


FORT SMITH POLICE DEPARTMENT

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SUBJECT	Communications Unit Operations		
NUMBER	1108.02	EFFECTIVE DATE	February 9, 2001
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APPROVED BY		CALEA STANDARDS	LE 46.1.8; LE 61.1.7; LE81.1.2; LE81.2.1; LE81.2.2; LE81.2.3; LE81.2.4; LE81.2.5; LE81.2.6.b; LE81.2.12; LE81.3.3; LE81.3.4; LE82.2.3; LE 46.1.10; COM 2.4.11; COM 6.1.2; COM 6.2.2; COM 6.2.4; COM 6.2.5; COM 6.3.1; COM 6.3.2; COM 6.4.3; COM 6.4.5; COM6.5.1; COM 6.5.2; COM 6.5.3; COM 6.6.1; COM 6.6.2; COM 7.1.8; COM 7.1.11;

I. Purpose and Scope

- A. The purpose of this policy is to establish radio communications procedures for the Fort Smith Police Department's Communications Unit and users of the Department's radio communications systems.

II. Policy

- A. Personnel assigned to the Fort Smith Police Department's Communications Unit shall at all times provide a courteous, timely, and efficient response to all persons that call for police and fire assistance, while simultaneously providing for, to the maximum extent possible, the safety of the police officers and firefighters.
1. The City of Fort Smith Employee Handbook, Section III.H.14 states that intentional and improper conduct in dealing with the public, including, but not limited to discourtesy over the telephone, is a violation of personal conduct standards. As personnel assigned to the Communications Unit is the primary access point for many citizens in need of emergency assistance, violations of this nature may result in higher levels of progressive discipline as outlined in Section III.C of the Employee Handbook.
- B. The Fort Smith Police Department's Communications Unit shall be staffed and operated on a twenty-four hour basis to provide continuous two-way radio communications and support services to all Fort Smith police officers and firefighters. Shift assignments, days off, and suitability to a specific assignment are recognized as having a distinct effect on the operations of the Communications Unit. The Chief of Police or the Chief's designee may circumvent any or all portions of this policy, temporarily or permanently, by making staffing adjustments as needed in order to further the department's mission, maintain adequate personnel levels, and ensure a high quality of service.
- C. The Fort Smith Police Department's Communications Unit is equipped with an enhanced 9-1-1 Emergency Telephone System providing callers with toll-free access to police and fire services. The telephone system has a built in TDD/TTY capability and may automatically recognize a call coming in from a TDD/TTY caller. Communications Unit personnel shall be

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available to respond to telephone calls of both an emergency and non-emergency nature on a twenty-four hour basis.

- D. In order to minimize the chances of a caller receiving a busy signal when calling the Fort Smith Police Department 9-1-1 System, seven (7) incoming telephone lines are dedicated to the Enhanced 9-1-1 System. The Communications Unit is also equipped with six (6) incoming "non-emergency" or administrative lines.
- E. Radio communications, whether voice, wireless data, or a combination voice and data, is the primary method used by the Communications Unit to relay information to Fort Smith Police Department units, to Fort Smith Fire Department units, and to other designated police personnel. Fort Smith Police Department officers will be issued a portable radio and shall carry this radio at all times while on duty. Telecommunicators will be issued headsets which may be used during the course of their duties. Personnel shall utilize only the radio communications equipment issued to them by the police department, unless authorized by the Chief of Police or the Chief's designee, and shall, at all times, operate City of Fort Smith communications equipment in accordance with the procedures and regulations established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).
- F. Only those radios equipped with an *automatic identification system* which automatically identifies the unit number of the radio to Communications Unit personnel will be allowed to operate on the Fort Smith Police Department's communications system. Any agency outside the Fort Smith Police Department or Fort Smith Fire Department desiring to equip their radios with Fort Smith frequencies must first obtain the approval of the Chief of Police if access to police frequencies is desired, and the Fire Chief if access to fire frequencies is desired.
- G. The Fort Smith Police Department's Communications Unit operates as a part of the Arkansas Wireless Information Network (AWIN). In the current format, there are thirty (30) talk groups designated for police voice radio communications, and twenty-nine (29) talk groups designated for fire voice radio communications. All Fort Smith Police Department and Fire Department units equipped with two-way radios shall also have cross communications capabilities. EMS, other law enforcement agencies, and Fort Smith City Administration and Public Utilities also have access to a common frequency permitting interagency communications that can be used in times of emergencies or natural disasters.
- H. The Fort Smith Police Department will utilize digitized communications that have the capability of encrypting sensitive communications. This type of encryption can enhance the safety and success of officers by reducing the opportunity for persons to take advantage of emergency situations.
- I. The Fort Smith Police Department recognizes that in emergency situations or other unusual circumstances, an independent back-up communications system is necessary to meet the basic public safety communications requirements of the agencies involved in such circumstances. To accomplish this task, the police department shall maintain a Backup Communications Center located at the Sebastian County EOC/Fort Smith Police Department Training Center. The Backup Communications Center currently consists of four Motorola MCC7500 radio consoles. The Fort Smith Police Department also maintains three portable radios and four backup cell phones that can be used in the event of an emergency. All backup communication equipment will be tested monthly to ensure operability.

