beyond discipline. Sustained findings involving truthfulness may affect prosecutorial disclosure obligations, witness credibility, future testimony, employment decisions, and organizational trust. Once an officer develops a documented history of dishonesty, the consequences often extend well beyond the immediate disciplinary case.

Technology, Digital Evidence, and the Modern Investigation

The report demonstrates how thoroughly technology has transformed police accountability. Investigators increasingly rely upon body-worn camera footage, CAD records, dispatch logs, vehicle tracking systems, overtime records, scheduling data, electronic communications, database audits, and other forms of digital evidence.

In prior decades, many investigations depended heavily upon competing witness statements. Modern investigations frequently begin with objective electronic evidence. Time stamps, access logs, camera footage, screenshots, metadata, and system records often establish facts before formal interviews even begin.

The significance of this development cannot be overstated. Agencies that effectively preserve and analyze digital evidence are far better positioned to identify misconduct, evaluate credibility, and defend disciplinary decisions.

Conversely, agencies that fail to secure electronic evidence promptly risk losing some of the most reliable information available to investigators.

Body-Worn Cameras and Documentation Failures

The report also reflects the growing importance of body-worn camera compliance. Failures involving camera activation, deactivation, reporting malfunctions, and documentation frequently occurred alongside other allegations of misconduct.

What is particularly noteworthy is that camera violations rarely existed in isolation. Instead, they often accompanied allegations involving the use of force, crash investigations, citizen encounters, supervisory failures, or concerns about truthfulness. As a result, camera compliance is increasingly viewed as an integrity issue rather than a purely technical requirement.

For supervisors and investigators, body-worn camera reviews should remain a routine component of both proactive auditing and reactive investigations. The report suggests that camera violations frequently serve as indicators of broader policy compliance issues.

Misuse of Authority and Access to Information

Another significant theme involves misuse of position and access to confidential information. Several officers used law-enforcement databases, confidential records, agency resources, or their official authority for personal purposes. These incidents illustrate the risks created when public authority is used to advance private interests.

Such misconduct is particularly damaging because it strikes at the heart of public trust. Citizens grant law enforcement extraordinary access to sensitive information with the expectation that it will be used only for legitimate governmental purposes. When officers misuse that access, the resulting harm extends beyond the individual incident and raises broader concerns about organizational controls and oversight.

The report therefore reinforces the need for regular auditing of database activity, stronger information-security practices, and consistent enforcement of confidentiality policies.

Off-Duty Conduct and Fitness for Duty

The report makes clear that accountability does not end when an officer's shift concludes. Numerous cases involved off-duty criminal conduct, domestic violence allegations, intoxicated driving, harassment, theft, sexual misconduct, and other behavior that raised legitimate concerns regarding fitness for duty.

Historically, some officers viewed off-duty conduct as a private matter. Modern disciplinary standards largely reject that distinction. When off-duty conduct undermines public confidence, affects credibility, demonstrates poor judgment, or creates safety concerns, agencies increasingly treat it as a legitimate subject of administrative review.

The lesson for police executives is straightforward: organizations must evaluate off-duty conduct not only through the lens of criminal liability but also through the broader question of whether the conduct is compatible with continued public service.

Lessons for Supervisors and Internal Affairs Units

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of the report is the practical guidance it offers supervisors and investigators. First, concerns about truthfulness should receive immediate attention. Second, digital evidence should be preserved early and reviewed comprehensively. Third, attendance systems, overtime records, and leave practices should be audited regularly. Fourth, body-worn camera compliance should be monitored proactively rather than only after complaints arise.

The report also highlights the importance of lateral investigation. Cases that initially appear narrow often expand into broader inquiries involving policy violations, documentation failures, supervisory shortcomings, or integrity concerns. Effective investigators remain alert to secondary misconduct that may be more significant than the original allegation.

Equally important is the role of supervision. A number of cases demonstrate that organizational failures often begin with inadequate oversight. Supervisors who fail to intervene, document concerns, review reports carefully, or address recurring issues may allow minor misconduct to develop into major disciplinary matters.

Implications for Prosecutors and Defense Counsel

The disciplinary findings described in the report carry important implications for the legal system. Prosecutors must remain attentive to sustained misconduct involving dishonesty, falsification, misuse of authority, evidence handling, and other credibility-related issues. These findings may trigger disclosure obligations and affect the evaluation of cases in which disciplined officers serve as witnesses.

Defense attorneys, meanwhile, should recognize that major discipline reports often reveal information extending beyond criminal convictions. Findings involving report falsification, inaccurate statements, documentation irregularities, or violations of investigative procedures may present important avenues for discovery, cross-examination, and witness impeachment.

The report demonstrates that modern police discipline and criminal litigation are increasingly interconnected through questions of credibility and transparency.

Conclusion: What the Report Says About Accountability in New Jersey

The 2025 Major Discipline Report presents a picture of a police accountability system that is imperfect but increasingly transparent. The report documents misconduct involving line officers, supervisors, command staff, corrections personnel, investigators, and agency leaders. It demonstrates a willingness to publicly identify misconduct across a broad range of agencies and circumstances.

At the same time, the report reveals continuing challenges. Some cases took years to reach final disposition. Others concluded through resignation, retirement, settlement, or collateral proceedings. Accountability is therefore neither immediate nor uniform.

Nevertheless, the broader trend is unmistakable. Modern police accountability in New Jersey is increasingly driven by credibility, documentation, technology, and transparency. While serious criminal misconduct continues to appear in disciplinary systems, a substantial portion of major discipline now arises from failures involving honesty, reporting, supervision, policy compliance, and responsible use of authority.

For Internal Affairs professionals, that may be the report's most important lesson. The future of police accountability is not defined solely by the investigation of extraordinary misconduct. It is equally shaped by the ability of agencies to identify, document, and address the routine integrity failures that gradually erode public confidence long before a crisis reaches the front page.