



**Maryland-National Capital Park Police
Prince George's County Division**



DIVISION DIRECTIVE

TITLE COMMUNICATIONS			PROCEDURE NUMBER PG1300.0
SECTION Communications Procedures	DISTRIBUTION A	ISSUE DATE 03/16/10	REVIEW DATE 02/01/13
REPLACES PG1300.0 "Communications", issued 02/01/05			
RELATED DIRECTIVES PG406.0, PG1724.0	REFERENCES CALEA 41, 43, 61, 81, 92	AUTHORITY Larry M. Brownlee, Sr., Division Chief	

I. PURPOSE

This directive establishes the policy and procedures relating to the operation of the Division's radio communications system and related activities.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of this Division to operate the radio communications system in a professional manner and in accordance with the Federal Communications Commission (F.C.C.) procedures and requirements at all times. This directive's intent is to be used in conjunction with the Standard Operating Procedures for the Communications Section.

Transmissions on police radios shall be restricted to official Division business only. All Division personnel must remember that both lives and property may depend on the proper use of this system. Every officer engaged in a field assignment will have constant access to radio communications.

III. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Dispatchers

1. Will coordinate the assignment of police units utilizing available information and in accordance with established Division procedures.

2. Requests from field personnel will be honored by the dispatcher when practical and as resources permit. If a request cannot be honored, the dispatcher will advise the requester.
3. Communications personnel will notify the patrol supervisor of all requests for tactical assistance.
4. Dispatchers will maintain a record of all units' current status.

B. Communications Supervisor

1. Will be responsible for ensuring that proper radio procedures are followed by all communications personnel.
2. Will ensure that the Communications Section personnel have immediate access to facility use permits, tactical plans, action plans and operation plans.
3. Will ensure that a current listing of telephone numbers of emergency service agencies is immediately available to Communications Section personnel.
4. Will ensure that there is a schedule for Communications Section personnel to accommodate 24-hour coverage and staffing.

C. Support Operations Manager or Designee

1. Will ensure that there are an adequate number of incoming phone lines for emergency calls.

D. Patrol Supervisors

1. Will be responsible for ensuring proper radio protocol and conformance with all procedures in this directive by field personnel. A patrol supervisor or officer in charge of an incident has the authority to direct officer-to-officer communications as necessary.
2. Will ensure that a lineup and shift assignments are provided to communications no later than the start of their shift/tour of duty.

E. All Officers

1. Will, while on duty, keep the Communications Section personnel informed of their current and all status changes.
 - a. Units equipped with mobile data computers will follow the approved policy and Division Directive PG752.0—"Use of Computers and Information Systems".

2. Will, while on duty, use the car/unit number designated for the units current assignment, or their Division identification number preceded by "ID" when off duty and transmitting on the radio.
3. Will advise the dispatcher when responding to or present at the scene of an incident.
4. Will clear all assignments through the dispatcher as soon as practical.
5. Officers conducting covert police operations, such as raids, stakeouts, etc., will inform Communications in advance of their assignment and provide their car/unit numbers, the name of the officer in charge of the operation, and the car/unit number of the communication car, if necessary. Communications personnel will be notified by the officer in charge at the conclusion of their detail.
6. Will, while off duty, use their Division identification number when transmitting on the radio, Division Directive PG1724.0 – "Take Home Vehicle Program").
7. Will, whenever possible, make any necessary notifications and communications directly to the public safety organization's (ie. Prince George's County Police, Park Police Montgomery County Division, or the University of Maryland Department of Public Safety) radio channel.
 - a. This does not relieve officers of the requirements outlined in Section III.E.1 of this directive.

IV. COMMUNICATIONS FUNCTIONS

- A. The Communications Section is responsible for the following activities:
 1. Coordination of Division radio communications, including reception, coordination and dispatching of all radio messages.
 2. Reception and disposition of all telephone calls received by the Section for administrative and operational needs.
 3. Training of Communications Section personnel.
 4. Sending and receiving METERS/NCIC teletype messages.
 5. Coordinating emergency and non-emergency notifications.
 6. Providing 24-hour access to the Maryland Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) and NCIC for field officers and after-hours emergency CJIS entries and deletions.
 7. Communications with other agencies via telephone and/or radio.

