



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Law Enforcement

ALLIGATOR RESPONSE

GENERAL ORDER	EFFECTIVE DATE	RESCINDS/AMENDS	APPLICABILITY
62	December 17, 2019	March 28, 2013	All Members

GO 37

1 POLICY

- A** It is the policy of the Division to help manage threats by alligators to public safety, pets, and property.
- B** The management authority for nuisance alligators resides with the Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program (SNAP) within the Division of Hunting and Game Management. Incidents involving nuisance crocodiles shall be referred to SNAP, and a program member will determine the appropriate management strategy.
- C** It is the policy of the Division to support and assist with the implementation and administration of the Commission's Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program (SNAP).
- D** It is the policy of the Division to investigate all alligator incidents involving a bite to a person.
- E** It is the policy of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission that all nuisance alligator complaints coming from state parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, public parks, or other public property shall be handled in cooperation with the property's managing authority. While the final authority to remove a nuisance alligator rests with the Commission, the agency will exercise due diligence to coordinate a response that reflects the preferences of the property's managing authority.
- F** It is the policy of the Commission that all nuisance alligator complaints originating on private property shall be handled in cooperation with the property owner or managing authority. Furthermore, it is the policy of the Commission to respect private property rights and to defer to the wishes of the property owner and managing authority when possible. However, public safety concerns remain a priority and supersede other considerations.
- G** It is the policy of the Commission that alligators less than four feet in length are not generally considered a nuisance because they are typically not large enough to pose a threat to people, pets, or property. However, alligators less than four feet in length may require action in accordance with this General Order if the alligator meets the "Immediate Response Alligator" definition.
- H** It is the policy of the Commission and its leadership that any field-based, alligator-related, intra-agency conflict that may develop will be resolved in accordance with the conflict resolution protocols provided in this General Order. All agency employees are expected to resolve conflict in a manner that balances public safety and conservation concerns, and at the lowest possible level of supervision. Any conflict item that centers on public safety issues shall be resolved in favor of maximizing public safety. Any conflict item that concentrates on behavioral issues and tendencies of alligators shall be resolved in

accordance with established alligator management protocols.

I Definitions

- (1) **Alligator Bite** – Incident which involves an alligator bite to a person.
- (2) **Immediate Response Alligator** – Calls concerning alligators that warrant an immediate response. This includes, but is not limited to, alligators that have bitten a person; are attacking a pet; are blocking traffic or causing unsafe traffic conditions; are in someone's pool, carport or garage, under a car, or otherwise blocking access to personal property,.
- (3) **Nuisance Alligator** – An alligator four feet or larger in length that the caller believes is a threat to people, pets, or property may be deemed a nuisance. The caller must have the legal authority to grant access to remove the alligator.
- (4) **Nuisance Alligator Trapper/Agent** – A private individual under contract or assisting the person under contract with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Nuisance Alligator Trappers operate under the direction of SNAP.
- (5) **Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program (SNAP)** – The Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program in the Division of Hunting and Game Management addresses concerns about nuisance alligators throughout Florida.
- (6) **Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator** – The Division of Hunting and Game Management member assisting with implementing the Wildlife Incident Response Plan and providing 24/7 guidance and support to Division members responding to alligator calls for service.

2 RESPONSIBILITIES

A Regional Commander

- (1) In the event of a human fatality or injury from an alligator bite, the Regional Commander shall notify the appropriate Deputy Director, the FWC Regional Director, Public Information Coordinator (PIC), and the appropriate coroner or medical examiner, if necessary.
- (2) The Regional Commander, or their designee, is responsible for coordinating the investigation of alligator incidents involving any alligator bite to a person, and ensuring that the disposition and removal is coordinated with the Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator.

B Supervisors

- (1) Supervisors are responsible for reviewing all investigative reports and ensuring that investigating members consult with the Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator during the investigation.

