



# COMMUNICATIONS

*General Order: 21.2*

*Effective Date: 03/04/2025*

## **POLICY:**

It is the policy of the Brookline Police Department to maintain an efficient flow of information essential to the functions of the department and the community it serves. The communications component must insure that the communications system facilitates the operations of all other components of the department. Officers and employees of the Brookline Police Department shall conduct radio operations in accordance with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) procedures and requirements. The communications procedures of the Brookline Police Department are an important part of the support mechanisms necessary for the effective and safe conduct of department business. Department communications involve the use of telephone, computer terminals and radios. The department has established a number of communications procedures so that communications will be orderly, documented and effective.

## **PROCEDURES:**

These procedures cover three areas of communication within the department: **STARS, Manifold/Bulletin and town/police e-mail**. These procedures are intended to be comprehensive and includes computers, computer programs, printers, facsimiles, machines, telephones, voice mail, and E-Mail. All officers will have the ability to access these systems from the in-house computers and the cruiser laptops. The Town of Brookline Policy on the Use of Information Technology Resources is still in effect as well as this departmental policy.

All personnel will be responsible for the laptop in their assigned cruiser during their assigned shift. These laptops are wireless and can be removed from the cars; however, it is the policy that **LAPTOPS SHALL REMAIN IN THE CRUISERS AT ALL TIMES**. Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) regulations mandate that we protect sensitive information from being viewed by a passerby. For this reason, and in order to prevent the theft of a laptop, officers should close the laptop cover and lock the doors when exiting the cruiser, when possible.

Officers are encouraged to review the CAD and Incident System during their tour of duty to ensure they are aware of recent calls and incidents. ***Officers are to check the STARS, bulletin and e-mail system as part of their regular duties – at the start of their tour of duty and throughout the shift as needed.***

**I. STARS (Situational Analysis & Response System):**

The STARS System is a Brookline Police Department tracking system for handling reoccurring problems. The system is designed as a multi-divisional approach to problem solving throughout the department. Communication thru this system should be both vertically through the chain of command and horizontally from Division to Division. Proper use of the STARS system requires entry of a problem into the system, analysis and assigning to the proper division, unit, or persons, review of actions taken and assessment of the work performed. All officers are to make use of the system in the following manner:

**A. ENTRY INTO SYSTEM:**

Entries into the system will be made by Department supervisors, the Crime Analysis Unit, and any other officers designated by the Chief of Police. Problems identified by line officers should be brought to the attention of their direct supervisor. Supervisors, after fully discussing the problem with the officer, will make the actual entry into the system. Dispatchers are to bring situations to the attention of the Commanding Officer – Platoon on Duty for submission into the STARS system. The Crime Analysis Unit will make entries based on the results of a specific completed analysis which identifies problems and issues throughout the Town.

Some examples of problems that should be entered are:

1. Location-based complaints (loud parties, youths disturbing, drug areas, etc.)
2. Location-based crimes (a cluster of crimes in a specific area, i.e. north side car breaks)
3. On-going traffic concerns (MV crash hot spots, Red Sox game parking control strategy)
4. Grant Programs (Traffic Enforcement Program, Domestic Violence, etc.)
5. Domestic Preparedness (vulnerable locations, persons and institutions.)

\*\*The STARS system will not be used for regular parking complaints, except under special circumstances. The proper communication avenue for these types of complaints is the Daily Bulletin/Manifold.

**B. ASSIGNMENT:**

Assignments should be made by the Division Commanders or their designees. When the assigning supervisor believes additional or other divisions, outside his/her chain of command, should be assigned, the entering supervisor should outline their thought in the narrative section. The assignments will be reviewed by the identified Division Commander and made, if deemed appropriate. As a 24-hour-a-day, 7-days-a-week service to the community, the Department must manage situations using a multi-divisional approach. For instance, a complaint may initiate as a traffic problem, but may fall to the Patrol Division to handle because the problem occurs during last halves when traffic officers are not available.

