

# ELIZABETH POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDERS



**VOLUME: 5**

**CHAPTER: 4**

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**SUBJECT: COMMUNICATIONS**

**EFFECTIVE DATE:**

**November 17, 2021**

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**BY THE ORDER OF:**

**Deputy Chief Giacomo Sacca**

**BY AUTHORITY OF:**

**Police Director Earl J. Graves**

**SUPERSEDES ORDER #:**

**G.O. V5, C4 September 2015**

**PURPOSE:** To establish the communication function of the agency for routine and emergency situations.

**POLICY:** It is the policy of the Elizabeth Police Department to operate the various components of the communications system in compliance with local, state, and federal guidelines. Further, this agency recognizes that proper standardized radio, telephone, and online reporting procedures are essential for providing effective and efficient service to the community and ensuring employee safety.

## **PROCEDURE:**

### **I. Organization**

- A. The Elizabeth Police Department operates a Communications Center Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for all emergency services, police, fire, and EMS within the City of Elizabeth.
- B. The Communications Center handles radio (base, mobile and portable) and telephone communications, providing 24-hour coverage with all on-duty personnel.
- C. The duties of the Communications Center include, but are not limited to, the following responsibilities:
  - 1. Answering all incoming calls, administrative as well as emergency and soliciting essential information from callers in order to properly and efficiently handle each call.
  - 2. Monitoring officer status, including periodic checks on-field personnel.
  - 3. Accessing information from and disseminating information to local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies via the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system.
  - 4. Obtaining and providing the information needed by field personnel.
  - 5. Overseeing the Online Self Reporting System.

### **II. Obtaining and Recording Information for Calls for Service**

- A. Calls for service can be generated in several different ways: telephone calls from citizens, walk-ins to the police department, written / electronic requests for service, and calls initiated or received by officers and/or employees.
- B. Upon receiving a call for service, telecommunicators will attempt to gather as much relevant information as possible to assist responding units in locating the call. Additionally, the telecommunicator shall thoroughly interview the caller to anticipate conditions to be encountered at the scene and enhance officer safety. Telecommunicators must immediately notify the Police Communications Supervisor of calls involving a potentially life-threatening situation, the use or threat of a weapon, or any incident requiring an immediate police response.
- C. As the information is being obtained, it will be entered into the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. CAD automatically assigns an incident number to all entries and captures the date and time the call for service is entered.
- D. Telecommunicators will obtain/record, all other information required by CAD, including but not limited to:
  - 1. Name, address, and telephone number of the reporting party, whenever practical and feasible;

2. Type of incident reported;
  3. Location of the incident reported.
- E. When the call is ready to be dispatched, telecommunicators will obtain/record all information required by CAD (which automatically records the time these transactions occur) to include:
1. Identification of officers assigned as primary or back-up units;
  2. Time call is assigned for handling;
  3. Time of arrival of responding units;
  4. Time of return to service of responding units;
  5. Disposition/status of the incident.
- F. All dispatches will be done over the police radio on the primary channel assigned at that time.
- G. Dispatchers/Telecommunicators and Camera Operators are subordinate to the Police Communications Supervisor and their command. Civilian employees assigned to the communications center must obey all lawful commands by a police supervisor.
- H. Dispatchers/Telecommunicators and Camera Operators may not leave their posts or change assignments without authorization from a police supervisor.

### **III. Radio System**

- A. The police department utilizes a two-way radio network.
- B. The radio system allows base, mobile, and portable access to various public safety agencies within the area and is capable of two-way operations on the state regional radio frequency, including State Mutual Aid.

### **IV. Radio Communications**

- A. All radio transmissions are to be kept as professional, concise, and complete as possible.
- B. At no time will members of the police department misuse or disrupt the radio system by transmitting unauthorized messages.
- C. All official communication will be transmitted only on the authorized department radio talk groups.
- D. On duty officers, depending on assignment, have access to mobile and/or portable radio equipment. They are responsible for maintaining contact with the Communications Center during their tour of duty.

- E. Call numbers are assigned and are to be utilized during radio transmissions for identification purposes.
  - 1. Transmitting units will begin radio transmissions by announcing their call number, followed by the call number(s) of the unit(s) being contacted.
  - 2. Responding units will utilize call numbers when acknowledging receipt of a transmission.
  
- F. Command Staff Personnel shall use the following radio call numbers:
  - 1. 700 Police Director
  - 2. 701 Chief of the Department
  - 3. 702 Deputy Chief of Police
  - 4. 703 Deputy Chief of Police
  - 5. 704 Deputy Chief of Police
  - 6. 705 Professional Standards Accreditation
  - 7. 706 Commander of the Detective Bureau
  - 8. 707 Commander of Administrative Service Bureau
  - 9. 708 Commander of Professional Standards
  - 10. 709 Commander of Support Service Bureau
  - 11. 710 Commander of Community Affairs Bureau
  - 12. 711 Commander of Administrative Agency Development
  - 13. 009 Patrol Duty Captain
  - 14. 105 Commander of the Patrol Division
  
