



SACRAMENTO POLICE DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTIVE



410.02 TELEPHONE ANSWERING 1-31-23

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Communication Directive is to establish procedures for the handling of telephone calls for service by Communications Division personnel.

POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Communications Division to respond quickly, professionally, and accurately to all telephone requests for service.

PROCEDURE

A. DEFINITIONS

1. 9-1-1 – the primary emergency telephone number designed to ensure quick response to any person calling or texting for police, fire, medical, rescue, and any other emergency service. The Sacramento Police Department is the primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for 9-1-1 calls generated within the geographic boundaries of the City of Sacramento.
2. Emergency telephone number – the 10-digit phone number that was originally published before 9-1-1 was in existence. It remains a functioning telephone number that is used by the public to report emergencies. The 10-digit emergency line shall not be given as an alternate to 9-1-1.

B. GENERAL

Dispatchers shall:

1. Comply with procedures set forth in General Order 210.04 (General and Professional Conduct).
2. Only use telephone lines in the work area for work-related telephone calls. All telephone calls are recorded.
3. Answer all telephone calls for service as quickly as possible.
 - a. In accordance with the State of California's 9-1-1 mandatory standards, all 911 calls should be answered within fifteen seconds.
4. Place non-emergency telephone calls and requests on hold to answer incoming 9-1-1 calls.
5. Demonstrate courtesy, respect and professionalism.
6. Never assume or guess the nature of a request.
7. Remain empathetic but impartial.
8. Use plain language when communicating with non-public safety personnel.
9. Not give advice for telephone calls that do not require police response but refer the requestor to the appropriate agency or service provider.
10. Direct any concerns or questions to the appropriate on-duty supervisor.
11. Be alert to co-workers' needs for assistance.
12. Not engage in any activity or loud conversation that distracts from or interferes with performing Communications Division duties.
13. Comply with RM 220.01 (Internal Investigations Manual) when handling complaints from any source about the Sacramento Police Department or its employees.
14. Deem all information received by Communications personnel as confidential.
15. Not release information to the public or the media unless directed by a supervisor.
16. Comply with GO 360.01 (Media Relations Policy).
17. Refer all Public Records Act (PRA) requests to SPD Government Affairs Unit.

C. 9-1-1 CALLS

1. Methods for Handling.
 - a. Direct Dispatch Method: Upon determining that an emergency is occurring within the city limits, a call for service shall be entered by the service desk and dispatched by the radio dispatcher in accordance with General Order 510.04 (Dispatching Sequence of Assignment).



SACRAMENTO POLICE DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTIVE



- b. Transfer Method: Upon determining that an emergency falls outside SPD jurisdiction and/or requires dispatch of equipment by another agency, the dispatcher shall transfer the caller to the responsible agency.
 - (1) The dispatcher shall advise the caller that the call is being transferred and should remain on the line.
 - (2) When the transfer point answers, the dispatcher shall state "Sacramento PD or Sac PD with a Transfer" and remain on the line until the connection has been successfully made and the location and/or call back numbers are relayed.
 - c. Relay Method: The dispatcher shall obtain from the caller all required information and then call the responsible agency. This method shall be used only when:
 - (1) The caller terminates the conversation prior to being transferred, or
 - (2) The call cannot be transferred.
 - d. If a transferred 9-1-1 call is received and it is determined that the call needs to be referred to another agency, per the State of California's 9-1-1 mandatory standards, every effort should be made by dispatchers to minimize the number of 9-1-1 call transfers.
2. Non-Emergency Calls Received on 9-1-1.
- a. If the dispatcher determines that the call is not an emergency, then the dispatcher shall handle the call and educate the caller by:
 - (1) Obtaining the necessary information and either entering an incident for dispatch, or referring the caller to the appropriate service provider, and
 - (2) Informing the caller that 9-1-1 is to be used for emergencies and providing the caller with the non-emergency number.
 - b. If there are other incoming 9-1-1 calls, then the dispatcher shall place the caller with the non-emergency on hold to answer incoming 9-1-1 calls.
3. 9-1-1 Abandoned or Hang-Up Calls.
- a. From residence, business or fax lines.
 - (1) The dispatcher shall enter a 952 incident, ensuring a "Y" for Yes Contact is placed in the Contact field and noting any extenuating circumstances (e.g., sounds of a fight, someone asking for help, etc.) in the incident text.
 - (2) The dispatcher shall attempt to ascertain the validity and/or circumstances through callback and shall supplement the incident with the results of the callback. In calling back, caution shall be used to avoid escalating a volatile situation. A message shall not be left on landlines when a voicemail or answering machine is received.
 - b. From payphones.
 - (1) Absent any unusual circumstances or additional information that would necessitate an immediate response, the dispatcher shall enter a 952PP incident, ensuring an "N" for No Contact is placed in the Contact field.
 - (2) The dispatcher shall attempt to ascertain the validity and/or circumstances through callback and shall supplement the incident with the results of the callback. In calling back, caution shall be used to avoid escalating a volatile situation.
 - (3) If no further information is obtained, the radio dispatcher shall make an All Units broadcast to the affected radio channel and cancel the incident.
 - c. From PBX or Centrex lines.
 - (1) The dispatcher shall enter a 952 incident, ensuring an "N" for No Contact is placed in the Contact field unless, there are extenuating circumstances present (e.g., sounds of a fight, someone asking for help, etc.) in the incident text.
 - (2) The dispatcher shall attempt to ascertain the validity and/or circumstances through callback and shall supplement the incident with the results of the callback. In calling back, caution shall be used to avoid escalating a volatile situation.



