

Communications Division

801.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes guidelines for the basic functions of Communications Division. It addresses the immediate information needs of the Department in the course of its normal daily activities and during emergencies.

801.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Santa Ana Police Department to provide 24-hour telephone service to the public for information and for routine or emergency assistance. The Department provides two-way radio capability providing continuous communication between Communications Division and department members in the field.

801.3 COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION SECURITY

The communications function is vital and central to all emergency service operations. The safety and security of Communications Division, its members and its equipment must be a high priority. Special security procedures should be established in a separate operations manual for Communications Division.

Access to Communications Division shall be limited to Communications Division members, the Watch Commander, command staff and department members with a specific business-related purpose.

801.4 RESPONSIBILITIES

801.4.1 COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

The Chief of Police shall appoint and delegate certain responsibilities to a Communications Manager. The Communications Manager is directly responsible to the Administration Bureau Commander or the authorized designee.

The responsibilities of the Communications Manager include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Overseeing the efficient and effective operation of Communications Division in coordination with other supervisors.
- (b) Ensuring the radio and telephone recording system is operational.
 - 1. Recordings shall be maintained in accordance with the established records retention schedule and as required by law.
- (c) Processing requests for copies of Communications Division information for release.
- (d) Maintaining Communications Division database systems.
- (e) Maintaining and updating Communications Division procedures manual.
 - (a) Procedures for specific types of crime reports may be necessary. For example, specific questions and instructions may be necessary when talking with a victim

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of a sexual assault to ensure that his/her health and safety needs are met, as well as steps that he/she may take to preserve evidence.

- (b) Ensuring dispatcher compliance with established policies and procedures.
- (f) Handling internal and external inquiries regarding services provided and accepting personnel complaints in accordance with the Personnel Complaints Policy.
- (g) Maintaining a current contact list of City personnel to be notified in the event of a utility service emergency.

801.4.2 ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES

The Communications Manager should establish procedures for:

- (a) Recording all telephone and radio communications and playback issues.
- (b) Storage and retention of recordings.
- (c) Security of audio recordings (e.g., passwords, limited access, authorized reviewers, preservation of recordings past normal retention standards).
- (d) Availability of current information for dispatchers (e.g., Watch Commander contact, rosters, member tracking methods, member contact, maps, emergency providers, tactical dispatch plans).
- (e) Assignment of field members and safety check intervals.
- (f) Procurement of external services (e.g., fire suppression, ambulances, aircraft, tow trucks, taxis).
- (g) Protection of essential equipment (e.g., surge protectors, gaseous fire suppression systems, uninterruptible power systems, generators).
- (h) Protection of radio transmission lines, antennas and power sources for Communications Division (e.g., security cameras, fences).
- (i) Handling misdirected, silent and hang-up calls.
- (j) Handling private security alarms, if applicable.
- (k) Radio interoperability issues.

801.4.3 POLICE COMMUNICATIONS SUPERVISORS

There are four (4) Police Communications Supervisors, one for each of the four main shifts in Communications. Under general direction from the Communications Manager their duties include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Receiving and handling all incoming and transmitted communications, including:
 - 1. Emergency 9-1-1 lines
 - 2. Business telephone lines
 - 3. Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)/Text Telephone (TTY) equipment
- (b) Scheduling and maintaining dispatcher time records

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- (c) Supervising, training and evaluating dispatchers (including those assigned as lead workers)
- (d) Investigating complaints related to the delivery of services and taking appropriate action to resolve them
- (e) Reviewing existing procedures and making recommendations to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness
- (f) Act as a liaison between the Communications Unit and other sections in the department and/or other agencies
- (g) Supervises and coordinates the repair of communication equipment
- (h) Determines a course of action in emergency situations not covered by departmental procedures and immediately notifies the Watch Commander or his/her designee
- (i) Prepares logs of daily activity

801.4.4 DISPATCHERS

Dispatchers report to the Police Communications Supervisor. The responsibilities of the dispatcher include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Receiving and handling all incoming and transmitted communications, including:
 - (a) Emergency 9-1-1 lines.
 - (b) Business telephone lines.
 - (c) Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)/Text Telephone (TTY) equipment.
 - (d) Radio communications with department members in the field and support resources (e.g., parking control, school police, allied agency law enforcement units).
 - (e) Other electronic sources of information (e.g., text messages, digital photographs, video).
- (b) Documenting the field activities of department members and support resources (e.g., parking control, school police, allied agency law enforcement units).
- (c) Inquiry and entry of information through Communications Division, department and other law enforcement database systems (CLETS, DMV, NCIC).
- (d) Monitoring department video surveillance systems.
- (e) Maintaining the current status of members in the field, their locations and the nature of calls for service.
- (f) Notifying the Watch Commander or field supervisor of emergency activity, including, but not limited to:
 - (a) Vehicle pursuits.
 - (b) Foot pursuits.
 - (c) Assignment of emergency response.

