


Atlanta Police Department Policy Manual		Standard Operating Procedure
Effective Date: December 31, 2022		APD.SOP.3130 Radio Operation/Usage
026Applicable To: All employees		Review Due: 2026
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Signature: Signed by DS		Date Signed: 12/30/2022

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#### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this directive is to provide the operational procedures for use of assigned radios, the 911 call priority, and the guidelines for assignment of unit radio numbers.

#### 2. POLICY

The Atlanta Police Department shall provide a radio to all sworn employees and to specific civilian employees, who are required to adhere to this policy.

#### 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 All employees are responsible for the proper care and safekeeping of their assigned portable radios.

#### 4. ACTION

(CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 12.2.1h)

##### 4.1 Assignment of Radio Numbers

- 4.1.1 Personnel who are issued portable radios are assigned an on-duty callsign or radio number. The callsign or radio number contains four digits uniquely identifying the personnel within a unit and is commonly referred to as the individual's unit designation. Unique groupings of four-digit numbers are allocated for each division, section, and unit. Radio numbers/unit designations will not end in a "59" or "63". See appendix.

- 4.1.2 Division or Section Commanders shall ensure that all required employees have been issued and are using the properly assigned radio numbers. See Section 9, Appendix.



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#### 4.1.3 Off-duty radio numbers (CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 81.2.4c)

1. All employees below the rank of Major shall use their 4-digit unique identification number followed by the letter "X" (x-ray) for their off-duty radio number. This includes retired officers that are members of the Atlanta Retired Police Reserve (ARPR).

For example: If your 4-digit identification number is "1234", your off-duty radio number shall be "1234 X".

2. Off duty radio numbers shall not change based on the officer's assignment.

#### 4.1.4 Overtime radio numbers (CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 81.2.4c)

1. Sworn employees working overtime are required to notify the dispatcher of their overtime radio number, or overtime beat unit number, the address, beat, or area they are working, and the overtime start time and end time. The employee will notify the dispatcher that they are "Code 8" when their overtime tour of duty is over.
2. Sworn employees working an overtime assignment that is not in a beat car are required to notify the dispatcher in the zone they are working using their unique identification number followed by an "OT" (e.g., "1234OT").
3. If the sworn employee is working overtime as a beat car, they will use the assigned beat number followed by "OT". The sworn employee will notify the zone dispatcher of the beat assignment followed by "OT", and then advise his or her unique identification number (e.g. 1234).

#### 4.2 Problems with Radio Transmissions

##### 4.2.1 General considerations

1. The short antenna shall be attached to the shoulder microphone and the long antenna shall be attached to the portable radio at all times; otherwise, safety and reception will be compromised.
2. The user may experience an occasional long, lower-pitched tone if they enter a building that restricts the ability of the radio system to function or if they travel into a dead spot. When the user clears the building or dead spot, the long, lower-pitched tone should stop.
3. The Electronic Maintenance Unit is open from 0700 to 2400 hours, Tuesday through Saturday and 0700 through 2200 hours Sunday and Monday. When EMU is not open, take the defective radio to the E-911 Communications Division for repair or replacement.

##### 4.2.2 If the user hears a beep about every 15 seconds, and the radio displays "FAILSOFT" in the Liquid Crystal Display (LCD), the radio is still operable but has limitations. Under these conditions, the system uses one frequency for each zone, one for SOS, and one for CID. This switchover happens automatically. The user can switch manually between the frequencies.