C Sworn Members

- (1) Sworn members responding to the scene of an alligator call for service shall act in accordance with General Order 37, Investigations.
- (2) The sworn member investigating the alligator bite to a person is responsible for completing and submitting the Accident Information Form (FWC/DLE-091) within 24 hours. The submitting member shall also be responsible for ensuring the completed form is submitted to the Regional Director and Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator.
- (3) Investigating members are responsible for consulting with the Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator during the investigation of all alligator incidents.
- (4) Sworn members shall communicate with SNAP to ensure a unified response that appropriately balances public safety and conservation concerns.

D Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator

- (1) The Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator shall maintain all files of investigative reports involving

alligator bites to persons, forms, and alligator incident data and statistics.

- (2) The Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator, or designee, shall be available 24/7 to provide guidance and support to all Division members.
- (3) The Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator is responsible for determining what, if any, action is warranted concerning the removal of an alligator involved in a bite to a person.

E Duty Officers

- (1) Duty Officers shall coordinate the Division of Law Enforcement response in accordance with the procedures listed below.

3 PROCEDURES

A Duty Officer Alligator Response Protocols

- (1) **Alligator Bite Incidents – Incidents involving a bite to a person require the following response:**
 - (a) Gather all essential information for the incident and enter into CAD (timely documentation as events occur and information becomes available is essential):
 1. Address and/or location.
 2. Phone number(s).
 3. Name(s).
 4. Date and time of the occurrence.
 5. Situational information.
 - (b) Dispatch the closest available law enforcement officer(s) to the site of the incident and advise the area supervisor.
 - (c) Based on severity and need, dispatch to the site any additional personnel and equipment required to initially handle the situation, including Emergency Medical Services (EMS) responders.
 - (d) Contact and provide all information directly to the appropriate Regional Commander and ascertain if the chain of command is followed regarding additional notifications, or if notifications should continue in accordance with the Division's Incident Notification Protocol.
 - (e) Contact and provide all required information directly to the Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator,
 - (f) Complete the Report of Alligator Incident form (FWC/DLE-328) and send via e-mail to the appropriate Regional Commander and to the Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator.
- (2) **Immediate Response Alligator Calls for Service – Calls for service involving alligators meeting the Immediate Response Alligator Incident definition require the following response:**
 - (a) **Between the Hours of 0800 and 1700:**
 1. Gather essential information for the incident and enter into CAD:
 - a. Address and/or location.
 - b. Phone number(s).
 - c. Name(s).
 - d. Date and time of the occurrence.

- e. Situational information.
- 2. Transfer the call to the Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program (SNAP) hotline:
 - a. Remain on the line until the transfer is complete.
 - b. Advise SNAP that you have a caller with an immediate response alligator complaint on the line and turn the call over to the SNAP representative. Request SNAP to advise whether law enforcement response is required.
 - c. If a SNAP representative cannot be reached via the hotline number, use the alternate program representative numbers.
- 3. If requested by SNAP, notify the closest available law enforcement officer(s) to the site of the incident and advise SNAP by phone if an officer has been dispatched and include the officer's estimated time of arrival (ETA).
 - a. If the officer is required to take action, advise SNAP by phone and send a copy of the CAD report via email or by fax.
- 4. As the incident develops, add all updates to the incident in CAD and send a completed CAD incident report to SNAP upon finalization.

(b) Between the Hours of 1700 and 0800:

- 1. Gather essential information for the incident and enter into CAD:
 - a. Address and/or location.
 - b. Phone number(s).
 - c. Name(s).
 - d. Date and time of the occurrence.
 - e. Situational information.
- 2. Dispatch the closest available FWC law enforcement officer(s). When FWC resources are not readily available, notify a supervisor for further direction. Consideration should be given to contacting surrounding agencies for additional law enforcement response.
 - a. If a law enforcement officer or Lieutenant is not available, the Duty Officer shall contact the area supervisor.
- 3. The Duty Officer shall notify the closest available Nuisance Alligator Trapper.
 - a. If necessary, the Duty Officer may contact the Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator for additional assistance.
- 4. Report the incident to SNAP by sending a copy of the CAD report via e-mail or by fax.