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801.5 CALL HANDLING

This Department provides members of the public with access to the 9-1-1 system for a single emergency telephone number.

When a call for services is received, the dispatcher will reasonably and quickly attempt to determine whether the call is an emergency or non-emergency, and shall quickly ascertain the call type, location, and priority by asking four key questions:

- Where?
- What?
- When?
- Who?

If the dispatcher determines the caller has a hearing and/or speech impairment or disability, he/she shall immediately initiate a connection with the individual via available TDD/TTY equipment or Telephone Relay Service (TRS), as mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

If the dispatcher determines the caller is a limited English proficiency (LEP) individual, the dispatcher should quickly determine whether sufficient information can be obtained to initiate an appropriate response. If language assistance is still needed, the language is known and a language-appropriate authorized interpreter is available in Communications Division, the dispatcher should immediately connect the LEP caller to the authorized interpreter.

If no authorized interpreter is available or the dispatcher is unable to identify the caller's language, the dispatcher will contact the contracted telephonic interpretation service and establish a three-party call connecting the dispatcher, the LEP individual, and the interpreter.

Dispatchers should be courteous, patient and respectful when dealing with the public.

801.5.1 EMERGENCY CALLS

A call is considered an emergency when there is an immediate or potential threat to life or serious property damage, and the timely arrival of public safety assistance is of the utmost importance. A person reporting an emergency should not be placed on hold until the dispatcher has obtained all necessary information to ensure the safety of the responding department members and affected individuals.

Emergency calls should be dispatched immediately. The Watch Commander shall be notified of pending emergency calls for service when department members are unavailable for dispatch.

801.5.2 NON-EMERGENCY CALLS

A call is considered a non-emergency call when there is no immediate or potential threat to life or property. A person reporting a non-emergency may be placed on hold, if necessary, to allow the dispatcher to handle a higher priority or emergency call.

The reporting person should be advised if there will be a delay in the dispatcher returning to the telephone line or when there will be a delay in the response for service.

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801.6 RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

The police radio system is for official use only, to be used by dispatchers to communicate with department members in the field. All transmissions shall be professional and made in a calm, businesslike manner, using proper language and correct procedures. Such transmissions shall include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Members acknowledging the dispatcher with their radio identification call signs and current location.
- (b) Dispatchers acknowledging and responding promptly to all radio transmissions.
- (c) Members keeping the dispatcher advised of their status and location.
- (d) Member and dispatcher acknowledgments shall be concise and without further comment unless additional information is needed.

The Police Communications Supervisor shall be notified of radio procedure violations or other causes for complaint. All complaints and violations will be investigated and processed through the chain of command.

801.6.1 FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION COMPLIANCE

Santa Ana Police Department radio operations shall be conducted in accordance with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) procedures and requirements.

801.6.2 RADIO IDENTIFICATION

Radio call signs are assigned to department members based on factors such as duty assignment, uniformed patrol assignment and/or member identification number. Dispatchers shall identify themselves on the radio with the appropriate station name or number, and identify the department member by his/her call sign. Members should use their call signs when initiating communication with the dispatcher. The use of the call sign allows for a brief pause so that the dispatcher can acknowledge the appropriate department member. Members initiating communication with other law enforcement or support agencies shall use their entire radio call sign, which includes the department station name or number.

801.7 DOCUMENTATION

It shall be the responsibility of Communications Division to document all relevant information on calls for service or self-initiated activity. Dispatchers shall attempt to elicit, document and relay as much information as possible to enhance the safety of the member and assist in anticipating conditions that may be encountered at the scene. Desirable information would include, at a minimum:

- Incident control number.
- Date and time of request.
- Name and address of the reporting person, if possible.
- Type of incident reported.
- Involvement of weapons, drugs and/or alcohol.

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- Location of incident reported.
- Identification of members assigned as primary and backup.
- Time of dispatch.
- Time of the responding member's arrival.
- Time of member's return to service.
- Disposition or status of reported incident.

801.8 CONFIDENTIALITY

Information that becomes available through Communications Division may be confidential or sensitive in nature. All members of Communications Division shall treat information that becomes known to them as confidential and release that information in accordance with the Protected Information Policy.

Automated data, such as Department of Motor Vehicle records, warrants, criminal history information, records of internal police files or medical information, shall only be made available to authorized law enforcement personnel. Prior to transmitting confidential information via the radio, an admonishment shall be made that confidential information is about to be broadcast.

801.9 TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

Dispatchers shall receive training consistent with minimum standards established by POST (Penal Code § 13510).