



Fitchburg State University Police Department

Subject: Communications Procedures

General Order

Reference: MPAC: 81.2.3, 81.2.4, 81.2.6, 81.2.10, 81.2.11,
81.2.12, 81.2.14
IACLEA: 11.1.3, 11.1.4, 11.1.6, 11.1.7, 11.1.8,
11.1.9, 11.1.10

Rescinds Section 5, D.P. O. 20-002

Effective Date:

September 14, 2020

Review Date:

11.1.1

By Order of: Michael J Cloutier, Chief of Police

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this general order is to provide guidance to personnel working in the dispatch capacity in the department communication center.

POLICY:

It is the policy of this department that personnel performing dispatch functions will follow the guidelines listed within this order. Personnel performing the dispatch function should remember that they are often the first representative of the department that the public has contact with and should maintain a professional demeanor at all times. In addition shall ensure accurate and complete record of transactions and calls for service.

PROCEDURE:

A. RECORDING INFORMATION

1. The dispatcher on duty shall be responsible for the maintenance of the official log of the Fitchburg State University Police Department during his or her assigned tour of duty. The department utilizes the Computer Aided Dispatch system for this function. This log shall record incoming requests for service as well as self-initiated activity. At minimum each log entry shall contain the following information if appropriate:
 - a. A control number (system-generated call number).
 - b. Date and time of the request for service.
 - c. Name and address of the complainant, if possible.
 - d. Type of incident reported.
 - e. Location of incident reported.

11 - Communications and Dispatch Services

- f. Identification of officers assigned as primary and backup.
 - g. The time of dispatch.
 - h. The time the officer arrived.
 - i. The time the officer cleared the call and returned to service.
 - j. The disposition or status of the reported incident.
2. Information from requests received via telephone, letter, in person, self-initiated officer activity, or reports received directly by officers in the field should be recorded into the Computer Aided Dispatch system.
3. In addition to a log entry, the following situations require a written report submitted through the Records Management System by the responding primary officer:
 - a. Potential University rule violations and criminal law violations.
 - b. Arrests.
 - c. Motor vehicle accidents.
 - d. Fire alarms.
 - e. Medical calls.
 - f. Towed vehicles.
 - g. Assisting outside agencies.

IACLEA 11.1.3 / MPAC 81.2.3

B. COMMUNICATION PROCESS

1. Radio Communications.

- a. Radio communication is the primary method that an officer communicates with the station and/or other officers. Uniform radio procedures and proper utilization of communications equipment are essential to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Every officer assigned to patrol duty will have access to radio communications at all times. Each officer, when possible, shall promptly notify dispatch when initiating any action that may have the potential for violence or may place the officer in a situation where s/he is no longer able to respond to calls for service. Such actions may include but not be limited to:

- i. Motor vehicle stops
- ii. Prisoner transports
- iii. Investigations
- iv. Building searches
- v. Group disturbances

IACLEA 11.1.4 a / MPAC 81.2.4 a

- b. Officers shall notify Dispatch prior to going "Out of Service."
- c. For the purpose of this department, "Out of Service" shall mean that the officer is unable or unavailable to respond to a call for service from dispatch.
 - i. If this involves a normal call for service (police action or functions), a call

11 - Communications and Dispatch Services

number will be generated.

- ii. Brief personal breaks do not need to be logged.
- d. Officers shall notify Dispatch promptly when they are available for service after being "Out of Service."
- e. Officers will also radio dispatch they will be "off on portable" whenever exiting a cruiser for a non-call.
 - i. Dispatch will select the officers name and select "out of vehicle"
 - ii. When officer return to their cruiser patrol, they will notify dispatch that they are back on patrol. Dispatch will select the officer's name and indicate "back in vehicle"

IACLEA 11.1.4 b / 81.2.4 b

2. Radio Numbers

- a. Every officer is assigned a radio number (call sign).
 - i. Police officer radio numbers (call signs) are currently assigned by seniority
 - (a) Officer's call numbers will begin with the 9 designation followed by their badge number (901,902,903....)
 - (b) Dispatcher's assisting with duties out of the communication center will be designated a number beginning with 92 (920,921,923...)
 - (c) Sergeant's call number will begin with S followed by their badge number (S1, S2, S3...)
 - (d) Command Staff consisting of Lieutenants and above will begin with C (C1, C2, C4...)
 - (01) The call number C3, has been retired in honor of Chief Michael Marcil. This call number will not be assigned to any personnel
- b. Officers calling dispatch will identify themselves through their assigned numbers. Personal names should be avoided unless necessary to clarify possible confusion.
- c. Dispatch radio number shall be 206, regardless of who is assigned to the communication center.