8. contact with any unit in-service, after three Maintaining or monitoring: Emergency contact phone numbers, Victim Services Directory, Division Roster, Investigators/Tactical officers on-call schedule, Tow Log, Holding Area/Cells cameras when in use, back-up Generator, and the Alarm Panel Monitor.

V. RADIO USE

- A. F.C.C. regulations prohibit radio misuse, such as, profane language, inappropriate transmissions, “covering” other units, etc. Misuse of the radio is a serious and potentially dangerous breach of safety protocol and will not be tolerated. Idle conversation not related to police operations is prohibited as it may interfere with operational transmissions and compromise officer safety. Supervisors are responsible for identifying individuals misusing the radio and those found to be in violation will be subject to disciplinary action.
- B. Radio messages will be transmitted using brief and concise terms. When transmitting, employees shall:
 - **Be clear and concise**
 - **Minimize background noise**
 - **Use unit numbers or ID numbers instead of names**
- C. Confidential or sensitive information shall not be transmitted unless immediate communication is essential to the successful resolution of a situation.
- D. Officers may use the telephone or MDT as a secondary source of communication when making routine requests for service, instead of consuming radio airtime. Officers will contact communications on a business taped line or ask that a dispatcher call them at a number. Officers will **not use** the emergency police number to contact communications for routine messages.
- E. Dispatchers and officers will record all necessary information prior to acknowledging any radio message received.
- F. Officers will notify the Park Police’s dispatcher whenever they switch to another police radio channel or alternate talk group. The Maryland-National Capital Park Police’s Radio Talk Group is “8N”.

Channel “8N1” is the primary channel controlled by communications and used to dispatch calls for service.

Channel “8N2” shall be used for car-to-car operational communications when not utilized as an OPS channel.

Channels “8N3” and “8N4” shall be used for tactical operations.

The issued Park Police radio can monitor (talk groups) and communicate with other jurisdictions and public safety organizations throughout the Washington

metropolitan region. Employees shall only communicate with other jurisdictions during emergency situations or when given permission by the outside jurisdiction to utilize a specific channel (or talk group) for public safety business only. Officers will not use other talk groups unless assigned to the unit the channel is designated to, or it is operationally necessary.

- G. When a dispatcher fails to make to make contact with any unit in service, after three attempts, a lookout will be placed after notification is made to the officers supervisor. The supervisor shall take/direct the appropriate action to locate the missing unit and cancel the lookout when the officer is located.
- H. When communications conducts a sequential welfare check of all units at the request of a supervisor, or when circumstances dictate, units will promptly acknowledge.
- I. In order to alert the dispatcher to their status and the immediate need for acknowledgment, officers calling out on a traffic stop or a suspicious situation will do so by stating their unit number and the nature of the call for service in their initial call to the dispatcher. The dispatcher will acknowledge the unit and the officer will then provide the location and other pertinent information prior to proceeding with the radio transmission.
- J. Officers will announce the type of computer check that they need when initially contacting the dispatcher. Once advised to proceed by the dispatcher, the officer will give the necessary information, in the following order:

Driver's License and Wanted Checks:

- 1. Last name first, followed by first and middle names.
- 2. Race (Asian, Indian, White, Black, etc. or the accepted MVA numerical race code).
- 3. Sex
- 4. Date of Birth (DOB)

Vehicle Listing's:

- 1. Registration State
- 2. VIN or tag number; if VIN only also provide make of vehicle; if out of state, provide the year and type of tag.

- K. Signal 13 (Officer in Trouble) Procedure
 - 1. When a Signal 13 is broadcast, the portable radio emergency call button (Signal 13 button) is activated by an officer; the dispatcher will receive an alert tone and the officers' identification number. The microphone of the portable radio used to declare the emergency will remain open for ten (10) seconds. Only the dispatcher and the activating officer will be able to talk on the radio during those ten (10) seconds.