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- 4.2.3 If the user hears a long, lower-pitched sound every seven seconds on a continuous basis, and the LCD shows "OUT OF RANGE", there is a problem with either the radio, or the radio system, or the user has traveled beyond the coverage area.
1. Tips to determine the nature of the problem if the portable radio fails:
    - a. Try another talk group.
    - b. Check for another user in the vicinity to see if their radio is functioning properly.
    - c. Try the mobile radio and if it works, the portable radio should be taken for repair.
    - d. Try replacing the battery. If this does not eliminate the problem, notify the supervisor and take the radio to be exchanged or repaired.
  2. If the nature of the problem cannot be identified or the problem is in the user's radio, take it to the appropriate unit within the E-911 Communications Division for exchange or repair.
- 4.2.4 Contractors or technicians performing system maintenance that may interrupt radio communications shall notify the Electronic Maintenance Unit (EMU) supervisor. The EMU supervisor shall notify the E-911 Communications Division watch commander. The watch commander shall determine whether to notify the radio users and what procedures to follow during the interruption. Depending on the nature of the maintenance, the users may not experience any problems with the system.
- 4.2.5 Field Response during a Radio Outage
1. If the radio system is completely disabled, radio-equipped personnel shall call or go to the main precinct or office immediately to be accounted for, to receive instructions, and to be assigned calls. While the system is disabled, officers shall focus on protecting the public and on officer safety. Section commanders shall authorize traffic stops, serving warrants, foot and vehicle pursuits, and planned tactical operations (e.g., clean sweeps, roadblocks, etc.) only as circumstances dictate.
  2. Zone dispatchers shall call the main precinct and keep the line open until directed otherwise. The dispatcher shall notify the precinct by telephone of all priority 0-3 calls. At least two officers shall be sent on calls for service. The field supervisor shall assign the calls and advise the dispatcher of which units are responding. Whenever possible, officers shall advise the precinct via telephone of arrival on call, departure from the call, and return to the precinct upon completion of call.
  3. Supervisors in the precinct shall monitor the Computer Aided Dispatch System (CADS) terminal for the status of calls.
  4. Employees shall call Communications Division dispatchers to receive complaint numbers. The precinct shall also have access to complaint numbers, by way of computer terminal screen.
  5. A limited supply of cellular telephones are available at the Communications Division for distribution at the discretion of the FOD commander.



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6. Section commanders are encouraged to keep officers' cell phone numbers on file for use during a radio outage.
- 4.2.6 A Communications Division supervisor shall request permission from DeKalb County to utilize a designated radio channel and shall notify Zone Six if approved.
- 4.2.7 Tactical situations: Units on the scene of a tactical situation shall use the designated radio channel. The range of the channel is approximately one-half mile. Officers are reminded that dispatchers will not be able to monitor radio transmissions on the designated radio channel.
- 4.3 Proper Operation of Portable Radio
  - 4.3.1 No person shall transmit any unnecessary radio communications that will interfere with any appropriate radio communications or signal.
  - 4.3.2 No person shall utter any obscene, indecent, or profane language by means of radio communications. Federal law states that the use of the radio is for police business only. Any attempt made to use the radio for private or personal matters is strictly forbidden.
  - 4.3.3 Calls for service dispatched over the radio by an E-911 Communications Division dispatcher is to be acknowledged and handled without delay by the unit that is given the call.
  - 4.3.4 Requests for authorization, approval, confirmation or documentation from a supervisor or dispatcher shall be made over the radio. Cell phones or landlines shall not be used for these types of transmissions. For example, requesting permission to impound a vehicle, supervisor requests, hit confirmations, etc.
  - 4.3.5 Before speaking, personnel shall ensure that the radio is clear for transmission. Personnel shall speak into the microphone in a normal voice from a distance not to exceed four inches.
  - 4.3.6 Radio transmissions shall be brief, police related, and directed to the radio dispatcher. All lengthy transmissions and personal matters shall be handled over the telephone. All transmissions are subject to frequent monitoring and inspection by the Office of Professional Standards (OPS), the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and all supervisory personnel.
  - 4.3.7 During a help call (Signal 63, Signal 59/Right Away, and Code 21), all transmissions, except those of the distressed unit and responding units, shall be restricted, until the dispatcher or a supervisor on the scene advises otherwise.
- 4.4 Proper Wearing and Care of the Portable Radio
  - 4.4.1 All employees are responsible for the proper care and safekeeping of any portable radio issued to them. The employee shall verify that the battery is fully charged and that the portable radio is not damaged.
  - 4.4.2 If an employee's radio is damaged, lost or stolen the employee shall:
    1. Notify their immediate supervisor and EMU to have the radio disabled.
    2. Complete an incident report detailing the loss or damage. Submit it through the chain of command and forward to EMU so a replacement.