- G. Officers will advise the Communications Center, via radio, in the following situations. When the situation is an official police incident, the times of each transmission shall be documented in the CAD by the telecommunicator.
  - 1. When beginning/ending tour of duty;
  - 2. When acknowledging a call;
  - 3. Upon arrival at the scene of an incident;
  - 4. When returning to service;
  - 5. To report incidents or conditions;
  - 6. When making vehicle, pedestrian, or suspect stops;
  - 7. When assisting motorists;
  - 8. Of their status if on a call for an extended period of time;
  - 9. When exiting the vehicle;
  - 10. As needed, for the safe and efficient operation of the shift;
  - 11. Upon exiting their vehicle or reporting out of service for any reason;

12. When performing extra duty work authorized by the police department.
- G. Whenever a unit is dispatched on a call, the exact location, nature of the call, and any other pertinent information will be transmitted to the responding officer, who will acknowledge receipt of the call.
1. The decision as to the appropriate method of response will be made by the responding officer, not by the telecommunicator, and shall be in keeping with applicable policy and state law.
  2. Supervisors are responsible for monitoring call assignments, ensuring that the method of response is appropriate, and modifying methods of response as necessary.
- H. Emergency Status
1. Telecommunicators and officers shall clear the main radio channel of all unrelated traffic during a critical incident or while trying to ascertain the status or well-being of a non-responsive unit.
  2. The main radio channel will remain in emergency status until such time as the situation is under control, a determination is made that the safety of those involved are no longer in question, and/or when advised to lift the emergency status by the responding officer or a supervisor.
  3. During emergency radio status, other officers working the main radio channel refrain from unnecessary transmissions or switch to another channel to relay information to the Communications Center.
- I. When it becomes necessary for an officer to communicate with a different agency by radio, the following procedures will be used:
1. The officer will advise the Communications Center of the information they need communicated to another agency. The Telecommunicator may communicate stated message via telephone or another interoperable radio channel, i.e. SPEN.

**V. Criteria to Determine the Number of Sworn Personnel Dispatched**

- A. A single unit will generally be dispatched to handle routine calls for service.
- B. Some calls may require additional officers to be dispatched in order to facilitate the handling of the call or to ensure the safety of personnel on the scene. Calls requiring two or more officers include, but are not limited to the following:
1. An assault on an officer or an officer calls for assistance;
  2. Any crime/offense in progress;
  3. An on-scene arrest for a violent crime;

4. Calls for service involving locations and/or persons where the use of weapons and/or violence might exist;
  5. Domestic situations;
  6. Calls for service where there exists a need to search the area for suspects, evidence, missing persons, etc.;
  7. Use of force incidents;
  8. Alarms;
  9. Calls for service involving unsecured premises;
  10. Calls for service involving intoxicated, disorderly, or mentally ill persons;
  11. Any call where, in the judgment of the telecommunicator, officer, or supervisor, there exists a need to send two or more officers.
- C. On any call for service involving multiple units, those additional units are expected to clear the scene as soon as it has been determined that their presence is no longer needed
- D. Requests by field personnel for emergent assistance, activated officer distress alarms and the inability to contact field personnel by radio or telephone are serious situations that require immediate attention and action. In such situations, the telecommunicator shall:
1. Clear the main radio channel of non-emergent radio traffic;
  2. Direct field units to the location or last known location of the officer or officers involved;
  3. Provide responding units with all known information concerning the emergency or possible emergency;
  4. Facilitate requests from officers and supervisors responding to the incident without delay.

## **VI. Supervisory Presence On-Scene**

- A. Situations might occur that would require the on-scene presence of the duty supervisor, or others, in order to assume command, conduct preliminary investigations, and/or otherwise give direction. Telecommunicators will ensure that the duty supervisor is notified of incidents involving the following circumstance:
1. Use of force situations resulting in injury;
  2. Crashes involving police department vehicles;
  3. Calls for service involving serious injury or death;
  4. High profile arrests;

5. Complaints concerning questionable conduct by a member of this police department;
  6. Vehicular pursuits (specifically ending locations);
  7. The discharge of a firearm;
  8. The on-duty injury of a police department employee;
  9. Hostage or barricaded suspect situations.
- B. Additionally, an officer can request the presence of the duty supervisor on any scene where the supervisor's involvement might be needed.

## **VII. Emergency First Aid Instruction**

- A. The police department authorizes emergency first aid instruction over the telephone.
1. All personnel authorized to work in the Communications Center will receive training consistent with the requirements of the New Jersey Office of Emergency Telecommunications (OETS).

## **VIII. Misdialed 9-1-1 Calls**

- A. Misdialed 9-1-1 Calls
1. Upon receiving a disconnected 9-1-1 call, the telecommunicator will attempt to re-establish contact with the caller.
  2. If unable to make contact, two officers, when possible, will be dispatched to investigate the call.
  3. Telecommunicators will also dispatch an officer to investigate any misdialed 9-1-1 telephone call, even if the person making the call advises the telecommunicator that there is no emergency. In such a case, the telecommunicator will not advise the caller that there will be an officer coming to that location to verify the situation.
- B. Misdirected Emergency Calls
1. Whenever a call is received for an emergency service that this agency does not normally provide or is outside this agency's jurisdiction, the telecommunicator receiving the call shall evaluate the call and then exercise one or more of the following options, depending on the nature of the call:
    - a. The caller will be transferred to the appropriate agency to handle the call while the telecommunicator monitors the call to ensure that a good connection was made and to ascertain whether this agency's assistance is needed.