If information is received regarding an officer in trouble, the dispatcher will:

- a. Activate the alert tone;
 - b. Broadcast the Signal 13, advising the units of the location of the call, and;
 - c. Acknowledge the first two responding units on police radio.
2. As soon as the dispatcher has verified that two units are in route to the officer in trouble, a 10-3 (limit transmissions) will be placed into effect. The two acknowledged units responding shall advise when they are on the scene and will relay any necessary further information via police radio to the other units. It is imperative that any other units refrain from using the radio unless the information they wish to convey is vital.
 3. If after one minute the situation is unchanged, the dispatcher will activate the alert tone and repeat the location.
 4. As soon as a Signal 13 is broadcast, the Prince George's County Police Communications will be notified immediately by our communications personnel and/or another unit on the street to request additional units to respond.
 5. To lessen the risk of incorrect information being provided, units, when broadcasting a Signal 13 will provide their exact location along with their unit number, if at all possible.
- L. When an officer communicates with other jurisdictions and agencies, he/she shall:
1. Use plain English (no 10 codes or signal codes).
 2. Identify themselves as Maryland Park Police followed by their ID number or call sign, for example Maryland Park ID#123 to Prince George's County.
 3. Keep communications brief, concise, and clear.
 4. When on-duty, officers shall not communicate with other jurisdictions or agencies unless operationally necessary or supervisor permission has been granted.
 5. When off-duty and travelling outside the bi-county area, officers shall communicate by radio with other jurisdictions or agencies only when they come upon an emergency incident that would require a 911 call.
- M. Officers shall not:
1. Make alterations to police radios.
 2. Transmit on the tactical or special operations channels of outside agencies unless authorized by that jurisdiction to do so.

VI. GENERAL PROCEDURES

- A. One or more police units will be dispatched on all requests for police service warranting the response of a field unit. Nothing will preclude handling a call for service in any other manner that will provide the same level of service. (Refer to Division Directive 910.0-“Reporting System”, Section III.B.) Any call for service may be held at the request of a patrol supervisor.

- B. The following information will be recorded/entered into the Computerized Aided Dispatching System (CAD) by dispatchers for every call for service:
 - 1. Date and time of request
 - 2. Name and address of complainant/victim, if possible
 - 3. Type of incident reported
 - 4. Location of incident reported
 - 5. Time of dispatch of initial unit
 - 6. Unit ID’s of primary and secondary units
 - 7. Time of first units arrival
 - 8. Time of unit that is handling the incident return to service
 - 9. Disposition or status of reported incident
 - 10. In custody/arrest time of any arrested person(s)

- C. In the event of a non-emergency call for service or information that does not come within the jurisdiction of this Division, the caller will be given the telephone number of the appropriate agency or service.

- D. In the event of a misdirected emergency call for service, the dispatcher receiving the call will obtain all necessary information and notify the appropriate agency of all information and note the time and persons notified.

- E. Dispatchers will obtain all relevant information for each call for service. It is important to attempt to gather as much information as possible to enhance the safety of the responding unit(s) and to assist in anticipating conditions that may be encountered at the scene.

- F. Dispatchers will judge the characteristics of each call to determine whether an emergency or non-emergency response is required and then dispatch the call accordingly. (Section VI.L. of this directive)

- G. The dispatch of a unit for a call for service will be made without unnecessary delay.
 - 1. Non-emergency, minor “occurred earlier” incidents can be delayed for a reasonable period of time, if necessary. If a delay is required, the calling party will be notified of the approximate ETA of an officer.

