

What is the Special Investigation Unit?

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The Special Investigations Unit (SIU) is a civilian agency responsible for investigating incidents between police and the public in cases where there has been a fatality or serious injury.

In 1988, the Task Force on Race Relations and Policing expressed concern about the way in which the police conducted investigations that involved other police officers and police services. The creation of the SIU was a response to the concern. The SIU began operations on August 8, 1990.

The purpose of the SIU is to promote and maintain the community's confidence in Ontario's police services through highly professional, objective and independent investigations. In order to carry out its job, the agency is led by a director and has about 40 civilian investigators from all across the province. The SIU also has its own forensic identification section.

The SIU investigates incidents that happen all across Ontario, and they encompass about 65 police services (approximately 21,600 officers) from the Ontario Provincial Police to local police forces. The SIU has full power and authority to investigate and, where appropriate, charge officers with a criminal offence.

As previously mentioned, incidents in which death, serious injury or a sexual assault has occurred between a police officer and a member of the public may fall under the jurisdiction of the SIU. The SIU's definition of serious injury includes admittance to the hospital, broken bones, burns and loss of vision and hearing. The incident may be reported by the police service involved or by anyone else. Any other complaints that do not involve the above must be referred to other agencies such as the Ontario Civilian Complaint Commission.

Once an incident is deemed to fall under the jurisdiction of the SIU, a thorough investigative process is deployed. The SIU will examine all of the evidence, the scene, medical condition of the victim, seek witnesses, seize police equipment, and speak to the coroner and next of kin, if applicable. Usually, SIU investigations take an average of 20 days to close. If the incident is found to have merit, the SIU will lay the appropriate criminal charges against the officer or officers who committed the offence. However, if the evidence is found lacking, the SIU will close the file but will make sure that all the information is available to the parties and the general public.

The SIU will not investigate incidents involving off duty cops unless they use police equipment or identify themselves as police officers during the event.

If you would like to find out more about the SIU and how to make a complaint, please see the side bar for contact information.

The SIU does not investigate complaints against RCMP or NAPS Officers, though they do have an Aboriginal Liaison Officer who deals with NAN when needed.