IACLEA 11.1.4 c / MPAC 81.2.4 c

3. Communication with other departments

- a. Should it become necessary to communicate with Fitchburg Police Dispatch directly via portable radio system one would do so by prefacing their first transmission by stating:
 - i. "Fitchburg State University Police Department to Fitchburg Police Department

11 - Communications and Dispatch Services

Dispatch”

- ii. In all but emergency situations, communication between agencies shall be done over the recorded telephone line for all official business.

IACLEA 11.1.4 d / MAPC 81.2.4 d

4. Responding to Calls

- a. The nature/severity of a call, the number of officers available and the number of calls pending will dictate the amount of officers available to respond to any one call. Urgency of a call can be identified as Emergency, Urgent or Routine as explained in **General Order 9.1.3 Patrol Response**.

- i. The Computer Aided Dispatch system delegates call priority levels as a predetermined level of 1, 2, or 3. However, mitigating circumstances known at the time that the call is taken will be weighed in the decision to send extra officers or not.
- ii. In the event of a domestic disturbance or fight call, all available officers should respond until the severity of the situation has been determined. At that time, officers may be released from that call or held on the call at the direction of the shift supervisor or OIC.
- iii. Shift supervisors or officer-in-charge should respond to situations to assume command of incidents including but not limited to:
 - (a) Fights
 - (b) Serious medical incidents
 - (c) Group disturbances
 - (d) Situations listed in the Fitchburg State University Emergency Management Plan.
- iv. If the shift supervisor or officer-in-charge is unable to respond to a situation to assume command, they should designate an officer to take charge of that particular situation.
- v. Dispatchers should be cognizant of the severity of a call and that the nature of a call can change at any moment. It is possible that a request from an officer for assistance may come in at any time. In the event that officer requests assistance, becomes involved in an ongoing felony or life threatening or saving situations, or activates his/her radio panic button, dispatch personnel should prioritize that call as the most important and dispatch the appropriate personnel.

IACLEA 11.1.4 e, f & g / MPAC 81.2.4 e, f & g

C. CELLULAR TELEPHONES:

1. The Fitchburg State University Police Department recognizes that members of the

11 - Communications and Dispatch Services

department carry cell phones while on duty; however, the use of cell phones raises certain issues, such as officer safety and communication protocols. Department members should be aware that cell phones are an augmentation to, not a replacement for, radio communications transmitted through the communications center. Cellular telephone use, as defined by this policy, includes all types of transmissions to or from a cell phone, including voice, text, and data messages.

2. The use of a cell phone by a department member while on duty is prohibited in the following situations:
 - a. When a cell phone operation would be considered disruptive, such as in meetings, training sessions, or in court, and their use would reasonably be deemed annoying or intrusive.
 - b. When the use of a cell phone would unnecessarily or unreasonably divert the attention of a department member from official duties and/or cause a potentially hazardous situation.
 - c. When cell phone usage would disrupt other necessary departmental equipment through radio interference, etc.
 - d. When use of the cell phone would replace normal radio communications procedures.
3. To protect officers in unknown or dangerous situations, cell phones should be shut off or left in silent or vibrate mode when performing field duties.
4. Cell phone use should be done out of public view whenever possible.
5. Members of the department may conduct necessary personal or family related business on cell phones while on duty; however, such usage should not interfere with the performance of their duties and shall be kept at a minimum.
6. Officers carrying cell phones while on duty shall be aware of the following:
 - a. The use of a personal cell phone for official business makes it subject to public record inquiry, and
 - b. The University is not responsible for any reimbursements for the use of, or for damaged or lost personal cell phones.

MPAC 81.2.10

D. CALLS FOR INFORMATION OR SERVICE

1. Communications center personnel are often the first contact a person has with the department. The proper handling of calls for information or service shall be done in a professional manner, maintaining public trust and confidence in the department.
 - a. Each request will be evaluated to determine whether an emergency or non-emergency request is required.

