

PALM BEACH GARDENS POLICE DEPARTMENT		
COMMUNICATIONS CENTER		
POLICY AND PROCEDURE 4.3.3		
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PURPOSE: To establish the function and responsibility of the Communications Center.

SCOPE: This policy and procedure applies to all members.

REVIEW RESPONSIBILITY: Special Operations Bureau Major

POLICY: The Department establishes the Communications Center as a support service to receive, screen, and prioritize calls for service, and subsequently dispatch the appropriate response in an efficient and coordinated manner. This function provides telephone communications as a necessary link between the public's call for service and the field operations units.

PROCEDURES

1. ADMINISTRATION

- a. The Special Operations Bureau Major shall be charged with the overall responsibility of the Communications Center.
- b. The Communications Center is staffed by Emergency Communications Operators (ECO) on each shift.
 - i. ECO and 911 Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST) are synonymous.

- c. The Communications Center is operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, providing toll-free voice and Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) telephone access for emergency calls for service.

2. COMMUNICATIONS FUNCTION

- a. The primary function of the Communications Center is to receive, screen, and prioritize calls for service and subsequently dispatch the appropriate response in an efficient and coordinated manner.
- b. Other functions include providing a system of operations for:
 - i. Radio communications
 - ii. Telephone communications
 - iii. Computer and Teletype communication
 - iv. Alarm monitoring
 - v. City Complex monitoring
 - vi. Enhanced 911 System equipment
 - vii. Walk-in complaints in the lobby
 - viii. Video monitoring and recording
 - ix. Community notification

3. PROVISIONS OF COMMUNICATIONS

- a. Radio communication is the primary means used by dispatchers to relay information to Patrol/Traffic units, Administrative police members, and designated police resources.
- b. Communications by radio will be in accordance with procedures and regulations established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Communications Training Manual.
 - i. A copy of this manual is maintained in the Communications Center.
 - ii. Violations of manual directives may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.
- c. Telephone communications provide the necessary link between citizen requests for service or information and the appropriate police, fire or general service field units.
 - i. The Communications Center receives emergency and non-emergency calls for service.
- d. Teletype and automated data communications provide access into the local, state and national computers.
 - i. Manuals covering the type of information available and how to obtain it are located in the Communications Center.
- e. Enhanced 911 System equipment provides a three digit emergency phone number to handle all emergency calls within the contracted areas (defined by contractual agreement).
 - i. 911 calls not requiring a response by a contracting agency are immediately transferred to the appropriate agency.
 - 1. The Enhanced 911 System allows transfer of emergency calls to specified agencies within Palm Beach County Telephone Communications' Group;
 - ii. Information on location of terminal units, agencies involved, procedures for transferring, and utilization of 911 equipment can be found in the Enhanced 911 System Manual.
 - 1. A copy of the manual is located in the Communications Center.
 - iii. 911 equipment is used and monitored by Department of Health (DOH) 911 PST certified members only.

4. 911 PST TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

FSS 401.465 mandates that all 911 PST are certified/recertified through the DOH.

- a. Effective October 1, 2012, all members, current and future, who are employed in the position of 911 PST will be certified and shall maintain certification through the DOH.
- b. All non-certified 911 PST hired by the Department shall achieve DOH certification within 12 months from date of hire.
 - i. The non-certified 911 PST must complete a DOH approved training program.
 - ii. The non-certified 911 PST must work under the direct supervision of a DOH certified 911 PST.
- c. PST certification training, whether in house or at an affiliated agency\academy, will be:
 - i. Provided by 911 PST DOH certified instructors
 - ii. Instructed from a DOH approved curriculum

5. ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

- a. The primary purpose of the Communications Center is to provide rapid telephone response to requests from citizens for emergency and non-emergency police, fire, and general services.
- b. The Communications Center effectively transmits calls for services through a radio trunking and Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system.