- b. The telecommunicator will collect all pertinent information and then contact the appropriate agency and relay the request.
2. Most misdirected emergency calls through the 9-1-1 system can be transferred to the appropriate agency through a one-button transfer.
3. Any emergency call received on the non-emergency (administrative) number will be handled as a 9-1-1 call.
4. When misdirected, non-emergency calls are received by the Communications Center, they will provide the caller with the telephone number of the appropriate service provider, if possible.

## **IX. Recordings**

- A. Communications personnel have the capability for immediate playback of telephone and radio conversations, to include the 9-1-1 system.
- B. All Communications within the Communications Center, including 9-1-1 calls, administrative telephone calls, and/or radio transmission monitored by the Communications Center are recorded. The recordings are maintained for a period of at least 31 days before erasure and reuse.
- C. All recordings are secured in the Elizabeth Police Department and access is restricted. The Evidence Custodian will maintain tapes requested for evidentiary purposes in criminal investigations and the appropriate supervisor for administrative matters.
- D. Internal requests for recordings should be made directly to the supervisor in charge of Communications and shall be strictly for law enforcement purposes or administrative review. The criteria and procedure for any external release of recordings, or copies of recordings, will be in accordance with agency, local, state (OPRA, Discovery Rule 3:13), and federal law.

## **X. Back-up Resources**

- A. The Communications Center is supported by a back-up generator that provides sufficient power to maintain all functions (i.e., radio, telephone, 911, heat, and air, etc.) in the event of a failure of the primary power source. This generator is tested monthly or in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. The generator will be tested and operated under full load at least annually.

## **XI. Online Police Reporting System**

- A. The Elizabeth Police Department will accept reports from citizens via the Online Police Reporting System for the following minor incidents and offenses:
  1. Burglary or Damage to a Vehicle- a report of unlawful entry and/or theft into a vehicle, or a deliberate act of damage to a vehicle, that has previously occurred and of which there are no known suspects.



2. Identity Theft- the taking and use of someone else's personal identification to obtain credit, goods, or services.
    - a. Example: Unknown persons obtain a credit card or some other goods or services by use of the victim's personal information. (such as name, social security number, date of birth, or some other identifying information)
  3. Lost Property- item or items that has been lost or misplaced.
    - a. Example: Personal items that are missing with no indication they were stolen.
  4. Theft- when a person's property is taken without permission
    - a. Example: minor thefts under \$500 where no suspects are known.
  5. Traffic Complaint- due to a specific related problem or situation, extra traffic enforcement is requested.
    - a. Observed speeding in a specific area at specific times of the day or night if no immediate danger exists.
  6. Vandalism- minor damage, modifying or defacing of public or private property where there are no identifiable suspects, and there is no indication of bias intent.
    - a. Example: Graffiti, knocking over a mailbox, throwing rocks through a window.
- B. The following are examples of incidents that shall not be reported utilizing the Online Reporting System. These incidents, or any other incident determined by a supervisor, will generate a police response and a report will be completed in person by an officer:
1. Any violent crime, including assault, kidnapping, robbery, etc.
  2. Any sexual offense.
  3. Domestic violence.
  4. Any type of stolen vehicle.
  5. Report of lost or stolen license plates.
  6. Any incident where the reporting person provides suspect information.
  7. Violation of a restraining order.
  8. Motor vehicle crashes.

- C. When a call for service involving a minor incident or offense listed in Section XI.A is received in the Communications Center, telecommunications operators may politely suggest to citizens the use of the Online Reporting System, which is located on the City of Elizabeth website. Users can click on the “Police Department” tab and access the self-reporting page by clicking on “How Do I”. The Online Reporting System will guide the user through the process of filling out and submitting the report. The benefits to the citizen include a reduction in wait time depending on call volume and expedited retrieval of the report. Under no circumstances shall a telecommunications operator refuse to create a call for service in lieu of using the Online Reporting System.
- D. An email address has been specifically created for the Self Reporting system. The email is SelfReporting@elizabethnj.org .The CCTV Operator shall link this inbox to their City of Elizabeth employee email inbox. The CCTV Operator shall check their City-issued email for self reports a minimum of every two hours during their assigned shift. Upon receipt of an Online Self Report, the CCTV Operator shall transfer the request into Lawsoft after ensuring the report is complete, with all pertinent information included. The time, date, and location of the incident must accurately reflect when and where the incident occurred, and not when it was reported. The CCTV Operator will state at the beginning of the narrative that the incident is reported via the Online Reporting System and will end the narrative with the words “Online Self Report”.
- E. The Communications Division Supervisor shall oversee the Self Reporting System and will be responsible for approving or rejecting online reports.
- F. Upon supervisory approval, a report will be forwarded to the email provided by the user/ reporting person.