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			Distribution: All
Title: Telephone Answering & Initial Call Processing		Section: Communications	
Issued: 06/25/2019		Effective: 07/03/2019	Revised: 07/14/2022
Rescinds: All Previous		Amends:	
CALEA References: COM 6.2.5, 6.2.6, 6.2.7, 6.2.8, 6.2.12			
Review: Annual		Authority: Chief Buck Buchanan	

## I. Purpose

The purpose of this General Order is to establish the guidelines for the use of the Next Generation NG 9-1-1 Phone System to obtain initial call processing information.

## II. Policy

It is the policy of the Andover Police Department to ensure that all callers will be treated courteously and efficiently, and employees must provide an appropriate response to all calls for service. An appropriate response is to create a dispatchable incident or to provide an appropriate referral, depending upon the circumstances presented by the caller.

## III. Definitions

- A. **National Emergency Number Association (NENA)** – the 9-1-1 Association that serves the public safety community as the only professional organization solely focused on 9-1-1 policy, technology, operations and education issues.


## IV. Regulations

(This section intentionally left blank.)

## V. Procedures

### A. General Consideration

1. Communication Officers must maintain a high level of professional conduct, regardless of the caller's demeanor.
2. Communication Officers will communicate clearly and concisely, and demonstrate the use of plain and understandable English.
3. Communication Officers need to effectively resolve misunderstandings with the caller without engaging in argument. The principles of repetitive persistence should be employed to elicit information from hysterical or uncooperative callers.


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4. Communication Officers shall control and maintain the conversation by calmly and professionally asking questions to guide the caller, while also listening to the information the caller is providing.
5. NG 9-1-1 and NENA requirements state that 90 percent of 9-1-1 calls/requests received will be answered within 15seconds 95 percent of 9-1-1 calls/requests received being answered within 20 seconds (NENA-STA-020.1-2020).  
Communication Officers shall make every reasonable effort to answer a ringing telephone in three rings or less.

#### **B. E 9-1-1 Phone, Non-Emergency and Administrative Lines**


1. 9-1-1 calls are considered emergency calls and will receive priority response.
2. All 9-1-1 phone lines shall be answered in the following manner: *"Andover 9-1-1, what is the address of the emergency?"* If the caller does not know the address, ask for the closest intersection.
3. All Communication Officers shall employ a proper greeting when answering calls that originate from non-emergency or administrative lines. The Communications Officer shall identify the agency and state at a minimum, and shall state their first name for the caller.
4. Immediately after the address is confirmed, the phone number shall be ascertained and verified.
5. The Communications Officer shall then determine the nature of the problem by utilizing the phrase *"Ok, tell me exactly what happened?"* This phrase shall be employed on all calls (police, fire, medical). This question does not have to be asked if the caller reveals the nature of the problem prior to this step in the call handling process.
6. Once the emergent or non-emergent nature of the problem is determined, the Communication Officer will:
  - a. Transfer all calls requiring EMS response to appropriate agency immediately;
  - b. Follow the appropriate line of questioning or SOP if established;
  - c. Classify calls for service:
    - i. Priority 1 – High: Call in progress, with a high possibility of personal injury to reporting party or others;
    - ii. Priority 2 – Medium: Call in progress, no threat to personal safety of reporting party or others but some degree of risk to property;
    - iii. Priority 3 – Low: Call in progress, nuisance calls, no threat to personal safety or property; or
    - iv. Priority 4 – Non-Priority: Not in progress, information only, or other reports after the occurrence.

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- d. Communication Officers shall use their best judgement from all information presented by the reporting party in determining at what level the call will be classified. These priorities are pre-populated in CAD based on the Nature of Call, but may be over-ridden as needed by Communication Officers.
  - e. Dispatch one unit to routine calls for service to maximize police resources and respond to calls for service in the shortest amount of time.
  - f. Whenever a serious incident occurs, or as established in department policy, which necessitates the response by the Watch Commander, the Watch Commander shall be dispatched to the scene and they shall then assume command of the incident and coordinate response by other officers or agencies.
7. No caller is to be offered a specific time frame for the response of police or fire personnel to the scene of an incident. If a caller inquires as to how long it will take for an officer or fire fighter to respond, they are to be advised that the responding unit(s) will be there as soon as possible.