(3) Other Alligator Calls for Service – Alligator calls for service not meeting the criteria detailed above, require the following response:

- (a) Gather essential information for the incident and enter into CAD:
 - 1. Address and/or location.
 - 2. Phone number(s).
 - 3. Name(s).
 - 4. Date and time of the occurrence.
 - 5. Situational information.

- (b) Advise the caller that SNAP will make contact with them as soon as possible and provide the caller with the number for SNAP.
 - (c) Report the incident to SNAP by sending a copy of the CAD report via e-mail or by fax
 - (d) Even in non-immediate response alligator incidents, the duty officer may dispatch the closest available officer to the scene, if warranted by the situation. If an officer is dispatched to the scene, the duty officer shall ensure that an updated CAD report is submitted to SNAP.
- (4) **Alligators In Personal Possession – Calls concerning personal possession of an alligator by a member of the public require the following response:**
- (a) Gather essential information for the incident and enter into CAD:
 1. Address and/or location.
 2. Phone number(s).
 3. Name(s).
 4. Date and time of the occurrence.
 5. Situational information.
 - (b) Dispatch the closest available law enforcement officer(s) to the site of the incident – law enforcement action may be warranted.
 - (c) The officer(s) will coordinate the release of the alligator with the property owner or managing authority and the Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator. If under 4 feet in length, an alligator trapper should be dispatched if the officer needs assistance with handling the alligator. Alligators 4 feet or greater in length should be turned over to a nuisance alligator trapper.
 - (d) If the alligator is not a nuisance alligator, i.e. a trapped, injured, or rescued animal, SNAP should be contacted by phone to determine the disposition of the alligator. During regular office hours, contact SNAP via the procedure in subsection A (2). After hours, contact the Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator per instructions for after hours contact. Enter the contact with SNAP personnel, including the name of the person, in the notes section of the call.
 - (e) Report the incident to SNAP by sending a copy of the CAD report via e-mail or by fax.

B Duties of Sworn Members responding to an Alligator Bite to a Person

- (1) The primary duty of the first sworn member to an alligator incident involving a bite to a person is to care for injured persons and to secure and protect the scene. Sworn members shall also:
 - (a) Assess injuries; administer emergency medical care to victim and initiate requests for additional first responder services. Treatment of victim will be turned over to qualified medical personnel upon their arrival.
 - (b) The sworn member shall maintain the incident scene and preserve the evidence.
 - (c) The sworn member shall locate and identify witnesses.
- (2) A supervisor shall be notified for all alligator incidents involving death, serious bodily injury, or missing persons.
- (3) The appropriate supervisor (Lieutenant or above) shall respond to the scene of all alligator incident fatalities.
- (4) The initial sworn member at an alligator incident scene shall retain authority to direct the investigation until relieved of that responsibility by supervisory or investigating personnel. The sworn member is not relieved of such authority until a supervisor or investigator clearly advises the sworn member that he or she is aware of the facts and is assuming responsibility.

C Duties of Sworn Members responding to all other Alligator Calls for Service

- (1)** If a sworn member has been dispatched, the primary duty of the first sworn member responding to any other type of Alligator call for service is to secure the scene and to assess the situation. The sworn member shall also:
 - (a)** Provide updated information on the situation to the Regional Communications Center, including a recommendation for action, which may include dispatch of a nuisance alligator trapper, referring the situation to SNAP, or contacting SNAP for guidance.
 - (b)** If a nuisance alligator trapper is dispatched, the officer may evaluate the need to remain on site until the requested Nuisance Alligator Trapper arrives. If remaining on site, the officer shall provide assistance as needed. If required, the sworn member may leave the site prior to the arrival of the NAT in order to respond to law enforcement or public safety calls for service.

