



MYRTLE BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

COMMUNICATIONS STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

***Subject: Handling telephone calls
(emergency and non-emergency)***

Number: 504

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Rescinds: C-101 Telephone

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Approved By:

1. ANSWERING PHONES

- A. All phones shall be answered promptly in accordance with the following procedures. Communications Officers shall handle each request for service with concern, courtesy, and professionalism no matter how insignificant the request may seem. Although a large majority of the calls received are routine in nature, no call will be handled as "just another call." The Communications Officer controls the situation by controlling the call. Communications Officers shall answer telephone lines identifying the line called as well as identifying themselves:

- 911 lines shall be answered: "911, Where is your emergency?"
- Non-emergency lines shall be answered: "Myrtle Beach Police & Fire, (Call taker name)"
- Police radio admin lines shall be answered: "Police Dispatch, (Call taker name)"
- Fire radio admin lines shall be answered: "Fire Dispatch, (Call taker name)"

- B. When there are two or more incoming calls, 9-1-1 lines are to be answered first

2. CALL HOLDS AND TRANSFERS

- A. Communications Officers shall transfer calls and put callers on hold in the following manner:

When a call is received for a specific person, the call will be transferred to that person's extension. If a caller requests a general division, the call will be transferred to the office assistant for that division. The caller will always be advised they are being transferred.

- B. When transferring a 911 call to Horry County Dispatch or any other appropriate agency, the caller will be advised they will be connected and asked to remain

on the line. Communications Officers should not say “hold on” before transferring the call giving the caller the impression they are being put on hold. The Communications Officer will wait until the other agency has answered before releasing the call. The Communications Officer shall relay to the other agency any location information or any pertinent information received from the caller when the line was first answered should the caller appear to have difficulty communicating.

- C. When it is necessary to put a caller on hold, the Communications Officer will ask the caller if they can hold, wait for a reply, and then put the caller on hold if the caller says that he or she can hold. Under no circumstances should a caller be put on hold or asked to hold before knowing whether or not there is an emergency. The caller should never be asked to hold immediately after the phone is answered, such as “Myrtle Beach Police and Fire, can you hold?” Rather, determine if there is an emergency first, and if not, ask if the caller can hold, such as “Myrtle Beach Police and Fire, (operator name), do you have an emergency? Can you please hold?”

3. CRITICAL DATA ELEMENTS

The Communications Officer will determine critical data elements in the following order:

Where.....The exact location of the incident is the most important data element; if no other data can be determined, the exact location must be. The location of the incident and the location of the caller may not always be the same. Both locations must be determined. Communications Officers will record the information, and then repeat it to the caller for verification. Remember, LOCATION- DOCUMENTATION- VERIFICATION. Additional location information should be determined (e.g. apartment numbers, lot numbers, landmarks, cross streets, directions if applicable).

What.....The exact nature of the call must be determined.

When.....It must be determined if the incident is in progress or has recently occurred. The time lapse should be determined in minutes (e.g. ask how many minutes since the incident occurred).

Weapons.....Weapons involved information shall be obtained if applicable to the nature of the call, (e.g. disturbance, fights, suspicious persons, etc.). The specific type of weapon and a description of the weapon should be obtained (e.g. if the weapon is a gun, the specific type (handgun, rifle, shotgun, or other) should be determined). If other than a gun, the type and size of weapon should be determined.

Who.....The suspect, suspect vehicle, name and/or description and direction of travel shall be obtained if possible. Description information should be obtained and given out head to toe and utilizing the CYMBALS method. The caller's location, name, and call back number should also be determined. The caller should not be promised anonymity if they give their name but it should be noted in the CAD incident that the caller requests their name not be given out.

Injuries.....Does anyone at the scene require medical attention? If so, advise EMS.

Vehicle Descriptions.....Color, year, make, body style and license, state (CYMBALS)

Physical Descriptions.....Sex, race, age, height, weight, hair, facial hair, other, and clothing from head to toe.

