



Eric Hawkins  
Chief of Police

**ALBANY, NEW YORK**  
**POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
 165 HENRY JOHNSON BOULEVARD  
 ALBANY, NEW YORK 12210



1789

**COMMUNICATIONS: TELEPHONE PROCEDURES**  
**GENERAL ORDER NO: 6.1.15**

<b>Issue Date:</b> August 2, 2019	<b>Effective Date:</b> March 1998
<b>Revision Date:</b> November 26, 2014	<b>CALEA:</b> 81.2.1, 81.2.6, 81.2.10, 81.2.12, 81.2.13
<b>Volume 6:</b> Communications	<b>Chapter 1:</b> Operations
<b>Distribution:</b> All Personnel	<b>NYSLEAP:</b> 55.1
<b>Issuing Authority:</b> Chief Eric Hawkins	<b>Page:</b> 1 of 8

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this policy is to develop measures for efficient telephone procedures and dissemination of information received.

**POLICY:** It is the policy of the Albany Police Department that all personnel assigned to the Communications Center shall handle all telephone calls in a prompt, courteous, and professional manner.

**DEFINITIONS:** **Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)** – A telecommunications device for the deaf is a teleprinter, an electronic device for text communication over a telephone line that is designed for use by persons with hearing or speech difficulties.

**I. PROCEDURES**

- A.** The department maintains twenty-four (24) hour, toll-free voice and TDD telephone access for emergency calls for service within the jurisdiction, via the 911 emergency lines.
  - 1. TDD instructions are located on the PBX monitor.
- B.** The Communications Center shall serve as a twenty-four (24) hour point of contact to respond to victim/witness requests for information and/or services, to include initial and subsequent requests. Call takers shall be responsible for the following:
  - 1. Speak directly into the telephone with an assertive tone, taking charge of the situation without being rude or sarcastic.
  - 2. Enter all medical calls into the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) computer to be dispatched by personnel assigned to that position. Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) protocol shall be followed.
    - a. Call takers shall provide emergency first-aid instruction over the telephone or radio by looking up proper response from EMD cards,

in accordance with training outlined in [GO 6.1.00 – Communications: Organization, Administration and Management](#), This training shall be complete prior to personnel being assigned any duties that require such action.

- b. Call takers shall have access to approved medical guidelines or materials.
3. Ensure that the proper information is relayed from the caller.
  - a. Confirm information with caller by repeating it back to him/her.
  - b. If still unsure, have the caller repeat it again.
  - c. Don't take anything for granted or make assumptions.
  - d. Keep communication simple, precise, and to the point.
  - e. Be sensitive to the caller. Remember they have reached out to you for help.
  - f. Be a good listener, stay calm, and maintain control of the situation.
4. Be responsible for handling all information on calls for service. When taking information from the caller, the following order is recognized as being the most efficient and most productive in terms of safety to responding personnel:
  - a. Location where help is needed;
  - b. Telephone number where caller is calling from;
  - c. Call type;
  - d. Remarks; which may include:
    - i. Number of suspects involved;
    - ii. Age, sex, and description of persons who are involved;
    - iii. Type of weapon, if one is involved;
    - iv. Any vehicle information pertinent to the call;
    - v. Direction of travel of perpetrator and/or vehicle if pertinent;
    - vi. Address of caller/complainant.
  - e. Complainant's last name;
  - f. Complainant's first name; and
  - g. Complainant's address.
5. In addition, questions shall be asked of the caller to determine the validity, nature, whether an emergency or non-emergency response is required and priority of the call.
6. When dealing with complainants who call frequently, handle every call as if it is the first time that the complainant has called.
7. Never advise the caller/complainant that if they don't identify themselves that a unit will not be sent.
8. Enter as much information into the CAD call ticket, as possible.
9. If a caller needs to be transferred to a different internal department, the caller shall first be given the phone number for the department they are trying to reach, the name of the employee who is completing the transfer, and the name of the department and/or personnel the caller is trying to

reach. Once these steps are complete, the caller shall clearly be advised that they are going to be transferred.

- a. The desk officer/clerk shall take every step necessary to assist the caller and shall not transfer the caller back to Communications.

**10.** If the situation requires a police response, the dispatcher shall advise the caller that an officer will be dispatched, as well as refer a caller who does not require a police response to the appropriate assisting agency or referral to another agency.