**C. REVIEW:**

All personnel will check the STARS program at the beginning of their tour of duty, each and every day, while taking any and all appropriate action.

**D. ACTION:**

Assigned officers shall make the required reports in the “Work Record” section within the STARS Program.

**E. SUPERVISION:**

**1. STARS ASSIGNMENTS FOR IMMEDIATE SUBORDINATES:**

- a.** Commanding Officers will be responsible for their sergeants making sure that their subordinates are aware of the STARS assignments in their sectors during their tour of duty.
- b.** Supervisors are responsible for assuring that their officers are aware of the STARS assignments in their sectors or divisions, and that the officers are doing the work and making the appropriate “work record” entries.

**2. STARS ASSIGNMENTS DURING TOUR OF DUTY, BUT NOT ASSIGNED TO IMMEDIATE SUBORDINATES:**

- A.** Commanding Officers will be responsible for making sure that one of his/her supervisors is overseeing the STARS assignment(s) that are assigned during their tour of duty, but are performed by officers outside of their immediate

subordinates.

- B.** Supervisors are responsible for overseeing the STARS assignment during his/her tour of duty that is being carried out by officers other than his/her immediate subordinates. Sergeants are to assure that the officers know the assignment and complete the “work record” at the end of their assignment.

**F. ASSESSMENT:**

Assessments shall be made by the assigning supervisors and shall be reviewed by the Division Commanders and Superintendent of Police on a weekly basis or more often as is needed. Assigning supervisors are to make recommendations to their Division Commander when they feel the closure of a record is appropriate or additional response tactics are needed. Division Commanders shall determine the appropriate course of action. When it is determined that a STARS entry will be closed, the reason for the closure is to be identified in the assessment and/or notes field of the record, indicating the effectiveness of the actions taken and status of the situation (i.e. the problem has been resolved, a suspect has been apprehended).

**II. DAILY BULLETIN/MANIFOLD:**

The Daily Bulletin/Manifold will be accessible from the laptops. The bulletin will be used for training information, general department correspondence and parking complaints. The duration of entries in the bulletin will be limited to fourteen (14) days. After the entry expires, if it is determined that a manifold item needs additional time for distribution, it may be re-entered for an additional fourteen days. All officers will have access to enter items in the manifold.

**III. ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS & E-MAIL:**

All officers have a Department e-mail account. The e-mail will be accessible from the cruiser laptop, in-house computers, Department-issued cell phones and tablets. The e-mails using Microsoft are set up based on name. The format for most users will be first initial followed by last name (example swilder@brooklinema.gov). All agency written directives will be decimated electronically via email.

- IV. PowerDMS:** PowerDMS is an online document storage platform designed to facilitate seamless document upload and accessibility for review. The platform's interface allows for easy document and topic searches. Documents include but are not limited to General Orders, Special Orders and Personnel Orders. Additional uses include providing digital signatures on important documents such

as General Orders, training modules and Accreditation. All agency written directives will be uploaded to PowerDMS. Department members are responsible for checking PowerDMS at least weekly.

#### **V. CELLULAR TELEPHONES/ELECTRONIC DEVICES:**

It is the policy of the Brookline Police Department that its members shall use cellular telephones and/or texting devices responsibly and in a manner that does not compromise their public safety duties. This includes all assignments, including private details. Employees must not use electronic devices in such a way as to give the impression that they are not paying attention to their duties. Use of cellular devices in open public areas should be limited to brief communications so as to not to invite undue public criticism. Texting while driving is prohibited.

- A. Department issued cellular telephones may be used to assist with all police business. Personal use of department issued cell phones is permitted, however such use should not be excessive or incur unwarranted charges. In the event that an employee engages in excessive personal use of their issued cellular phone, any incurred expenses due to this excessive use will be the responsibility of the employee. Any and all records and/or media related to the use of a department issued device are the property of the Brookline Police Department. This includes but is not limited to call logs, text messages, photos, videos, and any other product related to the cell phone usage. All communications and media related to the use of a department issued electronic device shall be professional and appropriate, and such that they would discredit or impugn the integrity of the employee or the department.
  