4. DIRECTING CALLERS

During domestic or in-progress incidents, callers should be asked to stay on the line if they can safely do so. If not, the caller should be advised to lay the phone down rather than disconnect. Generally, Communications Officers should not direct the action of any caller and should use caution when doing so. If a caller asks what to do they should generally be advised to do what they feel is best to keep themselves safe.

5. EMERGENCY CALLS VS. NON-EMERGENCY CALLS

The Communications Center telephone system is designed so that emergency calls can be distinguished from non-emergency calls. There are seven 9-1-1 lines, seven non-emergency lines, and five administrative lines dedicated for direct communication with the radio operators. The telephone lines are programmed to roll over so that a caller will only receive a busy signal if all fourteen lines are busy.

6. ENHANCED 9-1-1

When a 9-1-1 line is answered, the enhanced 9-1-1 system ANI / ALI screen in the telephone at each workstation will display information about the call. If the call is a landline 9-1-1 call, the name the telephone is listed in, the address, telephone number, type of phone service and police and fire jurisdiction will display. If it is a wireless 9-1-1 call, the tower address, call back number, and service provider will display. Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) 9-1-1 calls will display the name, address, and telephone number provided by the VOIP subscriber however this may not be the actual location from which the call was placed. To enter latitude & longitude on a wireless 9-1-1 call, the Communications Officer will type L/ on the Location line in the CAD Call taker/ Dispatch window to bring up the Latitude/Longitude Entry Box. The Communications Center has the ability to track some wireless 9-1-1 callers.

7. LANDLINE 9-1-1 HANGUPS OR OPEN LINE CALLS

A CAD incident should be created for all landline 9-1-1 hangups and open lines. An incident should also be created for misdialed 9-1-1 calls where the caller is on the line and it has been determined 9-1-1 was accidentally dialed. When a call is received on one of the 911 lines and the caller does not or cannot speak before hanging up, the Communications Officer shall listen to see if there is an obvious problem or emergency situation occurring. If the line has immediately disconnected or if there is normal conversation, sounds, music, etc. and it appears no problem or emergency situation exists then the call may be disconnected. The Communications Officer will call the number back and attempt to establish contact with the caller. If contact cannot be made in a timely manner or if the line remains open or if it appears that there may be a problem, an officer will be dispatched immediately to the location of the call. If contact is made on callback and the Communications Officer can reasonably determine that no emergency exists, the Communications Officer should indicate this in the CAD incident notes and still send an officer to verify.

8. WIRELESS 9-1-1 HANGUPS OR OPEN LINE CALLS

For wireless hang up calls or open lines on 9-1-1 lines, the Communications Officer shall listen to see if there is an obvious problem or emergency situation occurring. If the line has immediately disconnected or if there is normal conversation, sounds, music, etc. and it appears no problem or emergency situation exists then the call may be

disconnected. If there is a valid callback number provided, the Communications Officer will call the number back and attempt to establish contact with the caller. If a location of the caller or emergency can be established, a CAD incident will be created for police response. If the Communications Officer believes that an emergency situation exists and cannot track a location then the Communications Officer should make contact with Horry County 9-1-1 Center to ascertain whether any location or call information was able to be identified by their agency prior to transfer. If no further information can be obtained either by callback attempts to the wireless phone number or to Horry County Dispatch, and if the Communications Officer believes that an emergency situation exists, the Communications Officer shall contact cellular service providers to initiate a trace. If the subscriber name and/or address is obtained from the cellular service provider, or if the current latitude/longitude data can be obtained, a call for service shall be entered in CAD. Cellular telephone numbers that have an "area code" of 9-1-1 or are non-service initialized "9-1-1 only" phones cannot be called back.

9. 9-1-1 SCREEN ERRORS

Any errors or problems found with the information on the 9-1-1 screen such as an incorrect address or responding agency should be noted and left for a Communications Center Supervisor. The note should include the date, time, and location of the 9-1-1 call as well as the problem found with the information and the correct information if known. If possible, fill out the ALI Discrepancy form in the Sentinel 9-1-1 phone system indicating the errors and corrections.