11 - Communications and Dispatch Services

- b. Assist the caller with either a police response, transferring the call to a supervisor, or transfer the call to the appropriate university department or non-campus agency.
- c. This can be accomplished by obtaining enough information from the caller to determine emergency/ non emergency status, jurisdictional location, and other prevalent information.

IACLEA 11.1.6 / MAPC 81.2.6

2. In the event that victims/witnesses call for information or services, dispatch personnel should perform the following steps;
 - a. The dispatcher shall attempt to obtain sufficient information from the caller to determine the severity (emergency or non-emergency) and degree of response needed for any request of service. This will include judging the characteristics of the call, such as the tone of voice of the caller, background noises, and other clues indicative of high or lower priority responses.
 - b. Inform the victim/witness of the department's response to their request. Dispatch personnel should attempt to place the victim/witness in contact with the shift supervisor or officer in charge when applicable. Dispatchers should also be familiar with on and off campus resources available.
3. Victim and witness callers should receive timely and appropriate attention to their immediate needs. Information and/or services should be provided for both initial and subsequent requests even during non-business hours.
4. When a dispatcher receives a call from a citizen concerning activity that is **behavior based**, an officer should be assigned to investigate. However, should a caller merely report someone on campus who is unknown to them, the dispatcher should ask additional questions to discern whether the **person's behavior is considered to be suspicious**.
 - a. Where there is no suspicious behavior described, the dispatcher shall contact the shift supervisor or OIC by radio and advise him/her of the nature of call. Supervisor/OIC have the authority to direct that no officer be assigned in those cases where the activity is not behavior-based.
 - b. A call for service should be entered regardless if an officer responds or not, indicating calling party information, what the calling party stated, and what action was taken (type of response or no response due to no suspicious behavior provided).

IACLEA 11.1.7

E. EMERGENCY MESSAGING

1. Dispatch at times, may receive calls requesting emergency messaging or notifications. These may include welfare checks, death or illness notifications, or for a student or staff to call a family member.

11 - Communications and Dispatch Services

- a. Students attending classes: If a student is attending class we will not interrupt the class to deliver the message unless it is an emergency. In this situation make sure you know the nature of the emergency and obtain a return phone number for the student to call, in most cases the specific nature of the circumstances are not given to the student. If the message can wait until the class is over, deliver it to the student after the class has ended, or before the class begins. If the emergency message must be delivered during a class time, inform the Professor that you have an emergency message for a student. Follow up by documenting what you did in the police log.
- b. Students on campus but not in class: If a caller requests we deliver a message during non-school hours, or to a person who is not currently in a classroom attempting to have Residence Life staff (in Resident Hall) and ask that they advise the person to contact the person attempting to reach them. Otherwise, the officer should attempt to make contact.
- c. Officers will not transfer any calls or provide personal contact information to callers.
- d. In a situation where a caller is checking on the welfare of a student and officer will attempt to make contact with the individual to relay the message.
- e. Any notification of an exigent medical condition, a supervisor or officer in charge shall be notified of the information.
- f. Any death notification will be brought to the immediate attention of a Lieutenant (on duty or on call). Notification steps will be coordinated with either the Office of Human Resources if employee, or the Office for Student Affairs if a student.

IACLEA 11.1.8 / MPAC 81.2.11

F. MISDIRECTED CALLS

1. If the department receives an emergency call intended for another law enforcement or public safety agency. All misdirected and hang-up emergency calls should be promptly forwarded to the agency having jurisdiction of the call.
2. Per 560 CMR 2.00 – Appendix A, “No caller shall be procedurally required to speak with more than two call takers --- the primary PSAP call taker and the remote agency call taker. Calling party should be advised that the call is about to be transferred and to remain on the line.”

IACLEA11.1.9 / MPAC 81.2.12

G. FIRST AID INSTRUCTION

1. Per 560 CMR 500 dispatchers who are not employed in a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) are not authorized to dispense medical or first aid services over the phone. Only Emergency Medical Dispatchers (EMD) as defined in 560 CMR 500 are able to provide medical advice.

11 - Communications and Dispatch Services


2. The university has programmed all on campus hardwired phones to direct all 911 calls to the nearest PSAP, the City of Fitchburg Police Department.

IACLEA 11.1.10 / MPAC 81.2.14

Approval:



Chief of Police



Date