6. LIMITING ACCESS

- a. It is imperative that Communications Center members operate in an environment free of distractions and unnecessary confusion.
- b. Members assigned to the Communications Center shall limit and control access, protect equipment, and provide for back-up resources.
- c. Access will be limited to:
 - i. Members assigned to the Communications Center on a permanent or temporary basis
 - ii. Chief of Police and Administrative Staff members on official business
 - iii. Supervisory members on official business
 - iv. Other persons on official business upon approval of the Communications Manager or Communications Supervisors.

7. PROTECTION OF MEMBERS AND EQUIPMENT

- a. Access to the Communications Center shall be controlled for the security of members and equipment.
- b. Members and equipment assigned to the Communications Center are secured by locked doors equipped with electronic key access.
- c. Transmission lines, antennas, and power sources are protected by limiting access to areas where they are housed or accessible.

8. BACKUP RESOURCES

- a. The Department has, as an alternate source of electrical power, a generator capable of producing sufficient electrical power to maintain continuous emergency communications as well as to operate the Enhanced 911 and the CAD systems.
 - i. The emergency generator is located at the Emergency Operations Communications Center (EOCC) and is activated automatically when alternate power is needed.

- b. A documented test of the generator will be conducted at least quarterly or in conformance with manufacturer recommendations to ensure operational readiness.
- c. At least once a year, testing and/or operation of the generator under full load will be documented.
- d. Equipment not powered by generators will use an uninterrupted (universal) power source.

9. SYSTEM APPLICATION

- a. The Communications Center provides continuous two-way radio capability between the Communications Center and officers on duty.

10. COMPLAINT CONTROL NUMBERS

- a. Complaint control numbers are automatically assigned to each specific activity when received through the CAD system to insure a comprehensive/accurate field reporting/filing system.
- b. Each request for service or self-initiated activity shall include:
 - i. Control number
 - ii. Date and time of request
 - iii. Name and address of complainant, if possible
 - iv. Type of incident reported
 - v. Location of incident reported
 - vi. Identification of officer(s) assigned as a primary and backup
 - vii. Time of dispatch
 - viii. Time of officer arrival
 - ix. Time of officer return to service
 - x. Disposition or status of reported incident.

11. RADIO COMMUNICATIONS REGARDING FIELD OFFICERS

- a. Radio communications are the primary communication link between the Communications Center and the field officers.
 - i. All activities, either dispatched by Communications or self-initiated by the field officer will be transmitted via this radio communications system.
- b. The Communications Center uses a multi-channel radio communications system.
 - i. The portable and mobile radios also have multi-channel capability.
 - ii. Radio communications with other agencies are dictated by that agency accessing our radio communications frequency at times that would serve mutual interests or direction.
- c. All members are assigned a three digit identification number.
 - i. This number shall be the identifier of these members when using the radio communications system while off duty.
 - ii. The member shall articulate their assigned number when initiating a radio communications transmission(s).
 - iii. On duty officers shall use their assigned beat designator.
- d. Officers in the field will advise Communications of any activity, including, but not limited to:
 - i. traffic accidents and stops
 - ii. assisting citizens
 - iii. any events (violations/crimes) observed in progress
 - iv. out of service status (meal breaks, vehicle maintenance, etc.)
- e. Radio transmissions indicating officers "out of service" times is recorded.