2. Non-emergency, minor “in progress (or) just occurred” incidents can be delayed for a reasonable length of time, if necessary. If a delay is required, the calling party will be notified of the approximate ETA of an officer.
 3. Emergency or serious “in progress (or) just occurred” incidents will not be delayed. If there are insufficient, or no units available, or if the response time or distance is excessive, the Prince George’s County Police or another Municipal Agency will be requested to respond, until one of our units arrive.
 - a. The first available Park Police unit will be dispatched to assist or take charge of the incident.
 4. Serious “occurred earlier” incidents will not be delayed unnecessarily. If a dispatch delay occurs the caller will be advised immediately.
 5. In the event that a call for service is received and all means to dispatch it have been exhausted, an on-duty patrol supervisor will be notified and determine a course of action.
- H. All calls from citizens, regarding suggestions and/or complaints, need to be transferred to a supervisor (or a designated senior duty officer) immediately.
- I. A separate Case Number (CCN) or Incident Report Number (IRN) will be assigned to each specific call for service.
- J. Order of dispatch for field operation units should be based on the closest available unit whenever possible.
1. Primary beat car
 2. Secondary beat car
 3. At large car
 4. Adjoining beat car
 5. Mounted unit (SOD)
 6. Supervisor
- K. Manner of dispatch
1. All calls for service will be dispatched in the following order:
 - a. Unit number assigned
 - b. Location
 - c. Nature of complaint/incident
 - d. Status (in progress, just occurred, occurred earlier)
 - e. Complainant name and location or anonymous/reluctant
 - f. Response code, if a priority call
 - g. Additional facts, but only if they are pertinent to the unit’s response to the call.

2. The dispatcher will record the primary unit and all back-up units assigned to each call on the CAD System.

L. Routine/Priority Responses

1. Normally, calls for service only require a routine response. Certain calls do necessitate a more expeditious response; however, due to the inherent dangers associated with emergency driving, the need for this type of response must be carefully weighed. All priority calls will be dispatched immediately to the nearest/closest available unit(s). If no units are in service, the closest unit assigned to a less serious call will be assigned. (See Section VI. G. of this directive)
2. All priority calls will be preceded by the activation of the alert tone.
3. A priority response will only be warranted for:
 - a. An in progress call for service where a life is in danger, or serious injury is likely;
 - b. A felony is in progress or just occurred (within five minutes);
 - c. An officer in trouble (Signal 13) call;
 - d. A domestic assault in progress;
 - e. A personal injury collision, **except** when fire/rescue or other police personnel are already on the scene and determine that the situation does not require an emergency response.
4. The dispatcher will assign a priority response to any call for service where it is warranted, at the time the call is initially dispatched.
5. A field supervisor has the authority to change any response classification initially assigned by a dispatcher. The supervisor assumes responsibility for the decision to change any response. Calls for service that have been delayed by a supervisor must be reassigned by him/her.

M. Assignment of Back-Up Units

1. Situations requiring a response from more than one unit will be based on the actual or potential presence of one or more of the following factors:
 - a. An assault on a police officer
 - b. On-scene arrest for a felony or violent misdemeanor
 - c. Resistance to arrest
 - d. Use of force
 - e. A crime in progress
 - f. A fleeing suspect
 - g. The number and age of the suspects
2. Assigned back-up units will respond in the same manner as the initially assigned unit except on personal injury collisions, where back-up units may

have a routine response, depending on the known circumstances of the incident.

3. A field supervisor has the authority to change any back-up assignments initially made by the dispatcher or field units.
4. Officers may cancel backup units after arriving on the scene and determining there is no need for other units.

N. Victim/Witness Information

1. Whenever communications receives witness information regarding a call that is being currently handled, communications personnel will record the name, address and phone number on the CAD System for that incident. The unit assigned to the incident will be advised that there is witness information available. Except in emergency circumstances, the officer will call communications by landline for this information. If the event has been cleared, a unit will be sent to interview the witness, if the witness requests to see an officer, and take any further action necessary.
2. Upon request, dispatchers will advise any complainant/victim/witness of the Divisions actions regarding the request for service, including direct service and/or referral to another agency.