- B. Personal cellular telephones and/or other electronic communications devices may be carried by department employees while on duty. Use of a personal cell phone or other electronic communications device while on duty is permitted, however personal use of these devices should be limited to brief communications that do not distract from the employees duties. Conspicuous or prolonged use of personal cell phones or other electronic devices are not permitted except in emergencies. Personal cellular phones or other electronic devices may only be used in a manner so as not to give the appearance that public safety duties are being neglected. The Department is not responsible for the loss or damage to any personal cellular phone or other electronic communication device.

#### **VI. USER RESPONSIBILITIES:**

It is the responsibility of all users to read and understand the terms of this policy. Users are expected to exercise reasonable judgment in interpreting this policy and in making decisions about the use of electronic documents and E-mail.

- A.** Use of the Department's computer, electronic mail, Internet access and voice mail systems used at the Brookline Police Department facilities are intended for business purposes only.
- B.** Personal use of the department computer and electronic mail systems is strongly discouraged.
  - 1. Any personal electronic files or e-mail on the department's computers systems are police department property and subject to the Public Records Law and to supervisor review.
  - 2. The Department reserves the right to audit adherence to this policy at any time.

**VII. PROHIBITED USES:**

Intentional use of the Brookline Police Department electronic documents and E-Mail for any of the following activities is strictly prohibited.

- A.** Sending, receiving, downloading, displaying, forwarding, printing or otherwise disseminating material that is profane, obscene, harassing, fraudulent, offensive or defamatory other than for legitimate work related matters.
- B.** Disseminating or storing destructive programs (viruses) or other unauthorized material.
- C.** Wasteful use of the system such as sending mass mailings or chain letters, spending excessive amount of time on the Internet, printing multiple copies of documents, or otherwise creating unnecessary network traffic.
- D.** Using or copying software in violation of a license agreement or copyright.
- E.** Intercepting communications intended for other persons.
- F.** Gaining or attempting to gain unauthorized access to any computer or network.
- G.** Violating any international, federal, state or local law.
- H.** Installing any type of software without permission of the Technology Division and approval of the Chief or Superintendent.

**VIII. DATA CONFIDENTIALITY:**

E-mail messages dealing with official Police business are generally considered to be public record information. E-mail messages can be stored, copied, printed or forwarded by any intended or unintended recipient; therefore users should not expect their e-mail messages to be either private or confidential.

**IX. E-MAIL AND PUBLIC RECORDS LAW:**

E-mail messages sent from a Town of Brookline account and/or using Town supplied equipment (computers, smartphones, tablets, etc.) are generally considered public record information that is subject to disclosure under the Massachusetts Public Record Law. (G.L. c. 66, S 10; G.L. c. 4 7(26).

The Supervisors will read all e-mails each shift. All e-mails can be and will be tracked; therefore it is especially important for supervisors to check every shift.

**X. LISTING OF GROUPS FOR E-MAILS:**

The E-mail system will also have preset Group Lists so that mass notifications can be made with ease. Suggestions for additional groups should be forwarded to the Technology Division. Groups include:

- |                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Police 1 <sup>st</sup> Platoon | Police Crisis Intervention Team |
| Police 2 <sup>nd</sup> Platoon | Police Crossing Guard           |
| Police 3 <sup>rd</sup> Platoon | Police Detective Division       |
| Police All                     | Police Dispatch                 |
| Police All Sworn               | Police Lt and Sgt Group         |
| Police Bike Unit               | Police Meter Collector          |
| Police Civilian                | Police Notification             |
| Police Command Staff           | Police Patrol Division          |
| Police Community Service       | Police SRT                      |
| Police Crime Analysis          |                                 |

**XI. E-MAIL ETIQUETTE:**

E-mail, like other forms of communication, reflects upon the Brookline Police Department. Users shall communicate in a professional manner with proper spelling and grammar.

**XII. SUPERVISORY STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- A. Sergeants are also responsible for checking for general broadcast information and relaying such information as necessary.