- i. The CAD system allows for an officer's out of service status to be automatically recorded upon entry by the dispatcher or when self-initiated.
- f. The Communications Center addresses calls for service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
 - i. These calls are inclusive of:
 - 1. 911 emergency
 - 2. Non-emergency
 - 3. Informational
 - 4. Transfers
 - ii. 911 emergency lines and the non-emergency lines are designed in the automatic roll-over system, which routes calls to the next available line.
 - 1. This ensures callers will be able to reach police members immediately in the event of an emergency.
- g. The Communications Center receives emergency calls for service.
 - i. In the event a misdirected call is received, the operator will transfer it to the appropriate number.
 - ii. When the caller is unable to wait under critical circumstances, appropriate information will be taken and promptly relayed to the proper agency.
- h. The Communications Center has established procedures for obtaining assistance from outside agencies.
 - i. These numbers may be accessed from the Interact Phone System. Agencies may include, but are not limited to:
 - ii. Fire Departments
 - iii. ambulances
 - iv. taxis
 - v. wreckers
 - vi. human/environmental services
 - vii. qualified interpreters
 - viii. other law enforcement
- i. Current telephone numbers for all members are maintained by the Communications Center in:
 - i. the CAD system dialer file
 - ii. a contact book
- j. ECOs are able to check the status of each on-duty officer by monitoring the console screen.
 - i. The respective status of the officer is indicated by letters.
 - ii. ECOs will monitor the status of officers on calls to ensure officer safety.
 - 1. Inactive, on-duty officers will have their status checked after one hour of inactivity.
 - iii. The CAD system will automatically remind the dispatcher at a pre-set time of the need to check on an officer who is on a call.
 - 1. If the dispatcher has not heard from the officer or another officer at the scene during that time period, the dispatcher will perform a "10-4 check" of the officer.
 - 2. If the officer does not respond after the third attempt of a "10-4 check," the dispatcher will activate the alert tone and again attempt to contact the officer.
 - 3. If the officer still does not respond, the dispatcher will assign another officer to respond to the last known location of the non-responsive officer, and the on-duty patrol supervisor shall be notified.

- k. ECOs will dispatch officers to the known or last known location should a member request emergency assistance or activates their emergency alarm.
 - i. Open communication with the member will be maintained until assistance arrives.
- l. Criteria for assigning the number of officers in response to an incident will be based on a prioritized system as prescribed by Department policy [4.2.1.17 - Emergency, Urgent, and Routine Call Response](#).
- m. ECOs will dispatch a patrol supervisor to calls for service of a serious nature (e.g., armed robbery, in-progress burglary, etc.) so the supervisor may, as soon as possible, report to the area and assume command of the scene.
- n. Duty rosters (shift schedules) are available to the Communications Center via Telestaff.
 - i. The supervisor(s) and/or officer(s) in charge are noted on said roster.
 - ii. Contact information will not be broadcast over any radio channel or be given to any non-member of the Department.
- o. The Tactical Dispatch Plan will be readily available in the Communications Center.
- p. Visual maps of the municipality will be displayed within view of the ECOs and may be used as an aid in determining locations, cross streets, landmarks, etc.

12. VICTIM/WITNESS CALLS FOR SERVICE

ECOs receiving victim/witness type calls will respond in the following manner:

- a. Determine nature of call (emergency or non-emergency)
- b. Determine jurisdiction and corresponding agency for response
- c. Provide direction/information regarding emergency shelters/programs, and victim's right-to-know information where appropriate.

13. RECORDING REVIEWS

- a. The immediate playback of telephone conversations and radio transmissions will be retained for a minimum of sixty days and such recording(s) shall be maintained on a secure server.
- b. Retrievable recordings of radio transmissions and telephone conversations may be of use in criminal investigations, internal affairs, training purposes, and as a source of auditing the service provided to citizens and Department members.
 - i. These recordings are also subject to subpoena and court ordered availability.
- c. Request for a copy of radio and telephone recordings by Department members for official use will be made in writing via memorandum or email to the Communications Manager.
 - i. If there is an immediate official business need for a Department member to review a recording, the member may meet with the Communications Manager or a Communications Supervisor who will play back the desired recording for the member.
- d. Requests for review of radio and telephone recordings by the public or by Department members for non-official business use shall be facilitated by the Records Section in accordance with FSS 119.07.
 - i. Charges will apply per the City's fee schedule and payable to the City of Palm Beach Gardens.
 - 1. This also applies to Public Defenders, attorney offices, insurance firms, etc.
 - ii. Requests, in writing, from the State Attorney's Office (SAO) or other law enforcement agency for official use will be provided at no charge.
- e. Requests for review of radio and telephone recordings shall be provided to the requester with a useable copy in MP3 format.

- i. If another format is required it should be specified in the request.
- f. When an officer identifies a recording as having evidentiary value:
 - i. A request shall be made in writing as above and a copy of the recording shall be provided to the Records Section.
 - 1. The request must be made within sixty days of the original recording date.
 - ii. The original recording will then be maintained on the secure server pending disposition of all criminal and/or civil proceedings.
- g. The need for ECOs to immediately playback radio and telephone recordings to clarify or determine content is exempt from this directive.
 - i. ECOs have the ability for immediate playback and may do so.
 - ii. ECOs may not copy, maintain copy nor provide copy without a supervisor's approval.