O. Handling/Clearing Dispatched Calls For Service

1. Unless otherwise instructed, officers will contact the complainant on **all** calls for service.
2. Officers should complete all reports and immediate follow-up prior to clearing the call. If a report is written, the ID number of the officer responsible for writing the report shall be given.
3. Upon completing a call for service, officers will clear the call giving a **brief** description of the situation as actually found and will provide the clearance code.

P. Response To Alarms

1. When a Commission facility alarm is received through communications, it will be dispatched using the facilities name. All alarm calls will be handled with a routine response unless specific information is received by communications that would indicate that a priority response is warranted, i.e., hold-up, panic, trouble, or multiple zone alarms, etc.
 - a. At no time will dispatchers be requested to notify the Commission facility via landline prior to an officer responding to an alarm call or arriving on the scene of an alarm call.

2. If an employee notifies communication via landline indicating that an alarm was in error the dispatcher will verify the identity of the caller. If verified, the police response may be terminated. If not verified, police response will continue.
 - a. All unverified attempts to terminate police response will be immediately communicated to the responding unit(s).
 - b. Whenever a caller's identity cannot be immediately verified, the caller will be advised to meet the officer outside of the facility. The dispatcher will obtain a brief description of the caller and relay this information to the responding unit(s).
 3. All other alarm calls received will be handled in a similar manner.
- Q. The delivery of emergency messages to the public is a legitimate police function, however, this will only be done when a true emergency exists and there is no other prompt method of relaying the message. (Division Directive PG406.0 – "Notifications")

VII. ANONYMOUS AND RELUCTANT COMPLAINTS

- A. Anonymous Complainant – A complainant who refuses to give their name, address and/or telephone number.
- B. Reluctant Complainant - A complainant who provides their identity, but requests that the information remains confidential. No dispatcher will broadcast the identity of a reluctant complainant over the air. If an officer needs this information, it will be obtained via landline.

VIII. LOOKOUTS

- A. Lookouts must be obtained whenever possible. A lookout must be recorded. It must be timely, complete and accurate to serve as an investigative aid. Suspect lookouts may serve as probable cause for arrest.
- B. Routine lookouts, i.e., missing persons, runaways, PDC hit and run occurred earlier, etc. will be broadcast as time permits and not when any unit is involved in a call of a serious nature.
- C. Types of Lookouts
 1. Units may place lookouts for individuals wanted for a specific crime or a vehicle when probable cause for arrest without a warrant exists. Lookouts must state the specific crime for which the suspect is wanted for questioning and/or wanted and must be associated with a written report.
 2. Officer welfare lookouts are permissible but will not be used in lieu of a lookout for an individual who is wanted for a specific crime.

3. Lookouts for crimes where no probable cause for arrest exists (stop and obtain information) may be broadcast but the initiating officer is responsible for clarifying that although the individual is implicated in a particular offense, there is not sufficient information to justify an arrest. The phrase **“no probable cause exists for arrest”** is to be included by the officer when initiating the lookout and by the dispatcher when broadcasting the lookout over the air. All relevant information regarding the crime is to be included in the lookout. This category also includes those crimes for which probable cause exists, but an arrest without a warrant cannot be legally made. This type of lookout must be associated with a written report.
4. Traffic lookouts can be made, but will be self-canceling at the end of the initiating officers tour of duty, unless a report is being written, as in a hit and run accident.
5. Stolen vehicle lookouts will be broadcast only under the following conditions:
 - a. Vehicles stolen within two (2) hours of notification to communications.
 - b. Vehicles that have outstanding or unique characteristics, regardless of when the theft occurred.
6. All stolen vehicle lookouts will be broadcast as soon as possible.