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- 4.4.3 Uniformed officers wearing a duty belt without a vest carrier shall store the portable radio in the radio case provided by the department. The radio shall be worn on the opposite side of the belt from the service pistol.
- 4.4.4 Officers wearing the vest carrier shall store the portable radio in the designated pocket on the front left of the carrier.
- 4.4.5 The microphone shall be fastened to the shoulder epaulet on the same side as the portable radio.
- 4.4.6 All employees are responsible for the proper care and safekeeping of any handheld radio issued to them. Employees shall be held accountable for any damaged or lost equipment due to the employee's negligence or carelessness (APD.SOP.2020 Disciplinary Process, Section 4.15).
- 4.5 Responding to the Dispatcher  
(CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 81.2.4a,c)
- 4.5.1 Whenever a unit (officer or supervisor) is raised on the radio by a E-911 Communications Division Dispatcher, the unit shall respond immediately to the dispatcher. The unit shall repeat the call to the dispatcher for accuracy. In cases where a dispatcher error is evident and may result in danger to an officer or a citizen, the field supervisor may immediately correct the error. However, call assignment is the responsibility of the E-911 Communications Division dispatcher ONLY. The field supervisor may contact a E-911 Communications Division supervisor to address any non-emergency error at telephone number 404-614-6525.
- 4.5.2 A unit shall use the word "unit" and the full radio number when making radio transmissions. For patrol units the unit is a combination of the watch number, zone number, and assignment number (example: unit 3610 is watch number "3", zone number "6", and beat/assignment number "10").
- 4.5.3 Department employees shall endeavor to use plain talk in their radio communication as often as possible, however, not all communication between users, communications dispatchers and other agencies be in plain talk. For more detailed information and specific restrictions on the use of signals and codes see APD.SOP.3088 Signals and Codes.
- 4.5.4 The following coded words shall be used to identify letters of the alphabet in voice communications:

A	Adam
B	Baker
C	Charles
D	David
E	Edward
F	Frank
G	George
H	Henry
I	Ida
J	John
K	King
L	Lincoln



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M	Mary
N	Ned
O	Oscar
P	Paul
Q	Queen
R	Robert
S	Sam
T	Tom
U	Uncle
V	Victor
W	William
X	X – Ray
Y	Yankee
Z	Zebra

- 4.5.5 Failure to Respond: If a unit does not immediately respond to a radio call, the dispatcher shall repeat the call a second time. If a response is not received the second time, the dispatcher shall give the call to the next appropriate unit. The dispatcher shall then promptly notify the field supervisor and the E-911 Communications Division supervisor so that an immediate inquiry can be made.

4.6 Proper Radio Transmission Procedures  
(CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 81.2.4a)

- 4.6.1 Directed Patrol: When a unit is assigned to a directed patrol by a supervisor, the supervisor shall indicate which priority calls the unit shall receive. If an officer pulls themselves out on a directed patrol, the directed patrol shall be conducted in-service unless otherwise directed by a supervisor.

- 4.6.2 Pull-In Codes on Alarm Calls: When responding to an alarm call it is the responding officer's responsibility to give the appropriate pull in CODE to the dispatcher after the officer has made a thorough investigation and determined the reasons for the alarm being activated. ONLY the following pull in Codes shall be used when pulling in from an alarm call:

Code 6	False alarm
Code 9B	Handled by detectives
Code 9D	Handled by Fire Department
Code 9H	Handled by Owner / Manager
Code 9J	Handled by Alarm Company
Code 13	No such number
Code 17	Report
Code 22	Unable to locate
Code 23	Arrest made (in conjunction with Code 17)

- 4.6.3 When advising dispatch of a lookout, the unit shall give their unit number and the lookout type. Units shall provide concise descriptions, if possible, of all suspects and vehicles as well as any other pertinent information.
- 4.6.4 A lookout should give enough information to identify the subject or vehicle twenty-four hours after broadcast.



