

Chapter 40

COMMUNICATIONS

The basic function of the communications system is to satisfy the immediate information needs of the police department in the course of its normal daily activities and during emergencies. It is the latter situation that places the greatest demands upon the communications system and tests the capability of the system to fulfil its functions.

The speed and accuracy with which information flows through each system component are measures of the department's capability to respond to the needs of the community.

40.1 Administration

40.1.1 A written directive establishes the department's communications component.

Comments: The purpose of this directive should be to place accountability for the communications function within the department's organizational configuration. (M M M)

40.1.2 A written directive establishes the department's communications functions, to include:

- o radio communications;**
- o telephone communications;**
- o automated data communications (if applicable); and**
- o alarm monitoring (if applicable).**

Comments: The written directive should establish these functions and specify activities associated with each. (M M M)

40.1.3 A written directive establishes the authority and responsibilities of personnel assigned to the communications component.

Comments: A written job description should contribute to standardization of service rendered, reduce errors, aid the training effort, and reduce confusion during emergency situations. (M M M)

40.1.4 A written directive limits access to the communications centre to authorized personnel.

Comments: In general, access should be limited to those persons who operate and command the centre and to others specifically authorized. (M M M)

40.1.5 A written directive establishes procedures for routine telephone line load studies.

Comments: Without the proper number of telephone lines, calls placed to the department may receive a busy signal or go otherwise unanswered due to lack of equipment. (M M M)

40.1.6 A written directive establishes procedures for recording department radio transmissions and emergency telephone conversations within the communications centre.

Comments: These recordings are an indispensable source for criminal investigations, internal investigations, training, and audits of the department's service delivery system. (M M M)

40.1.7 A written directive establishes criteria and procedures for reviewing recorded conversations.

Comments: Access to recordings should be limited and available only through a specific procedural method. (M M M)

40.2 Operations

40.2.1 A written directive establishes procedures for performing telephone, radio, and automated data communications functions.

Comments: The policy may be a manual on the operations or activities in the communications centre. Personnel in the centre should have the manual accessible for reference. (M M M)

40.2.2 Communications personnel have immediate access to at least the following departmental resources:

- o officer in charge;**
- o duty roster of all personnel;**
- o telephone number of every department member; and**
- o telephone numbers of all emergency service agencies.**

Comments: Such information must be kept current. (M M M)

40.2.3 A written directive establishes procedures for procuring necessary services external to the department.

Comments: These services include fire equipment, environmental and human services, ambulances, helicopter or other aircraft, wreckers, cabs, and other services that are not components of the individual department. (M M M)

40.2.4 A written directive establishes procedures for prompt handling and appropriate routing of misdirected emergency calls.

Comments: Departments should accept any misdirected emergency call and promptly relay information to the department having jurisdiction. (M M M)

40.2.5 A written directive specifies the information to be recorded at the time of a request for service, to include:

- o date and time of request;
- o name and address of complainant (if possible);
- o type of incident reported;
- o location of incident reported;
- o time of dispatch;
- o time of officer arrival;
- o time of officer return to service; and
- o disposition or status of reported incident.

Comments: This information should be recorded for all requests, including those received by telephone, letter, in person; self-initiated by officers; or reported to officers in the field. (M M M)

40.2.6 A complaint control number is assigned to each specific call for police service.

Comments: The number should serve as the basis for filing and retrieving subsequent reports of the incident. (M M M)

40.2.7 A written directive requires the recording of the status of officers when out of service.

Comments: Such records should maintain a level of security for the officers, and retain records of vehicles and persons stopped by officers. (M M M)

40.2.8 The department has the capability of immediate playback of recorded telephone and radio conversations.

Comments: The citizen requesting service or officer wanting assistance may not be able to repeat an emergency conversation. The department should have the capability to replay a conversation immediately in the event that the original conversation was not easily understood. (M M M)

40.2.9 A written directive specifies the department's role in monitoring and responding to private security alarms.

Comments: The department should have a formal policy concerning monitoring commercial and private residential alarm systems. (M M M)

40.2.10 The department's communications personnel have immediate access to tactical dispatching plans.

Comments: The dispatching plans should include procedures to be followed in directing resources and obtaining information on crimes in progress and tactical operations. (M M M)

40.2.11 A written directive specifies criteria for accepting and delivering emergency messages and notifying next of kin of deceased, ill or injured persons.

Comments: Guidelines should be established to define the types of messages to be accepted and delivered. (M M M)

40.3 Facilities and Equipment

40.3.1 A written directive specifies security measures for the communications centre, to include:

- o protecting equipment; and
- o providing for back-up resources.

Comments: The capability to maintain communications in all emergency situations dictates that security measures be implemented to protect communications personnel and equipment. (M M M)

40.3.2 The department has an alternate source of electrical power that is sufficient to ensure continued operation of emergency communication equipment in the event of the failure of the primary power source.

Comments: The alternate power source should be inspected and tested regularly. (M M M)

40.3.3 Maps detailing the department's service area are visually available to communications personnel.

Comments: Communications personnel should be able to spot a caller's location and dispatch field units immediately. (M M M)

40.3.4 Officer status indicators are visually available to each communications operator.

Comments: By monitoring the officer status system, the operators know where, and how long, each officer has been out on a call. (M M M)

40.3.5 The department's telephone system is designed to separate emergency from nonemergency calls.

Comments: The department should always have enough trunk lines available so that incoming emergency calls do not receive a "busy" signal. (M M M)

40.3.6 The department has 24-hour two-way radio capability providing continuous communication between the communications centre and officers on duty.

Comments: Immediate communications capability provides a measure of safety and security to police officers and the public. (M M M)