D. Procedures For Placing And Canceling Lookouts

1. Except in exigent circumstances, all lookouts generated by officers will be given to communications by landline.
2. All lookouts will be documented by the receiving dispatcher on the appropriate form. A copy of all lookouts will be placed in HQ's roll call and a copy, FAX or e-mailed copy will be sent to Southern Station, Enterprise, Cosca, Investigative Operations and Tactical Unit.
3. When broadcasting lookouts the name of the officer and/or authority placing the lookout must be given over the air. Lookouts from other police agencies received by landline will also indicate this information as well as the agency name. Lookouts received via METERS/NCIC message will be so stated in the broadcast.
4. Initial lookouts for crimes/incidents that have just occurred, but have not been verified by an officer on the scene may be broadcast by the dispatcher and also given to other police agencies. Instead of giving the officers name as the authority the dispatcher will advise, “This is an unconfirmed lookout from the complainant”.

5. Initiating officers will notify communications to cancel a lookout whenever the subject is apprehended. All lookouts will be self-canceling after seventy-two (72) hours.

IX. REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE OR SERVICE FROM OTHER AGENCIES

A. Fire/Rescue Services

Officers will provide the following information, if available, when requesting assistance:

1. Traffic and non-traffic injuries
 - a. Location
 - b. Number of persons injured
 - c. Nature and location of injuries, i.e., gunshot to the chest, head trauma, etc.
 - d. Whether or not anyone is trapped
2. Fires, explosions, etc.
 - a. Location
 - b. Intensity of fire, i.e., smoke only, fully involved, amount of acreage, etc.
 - c. Type of structure, i.e., barn, house, vehicle, etc.
 - e. Whether or not anyone trapped

B. Other Police Agencies

1. All requests for immediate assistance from another police agency will be immediately given to the nearest field unit.
2. Any request for a specific unit/service for an in-progress incident will be relayed to the appropriate on-duty field supervisor.
 - a. All requests for additional service, not of an immediate nature, will be forwarded to the Assistant Chief, Field Operations.

X. SIGNAL 10-3 (Limit Transmissions)

- A. An officer or dispatcher involved in an incident may request a 10-3 (limit transmissions) whenever a true need exists, only a unit on the scene of the incident may cancel the 10-3.
- B. The dispatcher will activate the alert tone and announce the 10-3 by stating "attention all units, a 10-3 is in effect until further notice". Any officer on the scene of an incident can advise not to use the alert tone for officer safety issues. Nothing will preclude the dispatcher from asking if the 10-3 can be canceled.

- C. Units returning to service during the 10-3 will be acknowledged and advised of the 10-3 by the dispatcher.

XI. COMMUNICATIONS DIGITAL AUDIO TAPES (DAT)

- A. The Communications Section logging tape records all radio transmissions and telephone calls received on designated emergency and non-emergency lines to assist in the investigation of crimes, to provide documentation of police action and to assist communications in the performance of their duties. Digital Audio Tapes (DAT) are maintained for 90 days. Copies of these logging tapes will only be given using the following procedures:

- 1. Officers authorized to listen to or review a specific logging tape will file a written request on the appropriate form, via their supervisor, to the Assistant Chief, Support Operations or his/her designee.

Officers conducting internal investigations will submit the request directly to the Division Chief or his/her designee. In those instances where it is necessary for an investigator to immediately seize the logging tape, he/she may do so after first filing a request form with Division or his/her designee for documentation purposes. Requests from the State's Attorney's Office or defense attorneys will be in writing and directed to the Division Chief or Assistant Chief, Support Operations.

- 2. The Division Chief or Assistant Chief, Support Operations will review all requests. All approved requests will be handled by the Assistant Chief, Support Operations. Denied requests will be returned to the requestor.
- 3. The Assistant Chief, Support Operations or his/her designee will contact the requestor to either set up an appointment to review the logging tape or make notification that the copy is ready to be picked up. If a logging tape review is confidential that fact will be noted on the request and no other persons will be present during the review.
- 4. The Assistant Chief, Support Operations or his/her designee will maintain a record of all logging tapes copied. The completed request form will be returned to and maintained by the Assistant Chief, Support Operations or his/her designee. These records will be maintained for a period of seven (7) years then destroyed.

* Digital Audio Tapes (DAT) are maintained for 90 days then stored on DVD Ram Cartridges (NICE System MIRA #4 Digital Audio Recorder) for a period of seven (7) years.

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