- a. If the caller is referred to another agency, and the agency is local, the caller shall first be given the phone number for the local agency and then transferred.
- b. If the agency is not local, all attempts shall be made to locate a working telephone number to the referring agency, which shall be given to the caller.

**11.** Be courteous and consider the following when taking calls:

- a. It is the first contact many citizens have with our emergency services.
- b. The manner in which the call is handled can set the groundwork for responding units.
- c. It can be the difference between life and death and can instill a life-long impression of our services.
- d. Always take care to maintain a courteous and professional tone of voice when talking to a citizen.
- e. Your tone creates an image of yourself and of the department, which is instantly communicated to the caller.

**12.** Avoid using technical words or signals when talking to citizens.

**13.** Verify and repeat the person's name, if available, during conversation.

**14.** Obtain the necessary information quickly and accurately.

- a. Speak clearly and distinctly.
- b. Never sacrifice accuracy for speed.
- c. Reliability is necessary.

**15.** Ask the appropriate questions in a calm manner, helping callers in an uncontrolled state of mind or emotion, to be better able to provide information which can greatly assist the field units.

**16.** Whenever possible, fill in the following information in reference to all calls: Where, What, When, Who, and How.

- a. Where (most important):
  - i. When getting the address, it is better to have the caller repeat the number and street, rather than for the call taker to repeat it back to the caller. An emotional or excited caller

may be more inclined to agree with whatever address the call taker says, whether it is right or wrong.

- ii. If there is a question as to the location, ask for an intersecting street, nearest landmark, etc. to avoid confusion.
- iii. Never hesitate to ask questions which will pinpoint the proper location.
- iv. The more accurate the information, the more time saved in response by a field unit.
- v. Since not every caller knows the address of every business, building, or landmark in the City, CAD has been programmed to recognize the more familiar locations, but in some cases it might be necessary to use other reference materials to ascertain a proper address. Calls cannot be entered rapidly into CAD if the call taker has to look up the address in a reference guide.
- vi. Many streets have the same or similar sounding name such as: Pine (North or South); Second (Street or Avenue); the Boulevard (Northern or Manning). Ask the caller which location they are referring to and make sure responding officer(s) know.

**b. What (type of call it is):**

- i. Does an emergency exist?
- ii. If unable to ascertain the nature of the complaint, use “police wanted-nature unknown”, and describe in the remarks field.
- iii. Get a Report or Complaint:
  - 1) Ascertain the nature of the report or complaint.
  - 2) Make sure it is included in the CAD dispatch ticket so the radio operator knows what the call is about and can determine the proper number of units to send.

**c. When (did the incident occur):**

- i. Whether the incident is in progress.
- ii. Whether the emergency is over or in progress.
- iii. How much time has elapsed since the incident/emergency occurred?
- iv. If the suspect(s) are still in the area.
- v. Should there be any indication that an incident is “in progress”, the call taker shall then immediately forward any/all information available to the radio dispatcher who shall then immediately transmit the call to field units.
  - 1) Call taker is advised of an incident “in progress” and the location.
  - 2) Call taker will confirm the call and the location and advise the caller/complainant to: “Stay on the line. Do not hang up. An officer is being sent at this time, but I

need more information”.

- 3) The radio dispatcher shall start units to the location while the call taker continues to interview the caller/complainant.
- 4) The radio dispatcher will let the responding officers know that there is more information forthcoming and will relay it to them as it is received.
- 5) This is where the call taker now gets the complainant’s information, asking them to repeat the telephone numbers and addresses, if and when needed.

**a. Who and How:**

**i. The call taker then gets any additional information, such as:**

- 1) Intersections;
- 2) If the suspect(s) are still there;
- 3) Number of suspects;
- 4) Location of suspect(s);
- 5) Description – race, sex, height, weight, clothing (head to toes), and if weapon(s) involved, type;
- 6) Vehicle description – year, make, type, color, plate number, and state;
- 7) Direction of travel; and
- 8) Any other information that may be vital to the outcome of the call.

**17.** For situations requiring immediate dispatch, the location and type of call shall be given to the radio dispatcher. Follow up information, such as complainants name and address, suspect information, medical history etc. can be obtained while the field units are on the way to the scene of the incident.

**18.** Never hang up or clear the line until all the information needed for a safe and accurate response by the field unit has been obtained.

- a.** When in doubt, maintain contact with the caller and always attempt to get the telephone number where the caller can be contacted should there be any problems.
- b.** Do not hang up until all information is obtained and if possible, maintain contact until an officer has arrived on the scene and made contact with the caller.