14. ACCESS TO CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION SYSTEMS

- a. The Communications Center has access to local, state, and federal criminal justice information systems via computer terminal with links to:
 - i. National Crime Information Network (NCIC)
 - ii. Florida Crime Information Network (FCIC)
 - iii. Palm Beach Automated Law Enforcement Management System (PALMS)
 - iv. Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV)
 - 1. Access to these systems and related subsystems, is restricted to those members who are certified as operators through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE).
 - 2. These systems may be accessed for official law enforcement purposes only; in accordance with their user agreements and other requirements.
- b. The Communications Center will maintain current FCIC/NCIC user agreements.
 - i. Also, user manuals and documentation outlining specific instructions regarding the entry and/or inquiry of information within.
- c. Criminal history information obtained via these systems may be:
 - i. used only for the law enforcement purpose for which it was originally obtained
 - ii. disseminated to other law enforcement agencies for law enforcement purposes
 - 1. this information may not be released to another agency for non-law enforcement purposes
 - 2. may not be released to the public
 - iii. A dissemination log will be maintained for all criminal history information obtained from these systems.
 - 1. The log shall include, at a minimum:
 - a. the name of the person the information relates to
 - b. the name of the officer the information was released to
 - c. the name of the member the information was released by
 - d. the date
 - e. the purpose for which the information was released
 - f. the numeric Federal Bureau of Investigations/State Identification (FBI/SID) identifiers
 - 2. The log will be maintained for a period of four years after the date of inquiry and must be available for FDLE audit purposes.

- iv. Criminal history information should not be transmitted over the radio unless the officer or the public is in danger or it directly relates to the officers' investigation.
 - 1. Criminal history information may be disseminated to officers via landline or wireless network.
 - a. Care should be taken not to attach names to any criminal history disseminated via cell phone or wireless network.
 - 2. Criminal history name information will not in any way be attached to a virtual file nor entered into CAD notes.
- v. Any member in possession of criminal history information obtained from these systems shall safeguard that information as confidential.
- vi. When users are finished with criminal history information, it shall be shredded and not retained in case files.
 - 1. If the information is needed at a later date, another criminal history should be requested.
- vii. Any personal use of FCIC/NCIC or related subsystems is a violation of 28 USC 534 and FSS 943.
 - 1. Such a violation is punishable by Departmental disciplinary action up to and including termination.
 - a. Possible criminal prosecution as provided for in the FDLE Exchange of Criminal History Record Information User Agreement.

15. EMERGENCY MESSAGES

ECOs will follow guidelines for accepting and delivering messages of an emergency nature.

- a. Upon obtaining (and if necessary verifying) all pertinent information, the ECO will notify the appropriate officer by radio or telephone.
 - i. In the event of a sensitive or unusual request, the ECO will notify the on-duty patrol supervisor prior to dispatching the call.
 - ii. Emergency messages, other than routine "attempt to contact" messages will only be accepted from other law enforcement or government agencies via teletype (TTY) FCIC/NCIC message, so as to provide verification and prevent hoaxes.

16. PRIVATE ALARM SYSTEMS

This agency does not monitor private security alarms.

- a. Whenever calls notifying of an alarm in progress are received via alarm monitoring companies, ECOs will gain pertinent information and dispatch patrol unit(s) to the address.

17. RECEIVING CALLS BY TELEPHONE

The Department uses a call-taker system where an ECO provides requests and/or information to the dispatcher via the CAD system.

- a. The CAD system prioritizes the call and the dispatcher assigns a patrol unit to respond.

18. SECURITY MEASURES

Security measures for the Communications Center are in place to:

- a. Limit access to the Communications Center to authorized members
- b. Protect equipment

- c. Provide back-up resources
- d. Provide security for transmission lines, antennas, and power sources.

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RESPONSIBILITY INDEX:

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- OFFICERS
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APPROVED:



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