### **C. Address and Telephone Number Verification**


1. All requests for service received by Communication Officers will require that the most exact street address possible be obtained, as well as, the telephone number being used by the caller.
2. Verification of the address and phone number are crucial. Verification means that in all cases where the call taker has established intelligible voice contact with the caller, the Communications Officer shall obtain the following information:
  - a. Street address or intersection, business name and apartment or suite/unit name (if applicable);
  - b. Name of the street (by spelling if necessary) with directional designation;
  - c. Street type;
  - d. Name of the community for the address, (If the caller provides the street address without including the name of the town, the call taker must ask the caller, "In what town?" rather than providing a community name to the caller and asking them to provide verification.); and
  - e. Telephone number.
3. When at all possible the address and/or telephone number shall initially be provided by the caller rather than providing the information and asking the caller if that is correct.
4. If the information provided by the caller matches the ANI/ALI or telephone display, the address and/or telephone number may be considered verified.
  - a. Wireline calls: Address and telephone number must match or be repeated back to the caller to verify

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- b. Wireless calls: Telephone number must match or be repeated back to the caller to verify. The address must always be repeated back for verification.
5. In the event of a discrepancy between what the caller provides and the ANI/ALI display, it is incumbent upon the call taker to question the discrepancy.
6. When the address/telephone number is not displayed for confirmation, the call taker will either ask the caller to repeat their information, or the call taker will repeat the address/telephone number back to the caller for verification purposes.
7. In the event the caller does not know the address, they should be queried about the name of the street, closest intersection, business/landmark and community information. Proceed carefully when multiple choices are possible. Cross street verification can be critical.
8. Communication Officers need to keep their resources in mind, such as the mapping system and use it to assist in obtaining a good location. Discrepancies between the display on the mapping system and information the caller provides should be questioned.
9. Communication Officers should pay close attention to wireless callers and the location displayed on the mapping system. The location displayed on the mapping system may not be 100% accurate. It is important to use the re-bid feature to try to obtain the most accurate location on the mapping system. If the caller cannot provide a good location, it is acceptable to use the mapping system location as a starting point to assist in questioning.
10. The call taking process should not be prolonged unduly in an attempt to obtain an exact street address if the caller cannot provide it. A somewhat more vague location may be preferable to facilitate a prompt response than spending an excessive amount of time attempting to elicit a precise street address.
11. If the location is unable to be confirmed, it will be documented in the notes or narrative of the CAD event and offer any details that are appropriate so the responding unit(s) will understand the potential that the location may change.
12. When handling alarm calls from alarm companies, verification of the location address and premise phone number is required. After obtaining the alarm companies call back number, there is no need to verify the alarm companies address.

#### **D. Placing calls on hold**

1. Periodically, multiple telephone calls will be received simultaneously and it may necessitate placing calls on hold in order to answer other incoming lines. The Communications Officer shall ask the caller if they have an emergency prior to placing the call on hold.

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2. When a situation requires the Communications Officer to place the caller on hold, the caller will be advised they are being placed on hold and not being hung up on, and that you will return momentarily.


#### **E. Transferring calls to other Emergency Dispatch Centers (COM 6.2.5)**

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1. The primary method of handling an out-of-jurisdiction E-9-1-1 call is an ANI transfer. The Communications Officer should obtain all of the necessary information just as if the call is for this jurisdiction. The Communications Officer will then transfer the call to the appropriate agency. The Communications Officer shall notify the agency called that this is an E-9-1-1 transfer call. The Communications Officer shall stay on the line to assure the transfers complete prior to disconnecting the call.
2. The secondary method is for the Communications Officer to obtain all the pertinent information and call the correct agency on a regular telephone line. The Communications Officer will contact the appropriate agency, identify themselves and the department, and then relay the pertinent information. This method should only be used when the primary method is not available or if the Communications Officer lost connection with the caller prior to or during the transfer of the call.