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1. Format for lookouts on persons: race, sex, height, hair color/style, clothing, direction of travel, if known.
  2. Format for lookouts on vehicles: year, make, model, type, license, color, direction and occupants, if known.
- 4.7 Call Priority  
(CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 41.2.1)
- 4.7.1 To effectively serve the community and have a logical method of dispatching officers on calls for service, the department has devised criteria for prioritizing requests for police services. The priority of calls are as follows:
- 4.7.2 Priority 0 – Immediate Emergency Broadcast: These are calls where the immediate presence of the police is essential to save life, prevent serious injury, or to arrest a violent felon. These calls may require an immediate response from any available unit regardless of assignment. These calls include:
1. Violent felonies in progress.
  2. Help calls for police officers.
  3. Catastrophes where there may be loss of life or major property loss:
    - a. Rioting and looting.
    - b. Fires and explosions.
    - c. Severe storms and floods.
  4. Dispatch shall be immediate.
- 4.7.3 Priority 2 - Emergency Response: Calls where the immediate presence of the police may save life, prevent serious injury, prevent major property loss, or lead to the arrest of a felon. These calls require an immediate response from any available unit from the affected zone. These calls include:
1. Any imminent threat to life or great danger of serious physical injury or major property damage.
  2. Any active felony or violent crime that may result in serious injury or major property damage.
  3. Any recent felony or violent crime where the probability exists that a suspect may be apprehended.
  4. Any serious injury where an officer can render immediate aid.
  5. Any incident which, in the opinion of the 911 operator, demands an immediate police response, such as snipers, threat of an explosive device or chemical leak, or other hazardous materials.



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6. Any traffic accident that involves death, serious injury, hit and run, or impairment of the driver of a motor vehicle due to alcohol or drugs.

7. Dispatch shall be made within two minutes.

#### 4.7.4 Priority 3 - Expedited Response: These calls require the presence of the police but do not meet the criteria for Priority 2:

1. Any active incident that does not present a significant threat to life or property, such as minor domestic disputes, fight without weapons, etc.
2. Any active incident that could involve a crime, such as a suspicious person or vehicle, etc.
3. Any traffic accident that involves property damage to public vehicles or property, major traffic congestion as a result of the accident, or a disturbance between principals.
4. Any inactive crime scene where evidence may be lost or destroyed or where witnesses might leave before they can be interviewed.
5. Dispatch shall be made within ten minutes.

#### 4.7.5 Priority 4 - Routine Response: Those calls that require the presence of police, but where time is not critical:

1. Any non-active felony, misdemeanor, or other incident that does not require an immediate investigation, such as a property crime that was not recently committed or information for an officer.
2. Any motor vehicle accident that involves property damage but does not represent a significant hazard to the free flow of traffic.
3. Any noncriminal incident, such as parking violations, traffic services, or escorts.
4. Any administrative or officer-initiated service detail including transportation and routine vehicle maintenance.
5. Any other incident that is not active and cannot, because of its nature, be transferred to an outside agency or to the Online Reporting System (ORS) for handling by telephone.
6. Any call where property has been recovered by a citizen.
7. Officers may be dispatched on priority 0, 2, and 3 calls if they are currently on a priority 4 call.
8. Supervisors shall be dispatched on priority 0, 2, and 3 calls if time limitations outlined are about to expire and there are no units on priority 4 calls to be dispatched.
9. Dispatch shall be made within twenty minutes.

#### 4.7.6 Priority 5 - ORS Calls: These calls can be handled by the Online Reporting System:

1. Harassing phone calls





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2. Custody order violations
3. Loss of inventory (Business' property)
4. Lost property (Private citizen's property)
5. Damage to a vehicle on private property (not to include entering an auto, theft from a vehicle or motor vehicle collisions)
6. Damage to property
7. Fraud/Swindle
8. Identify theft (Less than \$10,000)
9. Fraudulent use of credit cards (Less than \$10,000)
10. Theft of services
11. Supplemental reports

The citizen should be referred to the Citizen Online Reporting System accessible on the departmental web site.

#### 5. DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 False Alarm: An activation of a burglary or robbery alarm at a time when no burglary or robbery is being committed or attempted on the premises.
- 5.2 Beep: A short, high-pitched tone.
- 5.3 Off-Duty Radio Number: The employee's unique identification number with an "X" (X-ray) attached to the end. (e.g. 1234 X-ray)
- 5.4 TA: Talk around channel on the portable radio.

#### 6. CANCELLATIONS

APD.SOP.3130 "Radio Operation and Usage", effective December 4, 2018.

#### 7. REFERENCES

APD.SOP.3088 "Signals and Codes"  
APD.SOP.3190 "Juvenile Procedures"  
APD.SOP.6010 "Communications"  
APD.SOP.2020 "Disciplinary Process"  
CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standards 12.2.1, 81.2.4 and 81.3.3

#### 8. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

Only minor changes were made to the policy.