

Virginia State Police

Media Release

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VIRGINIA STATE POLICE STATEMENT ON EX-EMPLOYEE

NORTH CHESTERFIELD, Va. – Since Riverside, Calif. Police investigators notified the Virginia State Police (VSP) on Nov. 26, 2022, that a former employee was involved in an ongoing, multi-jurisdictional criminal investigation, VSP initiated an extensive review of Austin L. Edwards’ hiring process, academy performance and monthly job performance evaluations. At no point during the hiring process or during his 15-months with the department did Edwards disclose any incidents that would have disqualified him from employment.

The department’s administrative review is now complete and has revealed that human error resulted in an incomplete database query during Edwards’ hiring process. Although we believe this to be an isolated incident, steps are currently underway to ensure the error is not repeated going forward. The department is also proactively auditing existing personnel records and practices.

The forensic review of Edwards’ department-issued laptop and cell phone remains ongoing by the VSP High Tech Crimes Division. In addition, as required by VSP policy, Edwards turned in all state-owned, department-issued equipment on his last day of employment, Oct. 28, 2022. Included in the returned equipment inventory are all service weapons, uniforms and badge.

VSP Sworn Hiring Process

The Virginia State Police conducts a thorough background check as part of its mandatory hiring process for entry into the academy. That background check requires passage of written, psychological, and physical testing, as well as a pre-employment polygraph.

During the background investigation phase of the employment process, the department obtains and documents detailed information regarding the applicant’s background, criminal history, ability and integrity to ensure the most highly qualified and suitable applicants are approved for employment.

As a CALEA (<https://calea.org>) accredited public safety agency, the Virginia State Police utilizes standardized performance evaluations for all sworn employees, which includes a personnel early intervention system. As a probationary employee, Edwards was also given monthly performance evaluations, in accordance with department policy. During Edwards' short tenure with the department, he never exhibited any behaviors to trigger any internal administrative or criminal investigations.

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