- B. Supervisors shall be responsible for periodically monitoring and checking the E-mail system to ensure that guidelines for proper use of the system are being complied with.

**XIII. DISCIPLINARY ACTION:**

- A. It is the responsibility of the Supervisors to ensure that all employees under their supervision receive a copy of this policy and that officers adhere to the procedures set out herein.
- B. Failure to observe this policy may subject officers to disciplinary action ranging from curtailment of the use of electronic documents and e-mail up to and including termination of employment.

**XIV. COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT POLICY:**

- A. The basic function of the Police Communications system is to serve as the link between the parties in need of service and the patrol officer in the street. The speed and accuracy with which the information flows through the system is a measure of the agency's ability to respond to the needs of the citizens of the community. The agency has 24 hour two way radio capability providing continuous communication between the communications center and officers on duty.
- B. The Brookline Police Department Communications Center is an E911 Primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) used for emergency calls for service (the toll-free phone number – 911) and is staffed by agency personnel 24 hours a day.
- C. The E911 system is a Teletypewriter (TTY) for the deaf and hard of hearing and for those individuals with speech disabilities.

**XV. MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS OF POLICE COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT:**

- A. Only Dispatchers, Supervisors, and personnel authorized by the Technology Division or the Commanding Officer- Platoon on Duty, will have access to the communication center.
- B. All telephone calls received on the Brookline Police Department's business and emergency lines and all police radio communications will be recorded. The recorder is secured in the Technology Division. These recordings are saved and backed up automatically on a mirrored drive. This media will be saved for at a minimum of two years provided no litigation is pending. Emergency phone call details shall be retained for a

minimum of three years, in accordance with Massachusetts Municipal Retention Schedule and all applicable laws.

- C.** All sworn members of the Department and dispatchers are authorized to access these recordings in the course of their duties for investigative purposes, court, employee safety, training or when requested by court order. Authorized personnel can access these recordings directly through the Public Safety Dispatch Center or through the Technology Division.
  - D.** Digital playback receivers are affixed to the dispatchers' phones, and the Brookline Police radio system. The digital playback receivers enable the dispatchers to instantly playback a message received over the radio or phone for clarification purposes.
  - E.** All Brookline Police radio and telephone equipment (telephone switching equipment, radio base station, etc) shall be located in the technology office in a secure area. Access to the equipment shall be limited to authorized personnel only. No items shall be stored in these rooms without prior approval of the Technology Division.
  - F.** The Technology Division will have back up emergency power (UPS-unlimited power supply) that will provide power to the communications area and the computer room. This UPS is designed to maintain power until the building's generator starts up, which is within 20 seconds of a power failure. The generator will provide power to the entire building. The Generator shall be inspected and tested at least monthly or in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. A documented evaluation of the generator, at least once every three years, confirming that the generator is good working order and is sufficient to meet the agency's current needs.
  - G.** In the event of a power outage or computer malfunction the Commanding Officer – Platoon on Duty is to promptly notify Technology Division personnel.
- XV. RADIO COMMUNICATIONS:** The efficiency of the Brookline Police Department's daily business as well as its emergency services depends upon the capabilities of its radio communications system. The speed and reliability with which communications can be established between and among dispatch points and mobile units are of tremendous importance in carrying out police activities. Many lives have been saved, including those of police officers, through the use of mobile radio.

**PROCEDURE:**

- A.** All assignments by the dispatcher shall be considered an authoritative order. Any discrepancy regarding an assignment (other than simple

clarification) should be reported by the officer to their supervisor **after** responding to the call.

- B.** Officers are responsible for all calls until completion of their tour of duty or until relieved. Officers shall not cancel or “pass on” an assignment at the shift change without supervisory approval. The dispatcher will then be notified by the supervisor to reassign the call to an officer on the next shift.
- C.** Personnel may be directed to perform police tasks without regard to sector, division, or assignment as needs dictate.
- D.** Personnel shall maintain radio contact with the dispatcher at all times while in-service unless they otherwise specify to the dispatcher.
- E.** All radio transmissions shall be conducted in such a manner as to reflect a professional image and to make efficient use of airtime. No personal conversations, non-essential discussions, or interference with communication are allowed.