10. MISDIRECTED EMERGENCY CALLS

If a 9-1-1 emergency call is received that should be handled by another agency, the Communications Officer will either transfer the call to the correct agency or if the number to that agency is unavailable, transfer the call back to Horry County 9-1-1 Center or take complete information and relay it to the appropriate agency. In either case of transferring the call, the Communications Officer shall stay on the line until they are sure the call connected.

11. MISDIRECTED NON-EMERGENCY CALLS

If the Communications Officer receives a non-emergency call to be handled by another agency, the Communications Officer will advise the caller of the proper agency to contact. The Communications Officer will then either provide the telephone number for the proper agency or transfer the caller directly to the proper agency.

12. FOREIGN LANGUAGE CALLERS

If a call is received on a 9-1-1 line and the caller does not speak English and the location of the caller or incident cannot be determined, the Communications Officer should connect with Horry County Dispatch to request the use of a language line translator. If the location of the caller is known, i.e., the call came in on 9-1-1 or the call taker can understand an address from the caller, a police officer should be dispatched so the response is not delayed in case an actual emergency exists.

If a call is received on a non-emergency phone line and the caller does not speak English, the call taker shall attempt to locate an employee that has been identified as being fluent in the language the caller is speaking, utilizing the Secondary Language list. If no employee on the list is on duty or is able to be reached, the call taker will do their

best to identify a location of the incident so a call for service can be entered in the CAD system.

13. MISCELLANEOUS TELEPHONE INFORMATION

A. Collect Calls

The Communications Officer shall not accept any collect phone calls from the general public unless specifically instructed to do so by a supervisor of the Myrtle Beach Police Department. However, collect calls made by any employee of the Myrtle Beach Police Department WILL be accepted.

B. Messages

Callers frequently request to leave a message for an officer. If the message is for a patrol unit on duty, the message will be taken and delivered as soon as feasible. If the message is for someone not on duty, the message will be emailed to the officer in which it is intended for. If the phone message is for an officer working out of the substation (Traffic/ Beach), the caller will be transferred to the substation to leave a voicemail for the officer. Calls for other employees will be transferred to their phone extension. A list of extensions is posted at each work station, in CAD phone directory, and in the Solacom 911 speed dial list.

C. Digital Voice Recorder

- 1) Telephone communications in the Communications Center are recorded. Recordings are retained at a minimum to State requirements.
- 2) Officers are permitted to request telephone recordings needed for cases/investigations/court. The officer should email the request to a Communications Corporal including the Report or CAD Event number. The Communications Corporal will place the original CD into Property & Evidence and complete an evidence voucher in RMS to preserve chain of custody if needed for court. The recordings will also be placed in the Recordings folder for officers to review.
- 3) If recordings are needed for internal review of a foot pursuit, use of force, or internal investigation, a request will be submitted to a Communications Corporal to include the Report or CAD Event number. The audio files can be burned to a CD or emailed to the requesting supervisor.

D. Viewpoint

Communications Officers have the ability to immediately playback telephone recordings for the previous two hours using Viewpoint. A Communications Officer needing access to a recording that is more than two hours old should contact a Communications Supervisor. All Communications Officers have the ability to "tag" recordings within Viewpoint to be easily retrieved at a later time.

E. INSTANT RETRIEVAL RECALL (IRR)

Communications Officer have the capability to immediately playback telephone conversations using the IRR on the phone system. No radio recordings are captured on IRR. Each IRR console only records telephone conversations for that position. Communications Officers and Officers can use the IRR to review

telephone calls as needed. They do not have the ability to “tag” recordings in the IRR system.

F. PERSONAL RECORDINGS PROHIBITED

Personal recordings of conversations or activity within the Communications Center is prohibited except as authorized by the Chief of Police or the Support Services Captain. Employees are strictly prohibited from saving any audio files to the desktop or to any personal recording equipment. If a recording needs to be saved for later referral, the employee should “tag” the call in Viewpoint and send a request to a Communications Corporal or Communications Sergeant. If Viewpoint is down, the employee shall make note of the date and time of the phone call so the recording can be searched for later.