**19.** For all “crime in progress” calls keep the caller on the telephone, if possible, until the first unit arrives.

**a. Continue to ask questions which could be vital, such as:**

- i.** Are there any weapons involved?
- ii.** Is anyone injured?

- iii. How many suspects?
    - iv. Where are they now?
  - b. As a call taker, you want to ensure that the radio dispatchers have all the information available to relay to the officers in the field.
- 20. Relay all information received, that is pertinent to the call, in the remarks field of the CAD call ticket. Do not try to retain the information.
- 21. Deal with callers in a prompt, courteous, and professional manner.
  - a. All calls should be answered within four (4) rings or less.
- 22. When a call is received for a field unit, connect the caller to the appropriate station or unit, if known.
- 23. Always be aware of what you are saying.
  - a. When you are saying something the caller should not hear, utilize the "hold" button.
  - b. Don't just release the "push to talk button" or put your hand over the receiver. These only reduce the sensitivity and do not fully mute the sounds.
- 24. If the caller asks for the home telephone number of another employee, it is not to be given out. If necessary, make the phone call yourself and relay the message if it's of an important nature.
- 25. If the caller is a private citizen and requests any police information, connect them to the proper station/unit.
- 26. If the caller is a private citizen and requests any motor vehicle information, advise them to contact the Department of Motor Vehicles.
  - a. No motor vehicle information shall be given over the telephone, except to a police officer whose identity has been verified.
- 27. Members of the news media requesting information or a news release should be referred to the Public Information Officer, per current directives.

## **II. PROCEDURES FOR PROPER TELEPHONE ANSWERING**

### **A. Call takers shall complete the following procedures:**

1. The way a person answers the telephone gives a caller an instant insight into the mood and disposition of the person they have reached. Like all the other facets of the Communications Center, a sense of professionalism will be stressed at all times.
2. When a call is received on an extension, the proper response shall be: "Teletype, Dispatcher Jones", "Radio, Dispatcher Smith" etc. Always identify the position working, followed by your last name.
3. If an extension telephone is ringing at a certain console or post and the person assigned to that post is busy on the radio or on another extension, someone else shall answer the ringing line, with the exception of radio.

4. Communications Center telephones shall not to be used for extended personal business. All the telephones in the Center are to be considered emergency lines.
5. Incoming or outgoing telephone calls shall be handled and completed.
6. Remember that all lines within the Communications Center are taped and are subject to review at any time.

**B. Acceptance of Collect Calls:**

1. The Communications Center does not accept collect calls, except from a ranking officer of the Albany Police Department or Albany Fire Department, who is calling from outside the local calling area and find it necessary to gain assistance from someone within the department.
2. In instances where persons call from correctional facilities and request that we accept the charges, inform the operator that you are transferring the call to the Detective Office and it shall be their option to either accept or deny the charges.

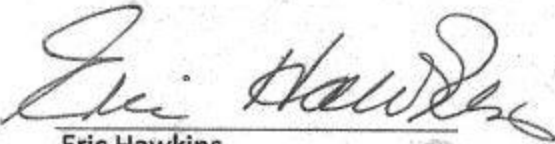
**C. Answering Telephone Burglar/Fire Alarms:**

1. Communications personnel, when answering a phone call for an burglar/fire alarm, shall ascertain the following information and enter the information into the CAD call ticket:
  - a. The alarm address;
  - b. The alarm company telephone number;
  - c. The call type;
  - d. The name of the business or resident;
  - e. The location of the alarm hit;
  - f. The alarm company name;
  - g. The alarm operator name or number (for some alarm companies the reference number can be placed in the call ticket or where the first name would go)
  - h. The name and phone number of the responder, and if he/she is responding to the alarm location.
    - i. If a person is responding, a description of the vehicle that the responder will be driving to the alarm scene shall also be listed in the call ticket.

**D. Emergency Messages:**

1. Requests for the delivery of emergency messages from citizens, such as an injury as the result of an accident or the serious illness of a family member, etc., will be cordially accepted and completed in a timely manner.
2. Call takers shall create a call ticket in CAD utilizing the call type of "notification", CAD call number 42. The call taker shall obtain all pertinent information from the caller and the dispatcher shall dispatch a patrol officer who shall be responsible for the actual delivery of said message.
3. In cases where the intended recipient is not at home or cannot be

reached, the officer shall leave a message for the individual with the appropriate contact information.



Eric Hawkins  
Chief of Police