**XVI. OPERATING PROCEDURES GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

- A.** Courtesy is most essential for the efficient and effective operation of the police radio system. Stress courtesy by setting the example.
- B.** Transmissions on the police frequencies are for the essential communication only. Unnecessary conversations will not be tolerated.
- C.** Transmissions shall be clear, concise and accurate.
- D.** Profane and obscene language is a violation of this policy and FCC rules and regulations.

**XVII. MICROPHONE PROCEDURES:**

- A.** Plan the message before transmitting.
- B.** Listen to make sure another message is not being interrupted.
- C.** Speak clearly.
- D.** Use an even tone of voice.
- E.** Avoid emotion such as nervous excitement, loss of temper, impatience.

**XVIII. TRANSMISSION PROCEDURE:**

- A.** From Base:
  - 1.** Control-when calling any Unit (Examples: Control to 541)
- B.** From Motorized Unit:
  - 1.** Officer shall call by the number assigned. (Examples: 541 to Control).
- C.** From Foot Officer:
  - 1.** Officer shall call by radio number, or assignment
- D.** Acknowledgement:
  - 1.** The dispatcher, when radioed by an outside agency unit shall respond “Brookline Control”.
- E.** Upon arrival at the assigned location officers shall report the same. (Example: 541 off at 350 Washington St).
- F.** Report back in service after clearing a call. (Example: 541, clear from 350 Washington Street).
- G.** Officer communicating between field units shall use unit assignment when calling. (Example: 541 to 542).
- H.** Officers will use the new Metro Homeland Security Region radio identifiers engraved on the portable radio. Officers calling on their radios while on a police detail or off-duty should give their call sign (Example: Portable 1A## to Control”). Please see Special Order #2006-6 on Use of New Portable Radio Guidelines).
- I.** Any field officer wishing to communicate with any other BAPERN agency shall first request permission through the Dispatcher.
- J.** Officers working paid details in Newton will change their radio channel to the Newton Police Channel One and scan Brookline PD Channel One. At times officers may be directed by Newton Control to change to Newton Police Channel Two which will also be programmed into the portable radio of officers seeking to work Newton details. Requests for street closures, detours, and any other police business will go through Newton dispatch or the Newton Patrol Supervisor. Officers will utilize "Brookline" & assigned portable number as their call sign when communicating with Newton Dispatch (ie “Brookline Police 1A12 to Newton Control.”)

Officers should make sure that their radios are programmed to POL 13 for Newton Police Channel One, and POL 14 for Newton Police Channel 2. Upon completion of the detail, officers are to return their portable radios to Brookline PD Channel One.

**XIX. SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- A. Patrol Supervisors will:
  - 1. Monitor radio communications and correct deficiencies within their own command.
  - 2. Receive and investigate reports of radio communication violations by officers coming to their attention

**XX. FIELD STOPS:**

- A. When making car stops or stopping an individual, use the following procedure:
  - 1. Radio in your location.
  - 2. Plate number (specify passenger/commercial/etc.)
  - 3. Activity of the vehicle or the individual stopped.
  - 4. Request for backup officer (if needed).

**XXI. RADIO ASSIGNMENT:**

- A. All officers will be assigned a portable radio as part of their Department issued equipment. A supply of spare radios will be maintained by the Technology Division, and will be made available for officers who need to leave theirs for repair or service.
- B. Officers are responsible for the proper care of both portable and mobile radios.
- C. All officers shall safeguard their assigned radio from damage, theft or loss and safeguard the radio from use by unauthorized people.
- D. Officers shall report for duty and paid police details with a fully charged radio.

- E.** Officers shall not alter or remove any accessories from the radio.
- F.** All officers shall immediately notify their Commanding Officer that their radio is lost or stolen. The CO on-duty may request assistance from the Communication Center in attempting to locate or disable the radio.