#### **F. Disconnects, Hang up, and Open-end Calls (COM 6.2.6)**

1. Any open line or hang up 9-1-1 calls will be treated as an emergency until proven otherwise. The Communications Officer shall:
  - a. Attempt a total of two call backs to the number shown on the NG 9-1-1 phone system.
  - b. If contact is made, advise the Andover Police Department received a 9-1-1 hang up call from this number and ask if there is an emergency.
  - c. If it is determined to be an emergency call, the Communications Officer will proceed with entering the call as a call for service and handle like all other emergency calls.
  - d. If it is determined the call was an error, the Communications Officer shall request the caller's name and address for the calls for service and document the reason for a misdial to complete the call, then close out the call for service.
  - e. If no contact is made on the second attempt, the Communications Officer shall leave a voice mail advising *"This is the Andover Police Department returning your phone call, if you need further assistance please return our call."*

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- f. If the Communications Officer is able to get an address from ANI/ALI prior to the disconnect of the phone line and when the two call back attempts are unsuccessful, an Andover Police Officer covering that area will be sent to check the location and the Watch Commander will be notified.
- g. If a call received is the result of a misdial or pocket-dial, the Communications Officer will not discount the call. The phone line will be left open and the Communications Officer will try to get the attention of the caller to answer the call. In the event that the call is a child playing with the telephone, the Communications Officer will try to convince the child to get an adult to answer the call. If the caller hangs up, or the call is disconnected, the Communications Officer will treat the call as a normal hang-up call and follow those procedures. The Communications Officer will record all steps taken and document all relevant information in the narrative or notes field in the call in CAD.
- h. If the Communications Officer receives a call where there is nobody on the other end but the line is open, the Communications Officer will assume this is a call from the hearing or speech impaired and will utilize the TDD/TTY on the 9-1-1 phone, following the TDD/TTY procedures in O2902 "Text to 9-1-1 & TDD".

#### **G. Handling Difficult Callers (COM 6.2.7)**

1. When handling calls from persons that seem under the influence, are difficult or obscene, Communication Officers shall maintain a calm, competent, decisive voice that is courteous and not antagonistic. Communication Officers shall attempt to gather all pertinent information from the caller and provide the appropriate assistance or response.
2. If the caller becomes extremely verbally abusive or obscene and has no legitimate request for police/fire/EMS service, the Communications Officer may hang up after telling the caller they cannot tie up the telephone lines. Such an incident shall be reported to the Watch Commander.

#### **H. Children, Developmentally Disabled, Elderly and Mental Health Callers (COM 6.2.8)**

1. Communication Officers may receive calls that require special attention in regards to processing. These calls can include calls involving children, the elderly, the developmentally disabled, non-English speaking callers and hearing impaired callers. Special consideration shall be given when obtaining/processing these calls. Personnel shall be aware that these types of calls may require the Communication Officers to exercise caution when interrogating a caller to ensure proper information is obtained.

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2. Child callers may often be upset or confused about the situation they are calling about. Special care must be taken to ensure the correct location information is obtained and to understand the exact situation. It may be necessary to use landmarks or nearby businesses to identify the location of the caller or use ANI/ALI information if available. Different terminology may need to be used to ensure the child caller understands the Communications Officer.
3. When communicating with developmentally disabled callers, the Communications Officer must ensure accuracy with the information being provided. The Communications Officer may need to rely on ANI/ALI information to confirm the location. When obtaining information, it is important to remember that the caller may be upset or confused about the situation, regardless of its severity.
4. Elderly callers may be confused, be hard of hearing or have some physical limitations which may require additional prompting by the Communications Officer. It may be necessary to ensure the accuracy of the information being provided. This can be accomplished by confirming with the caller the information provided. Extra reassurance may need to be given to these callers.
5. When communicating with callers who appear to have mental health issues, the Communications Officer must remember that the caller may be unable to relay what the exact situation is. The caller may be angry, scared, abusive or confused. It is important to determine the exact situation and send the appropriate help. Communication Officers shall not discredit what information they are being given based upon the history of the caller.

#### **I. Other than English Speaking Callers (COM 6.2.12)**

1. When the Communications Officer is unable to elicit information due to a language barrier, the Communications Officer shall contact the interpreter service Language Line at 1-888-808-9008 and provide the following information:
  - a. Enter the 8-digit pin 83996656 at the prompt, then clearly state the name of the language you need (e.g. Spanish);
  - b. If the language is correct, press 1;
  - c. You will be asked if you need them to dial a third party number for you, say no and they will connect you to a professional interpreter;
  - d. Once the interpreter is on the line, a three way conversation shall take place.