D Conflict Resolution Protocol

- (1)** All agency employees are expected to resolve conflict in a professional manner that balances public safety and conservation concerns. Conflicts that are based on public safety concerns shall be resolved in favor of maximizing public safety and conflicts based on alligator/wildlife behavior concerns shall be resolved in favor of appropriate alligator management practices and procedures. If a conflict arises that, despite diligent efforts of all involved members, cannot be resolved, the following protocol applies:
 - (a)** If the sworn member on scene and the SNAP member cannot reach consensus, the sworn member shall refer the issue to the next available sworn supervisor (Lieutenant), who will work with the SNAP member to reach consensus and resolve the issue.

E Investigations of Alligator Bites to a Person

- (1)** All alligator incidents involving a bite to a person shall be investigated by a sworn member.
- (2)** Incidents involving serious injury or human fatalities shall be investigated by an experienced investigator.
 - (a)** The investigating member shall conduct a thorough investigation within 60 days and complete the [Wildlife Incident Investigation Report \(FWC/DLE-327\)](#). Protracted investigations that cannot meet the report deadline will be documented on an Incident Summary Report. The report should contain, at a minimum, the accident number, date of accident, and the reason for extension. All extension notifications will be sent to the immediate supervisor of the member assigned to the investigation, who shall ensure that the extension is justified.
 - (b)** If an extension is approved, the investigating member's supervisor shall notify the member in writing of the revised deadline and copy the Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator on the written notification.
- (3)** Investigating members shall consult with the Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator on all alligator incident investigations.
- (4)** All alligator incident investigation reports will be reviewed and approved by the investigating sworn member's immediate supervisor.
- (5)** The completed [Wildlife Incident Investigation Report \(FWC/DLE-327\)](#) and any supporting documents shall be reviewed by the Captain, who will submit the report to the Regional Commander and the Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator. The Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator will have 14 calendar days to conduct a final review and communicate any recommendations to the respective Captain. If this review does not occur within the 14 calendar day timeframe, the investigation will be considered complete and the case file will be closed. Supporting documentation may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- (a) Accident Information Form (FWC/DLE-091);
 - (b) Incident Summary Report;
 - (c) Report of Alligator Incident (FWC/DLE-328);
 - (d) Sworn Written Statement (FWC/DLE-208)
 - (e) Call history record of CAD transactions;
 - (f) A medical examiner report or autopsy of the victim, if appropriate;
 - (g) Graphic representation of the location in which the alligator incident occurred (e.g., photos, maps, sketches, etc);
 - (h) Photographs of the location and immediate adjacent areas and the alligator, if captured or killed;
 - (i) Any relevant news clippings; and
 - (j) Any other relevant information.
- (6) All public records requests for completed alligator incident investigations shall be completed by SNAP.

F Alligator Disposition

- (1) Removal of alligators and disposition of alligators shall be determined by the Alligator Bite Incident Coordinator.
- (2) Only under circumstances in which a victim has lost body parts or flesh and there is reason to suspect human parts to be in the alligator's stomach should an immediate examination of the alligator's stomach be performed, if a contracted nuisance alligator trapper or other staff capable of performing this examination is available. If human parts are found during the examination, they shall be placed on ice and transferred to the hospital or coroner/medical examiner by the member. Any transfer shall be documented using the [Evidence Property Identification Tag \(FWC/DLE-074\)](#). The completed Evidence Property Identification Tag shall be submitted to the member conducting the investigation for inclusion into the case file.

4 FORMS

FORM NUMBER	FORM TITLE
	Incident Summary Report
FWC/DLE-074	Evidence Property Identification Tag (EPID)
FWC/DLE-091	Accident Information Form
FWC/DLE-208	Sworn Written Statement
FWC/DLE-328	Report of Alligator Incident
FWC/DLE-327	Wildlife Incident Investigation Report