

Communications

801.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes guidelines for the basic functions of Communications. 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 University of Maryland, Baltimore Police Department to provide 24-hour telephone service to the public for information and for routine or emergency assistance that complies with Md. Code PS § 1-304. The Department provides two-way radio capability for continuous communication between Communications and department members in the field.

801.3 COMMUNICATIONS SECURITY

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

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

801.4 RESPONSIBILITIES

801.4.1 COMMUNICATIONS SUPERVISOR

The Chief of Police shall appoint and delegate certain responsibilities to a Communications Supervisor. The Communications Supervisor is directly responsible to the Technical Services and COAST Lieutenant. In the event that the Police Communications Supervisor is vacant, the Police Communications Operators will report to the Technical Services and COAST Lieutenant.

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

- (a) Overseeing the efficient and effective operation of Communications in coordination with other supervisors.
- (b) Scheduling and maintaining police communications operator time records.
- (c) Supervising, training and evaluating police communications operators.
- (d) 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.
- (e) Processing requests for video footage to be released to the Records Section.
- (f) Maintaining Communications database systems.
- (g) Maintaining and updating Communications procedures manual.

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1. Procedures for specific types of crime reports may be necessary. For example, specific questions and instructions may be necessary when talking with a victim 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.
 2. Ensuring police communications operator compliance with established policies and procedures.
- (h) Handling internal and external inquiries regarding services provided and accepting personnel complaints in accordance with the Personnel Complaints Policy 1010.
- (i) Maintaining a current contact list/roster of Department personnel to be notified in the event of an emergency.

801.4.2 POLICE COMMUNICATIONS OPERATORS

The responsibilities of the police communications operator include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Receipt and handling of all incoming and transmitted communications, including:
1. Dispatching UMB officers to calls that are considered emergency in nature and transferring emergency calls to the Baltimore City Public Safety Answering Point.
 2. Business telephone lines.
 3. Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)/Text Telephone (TTY) equipment.
 4. Radio communications with department members in the field and support resources (i.e., fire department, emergency medical services (EMS), allied agency law enforcement units).
 5. Other electronic sources of information (e.g., text messages, digital photographs, video).
- (b) Documenting the field activities of department members and support resources (i.e., fire department, EMS, allied agency law enforcement units).
- (c) Inquiry and entry of information through Communications, department and other law enforcement database systems (i.e., Maryland Electronic Telecommunications Enforcement Resource System (METERS), National Crime Information Center (NCIC), National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS), Division of Parole and Probation, etc.).
- (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 Shift Supervisor or Shift Commander of emergency activity, including, but not limited to:
1. Vehicle pursuits.
 2. Foot pursuits
 3. Assignment of emergency response.

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Police Communications Operators report to the Police Communications Supervisor.

801.4.3 ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES

At least once each year, the Communications Supervisor shall examine the cybersecurity of Communications to determine whether the security procedures satisfy the standards established by the Maryland Emergency Number Systems Board and shall submit to that board a report detailing the results (Md. Code PS § 1-309.1).

The Communications Supervisor should establish procedures for calls involving individuals suffering an active mental health crisis that address at a minimum (Md. Code PS § 1-304):

- (a) Call triage protocols.
- (b) Resources available for Communications.
- (c) Procedures for making a dispatch decision.
- (d) Training for applicable members.
- (e) Any other procedures required by law.

801.5 CALL HANDLING

The UMBPD 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 police communications operator 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 police communications operator determines that 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 police communications operator determines that the caller is a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individual, the police communications operator 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, the police communications operator should immediately connect the LEP caller to the authorized interpreter.

If no authorized interpreter is available or the police communications operator is unable to identify the caller's language, the police communications operator will contact the contracted telephonic

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interpretation service and establish a three party call connecting the police communications operator, the LEP individual and the interpreter.

Police Communications Operators 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 police communications operator has obtained all necessary information to ensure the safety of the responding department members and affected individuals.

Emergency calls should be dispatched immediately. The Shift Supervisor 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 police communications operator to handle a higher priority or emergency call.

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

801.5.3 ADHERING TO KARI'S LAW

Any emergency call received will be entered into CAD and the Police Communications Operator will notify the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) of the pending call.

801.6 RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

The police radio system is for official use only, to be used by police communications operators 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 not be limited to:

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

The Communications Supervisor shall be notified of radio procedure violations or other causes for complaint. All complaints and violations will be investigated and reported to the complainant's supervisor and processed through the chain of command.

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801.6.1 FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION COMPLIANCE

University of Maryland, Baltimore 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. Police Communications Operators 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 police communications operator. The use of the call sign allows for a brief pause so that the police communications operator 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 to document all relevant information on calls for service or self-initiated activity. Police Communications Operators 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, the following:

- 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
- 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 may be confidential or sensitive in nature. All Communications members shall treat information that becomes known to them as confidential and release that information in accordance with the Protected Information Policy 805.

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Automated data, such as Motor Vehicle Administration records, warrants, criminal history information, records of internal police files, or medical information shall only be made available to authorized law enforcement personnel. METERS information should only be transmitted via the radio. At no time shall CJIS information be disseminated over the telephone. The requesting officer must receive the information via the radio. If the information is deemed sensitive, than the officer shall receive the information on either Channel UMB TAC 1 or Channel UMB TAC 2.

Both channels are considered secured. (See Meters Policy 808 for further details.)

801.9 TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

All police communications operators shall successfully complete training within six months of employment using a curriculum approved by the state Emergency Number Systems Board which includes training on Public Safety Answering Point orientation, communication skills, electronic systems, policies and procedures, call processing, documentation, stress management, administrative duties and disaster and major incidents (COMAR 12.11.03.10).