SACRAMENTO POLICE DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTIVE



- (3) If there is no answer or a phone tree is reached on a callback, and it is not possible to speak with a person:
 - a) The dispatcher shall supplement the incident and
 - b) The radio dispatcher shall make an All Units broadcast to the affected radio channel, notify the district sergeant, and cancel the incident.
 - (4) If there is an answer on the call back, but the citizen speaking to the dispatcher is not aware of the 911 call being placed, or cannot confirm an emergency:
 - a) The dispatcher shall supplement the incident and
 - b) The radio dispatcher shall cancel the call without a broadcast.
 - d. From cell phones, see Communications Directive 532.18 (Wireless 9-1-1 Call Handling).
 - e. If the Automatic Location Identification (ALI) feature does not display an address, the dispatcher shall:
 - (1) Call back the telephone number displayed to determine an address and if help is needed.
 - a) If the dispatcher is able to obtain the address, after the call is complete, the dispatcher shall submit an incorrect location request through the appropriate channels.
 - b) The dispatcher shall also advise the caller that the ANI/ALI information is not displaying their address and to contact their phone provider to advise of this issue.
 - (2) Attempt a Manual ALI Query.
 - (1) Attempt to obtain the address via available resources (e.g., Reverse Directory, CAD, RMS, next generation technology etc.)
4. Multiple Calls on the Same Incident
- a. It is common during major incidents to receive numerous calls reporting the same event, dispatchers shall:
 - (1) Be alert to the possibility that callers may be referring to the primary incident but reporting a second incident that may require a different type of response.
 - (2) Treat each caller as a potential witness.
 - (3) Enter a duplicate incident and include names, addresses and phone numbers of all callers.
 - (4) Never assume that subsequent callers do not have supplemental information or that there will not be a need to dispatch additional emergency equipment.

D. VERBAL COMMUNICATION/TELEPHONE PROCEDURES

1. Dispatchers shall answer telephone lines as follows:
 - a. 9-1-1 Lines: "9-1-1. What is the location of your emergency?"
 - b. Emergency Lines: "Sacramento Police (Department) Emergency Line" and provide first or last name or badge number.
 - c. Non-Emergency Lines: "Sacramento Police (Department)" and give first or last name.
2. Dispatchers shall speak distinctly and at a moderate pace and pitch.
3. Dispatchers shall obtain all primary information prior to terminating a telephone call.
4. Interviewing.
 - a. Dispatchers shall make every effort to obtain and enter primary information within 20-30 seconds.
 - (1) Where? Where is help needed? What is the exact location to which emergency services are to respond? In which direction is the suspect headed?
 - a) If the location is not within the City's jurisdiction, the dispatcher shall transfer the caller or shall relay the information to the appropriate agency.
 - b) If there is a question regarding jurisdiction, the dispatcher shall enter an incident. Jurisdiction shall be determined while assistance is en route.
 - c) The dispatcher shall always confirm ALI addresses.
 - d) The dispatcher shall utilize the phonetic alphabet for sound-alike streets.
 - (2) What? What is happening? Does the caller need police or fire or an ambulance?
 - a) Should the call be physical domestic violence the dispatcher shall ask if they are a victim of strangulation.
 - (3) Who? Who is calling? Who is involved?
 - (4) When? Is the incident occurring now? How many minutes ago did the incident occur?



SACRAMENTO POLICE DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTIVE



- (5) Weapons? Does anyone involved have a weapon? If so, what kind?
- b. After the Primary Information is entered, the dispatcher shall obtain secondary information to more clearly define the need for service.
- (1) Subject/Suspect Descriptions
- a) Gender, race and approximate age.
 - b) Height, weight.
 - c) Hair color and style (e.g., long, short, bushy, shoulder length).
 - d) Facial hair (e.g., goatee, full beard, mustache).
 - e) Other features (e.g., glasses, scars, tattoos, limp).
 - f) Hat or head covering including color and type.
 - g) Overcoat, jacket, sweater and/or shirt including color and type.
 - h) Pants or dress or skirt including color, length and type.
 - i) Footwear including color and type.
- (2) Vehicle
- a) Color (e.g., white vinyl, light oxidized metallic blue).
 - b) Year.
 - c) Make and model.
 - d) Body style (e.g., convertible, station wagon).
 - e) Other distinguishing features (e.g., luggage rack, decals, broken headlight).
 - f) License plate number.
- c. The dispatcher shall ascertain and indicate with a "Y, T or N" in the Contact field of the incident whether or not the caller requests contact by an officer.
- d. The outcome of interviewing will reflect what the caller perceives the problem to be.
- e. The dispatcher shall ensure, before terminating the call, that the caller understands how and if his/her request for service will be handled.
5. Defusing



- b. In attempting to defuse a critical call, dispatchers shall never:
- (1) Belittle, embarrass, or challenge a caller.
 - (2) Threaten arrest or to not send assistance.
 - (3) Give legal advice or opinions
 - (4) Make jokes.
- c. The manner in which the dispatcher approaches the caller directly impacts the manner in which the caller responds not only to the dispatcher but also to the responding officers.