

# The Communications Center

## 801.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes guidelines for the basic functions of the Communications Center. 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 Louisville Police Department to contract with the Boulder County Communications Center to provide 24-hour telephone service to the public for information and for routine or emergency assistance. The Department provides two-way radio capability for continuous communication between the Communications Center and department members in the field.

## 801.3 THE COMMUNICATIONS CENTER SECURITY

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

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

### 801.3.1 EQUIPMENT PROTECTION

Equipment protection procedures should be addressed in the Communications Center operations manual and include:

- a. Provisions for the protection of essential equipment, such as surge protectors, a gaseous fire suppression system, an uninterruptible power system powered by a generator or other appropriate means.
- b. Provisions for the protection of radio transmission lines, antennas and power sources for the Communications Center, such as security cameras, fences or other appropriate measures.

## 801.4 RESPONSIBILITIES

### 801.4.1 COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

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

1. Overseeing the efficient and effective operation of the Communications Center in coordination with other supervisors.
2. Scheduling and maintaining dispatcher time records.

## *The Communications Center*

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3. Supervising, training and evaluating dispatchers.
4. 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.
5. Processing requests for copies of the Communications Center information for release.
6. Maintaining the Communications Center database systems.
7. Maintaining and updating the Communications Center procedures manual.
  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 dispatcher compliance with established policies and procedures.
8. Handling internal and external inquiries regarding services provided and accepting personnel complaints in accordance with their Personnel Complaints Policy.
9. Maintaining a current list of emergency personnel who are to be called for municipal utility emergencies.

### 801.4.2 ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES

The Communications Director should establish procedures to ensure:

1. All telephone and radio communications are recorded and audio recordings are capable of immediate playback without disruption to continuous recording.
2. Appropriate storage and retention of recordings. Recordings should be maintained for no less than 30 days and thereafter as required by the established records retention schedule.
3. Adequate security of audio recordings, including:
  1. Password protection.
  2. Limited access and identification of positions or members authorized to access recordings.
  3. Identifying who can authorize review of audio recordings and under what circumstances.
  4. Preserving recordings known to have pending litigation or other exigent circumstances (e.g., officer-involved shootings or deaths, protracted operations).
4. All dispatchers have immediate access to current information including, but not limited to:
  1. The identity and contact methods for the Shift Supervisor.
  2. A duty roster of all members working in the field, including special status information (e.g., court, training).
  3. Member status tracking methods (e.g., computer-aided dispatch system, manual status tracking).
  4. Contact information for every department member.
  5. Visual maps detailing the Louisville Police Department service area.
  6. A current contact list of City or contract personnel to be notified in the event emergency external services are needed (e.g., utilities, animal control, street maintenance).
  7. Tactical dispatcher plans as appropriate (e.g., readily available instructions for handling low-frequency incidents such as plane crashes, major fires, SWAT Team (SWAT) responses).

## *The Communications Center*

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8. A current list of social services agencies that provide services to youths within the Louisville Police Department service area.
5. Assignment of field members, including supervisors, to incidents.
6. Communication processes for coordinating with allied agency field personnel (e.g., share frequencies, patches).
7. Safety checks of members in the field and responding to an emergency request for assistance from a field member or an activated emergency alarm (see the Mobile Data Center Use Policy).
8. Members working in the Communications Center who may need to provide Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) instructions are provided with department-approved training or certification in EMD and have immediate access to the established EMD protocols.
9. Procurement of external services (e.g., fire suppression, ambulances, aircraft, tow trucks, taxis).

### 801.4.3 DISPATCHERS

Dispatchers report to the Boulder County Communications Director. The responsibilities of the dispatcher include, but are not limited to:

1. 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.
  4. Radio communications with department members in the field and support resources (e.g., fire department, emergency medical services (EMS), allied agency law enforcement units).
  5. Other electronic sources of information (e.g., text messages, digital photographs, video).
2. Documenting the field activities of department members and support resources (e.g., fire department, EMS, allied agency law enforcement units).
3. Inquiry and entry of information through the Communications Center, department and other law enforcement database systems (e.g., CCIC, DMV, NCIC).
4. Monitoring department video surveillance systems.
5. Maintaining the current status of members in the field, their locations and the nature of calls for service.
6. Notifying the Shift Supervisor or field supervisor of emergency activity, including, but not limited to:
  1. Vehicle pursuits.
  2. Foot pursuits.
  3. Assignment of emergency response.

### 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 law enforcement services is received, the dispatcher will reasonably and quickly attempt to determine if the call is an emergency or non-emergency, and shall quickly ascertain the call type, location and priority by asking four key questions:

## *The Communications Center*

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

If the dispatcher 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 dispatcher determines that 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 the Communications Center, 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.

All dispatchers should be courteous, patient and respectful in 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 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 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.

### 801.5.3 MISDIRECTED, SILENT AND HANG-UP CALLS

The Communications Director should ensure that all dispatchers have guidelines for handling misdirected emergency calls, silent calls and hang-up calls, which should include the following, as applicable:

## *The Communications Center*

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- a. Procedures for transferring a call, including providing notice to a caller of the transfer and requesting the caller to stay on the line
- b. Guidance for determining whether the dispatcher should stay on the line until a call has been successfully transferred
- c. Circumstances when the dispatcher should stay on the line with a silent call
- d. Criteria for determining when a call for service should be initiated
- e. Circumstances when a dispatcher should attempt to reestablish contact after a call has been disconnected

### 801.5.4 PRIVATE SECURITY ALARMS

The Louisville Police Department does not monitor security alarms.

## 801.6 DOCUMENTATION

It shall be the responsibility of the Communications Center to document all relevant information on calls for service or self-initiated activity. The dispatcher 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.
- 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.

## 801.7 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.

## *The Communications Center*

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- d. Member and dispatcher acknowledgements shall be concise and without further comment unless additional information is needed.

The Communications Director 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.

### **801.7.1 REQUIRED COMMUNICATION CAPABILITIES**

The Department shall maintain 24-hour radio capabilities between the the Communications Center and on-duty members as well as multichannel mobile or portable radio equipment that is capable of two-way operation on a joint public safety frequency or frequencies.

### **801.7.2 FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION COMPLIANCE**

Louisville Police Department radio operations shall be conducted in accordance with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) procedures and guidelines.

### **801.7.3 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.

## **801.8 CONFIDENTIALITY**

Information that becomes available through the Communications Center may be confidential or sensitive in nature. All members of the Communications Center 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 Division of Motor Vehicles 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.