III. Procedure

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- A. The basic function of the Fort Smith Police Department's Communications Unit is to receive, screen, and prioritize calls for police or fire services and subsequently dispatch the appropriate response units in an efficient and coordinated manner.
- B. In the event the Communications Unit receives a call for service that should be directed to another agency, it should be determined if the call is of an emergency nature.
1. If the call is *not* an emergency, the caller should be given the appropriate agency's telephone number.
 2. If the call *is* an emergency, Communications Unit personnel shall utilize the one button transfer system designed into the communications console to transfer the caller to the appropriate agency as quickly as possible.
- C. When receiving information, the Communications Unit uses the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system to record the following minimum information:
1. *Call for Service Number (CFS)*: This machine-generated number is *automatically* designated by the CAD system at the time the call for service is entered into the system. Communications Unit personnel do not assign the CFS number. All Fort Smith Police Department CFS numbers will use the following scheme: The first two numbers designate the year in which the call was received. The remaining numbers denote the actual sequential number assigned (For example: CFS number 01004567 indicates that this call is number 4567 received in the year 2001). This feature ensures that each call for service has its own unique case number assigned. Calls for fire service are handled identically.
 2. *Received Date and Time for the Call for Service*: These entries are automatically designated by the CAD system and are not assigned by Communications Unit personnel.
 3. *Priority of Call*: This entry is automatically designated by the CAD system; however, Communications Unit personnel are authorized to change the priority level if the need arises.
 4. Name and address of the complainant, if possible.
 5. Type of incident (call type) being reported.
 6. Location of incident being reported.
 7. Identification of units assigned as primary and backup units.]
 8. The time the unit(s) was dispatched. This time is machine generated and is not controlled by Communications Unit personnel.
 9. The time of the unit's arrival. This time is machine generated and is not controlled by Communications Unit personnel.
 10. The time the unit returned to service. This time is machine generated and is not controlled by Communications Unit personnel.
 11. Disposition of dispatched incident as reported by the responding officer.

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- D. Communications Unit personnel shall obtain as much information as possible when receiving a call for service. The amount of information required will depend on the nature of the call and the status of the reporting/requesting party. *Particular attention must be devoted to issues that involve the safety of police officers or firefighters that may be dispatched on the call.*
- E. Police and fire personnel shall reply promptly by giving their unit identifier and location when called by radio by the Communications Unit personnel, by another unit, or by a supervisor.
- F. When conducting a vehicle stop, officers shall provide the Communications Unit with the following information:
 - 1. Vehicle license number and state of origin, if any, that is being displayed on the vehicle;
 - 2. A full description of the vehicle being stopped to include make, color, and type;
 - 3. The number of the occupants, if possible;
 - 4. Location of the traffic stop; and
 - 5. Any other appropriate information pertaining to the location, the vehicle, or the subject(s) in the vehicle.
- G. When contacting suspects or suspicious persons, officers shall provide the Communications Unit with the following information:
 - 1. Location;
 - 2. Description of person(s); and
 - 3. Reason for contact (if known).
- H. Police and firefighters shall advise the Communications Unit, by either voice or electronic message, of their status in the following situations, if applicable:
 - 1. When beginning their shift;
 - 2. When going off-duty;
 - 3. Upon arrival at calls for service;
 - 4. Upon clearing calls for service;
 - 5. When engaging in any activity that will affect the unit's availability to handle calls for service; and
 - 6. When making an arrest and transporting prisoners.
- I. When an emergency situation has been declared and the radio system's channel *marker has been activated by the Communications Unit*, officers not directly involved in the principle incident will be directed to switch to Police Channel 2. *All officers and Telecommunicators will cease further radio transmissions (except for other emergency traffic) on the primary FSPD communications channel until the emergency has been stabilized and the channel*

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marker cleared. All officers must restrict their radio traffic to reduce channel congestion and allow for instantaneous access to the channel by the involved officers, if needed.

1. Backup officers responding to the emergency situation or officers responding to other unrelated calls for service shall utilize the status buttons on their mobile data computer to update their status.
2. No voice radio traffic, such as the routine checking of license plates or warrants, is to be conducted during the emergency situation or while the channel marker is activated. Transactions using the mobile data computer system do not affect the voice radio communications system and are permitted while a channel marker is in place. *However, officers should attempt to limit their routine computer transactions to those that do not require immediate response by the Telecommunicator until the channel marker is cleared.*

J. Radio identification call numbers shall be assigned based on a combination of designators described below:

1. Patrol Division – Units shall be identified by shift (1,2,3) and beat area assigned with “X-ray” units being the primary unit and “Young” units being the secondary. (Example: 1X10 designates the morning shift’s primary unit assigned to beat area number 10; 1Y10 designates the morning shift, but as the secondary unit for beat 10.
2. Detective Division – Detective Division units shall be identified as “David” units with a numerical identifier assigned to each detective. (Example: D43)
3. Narcotics Unit – Narcotics units shall be identified as “Nora” units with a numerical identifier assigned to each detective. (Example: N41)
4. Administration Division – Administration units shall be identified as “Adam” units with a numerical identifier assigned to each member. (Example: A10)
5. Special Enforcement units shall be identified as “Victor” units with a numerical identifier assigned to each officer. (Example: V47)
6. Motors Units shall be identified as “Mary” units with a numerical identifier assigned to each officer. (Example: M40)
7. Patrol Special Operations Division –
 - a. Units assigned to the Warrant Office, the Information Desk, and Meter Enforcement shall be identified as “Robert” units with a numerical identifier assigned to each officer. (Example: R42)
 - b. Units assigned to Animal Control shall be identified as “William” units with a numerical identifier assigned to each unit. (Example: W41)
8. Daytime Traffic Task Force / DWI Enforcement Task Force – Units shall be identified as “Sam” units with the numerical identifier being S40 through S45, which are assigned by the Communications Unit (Example: S42)
9. Patrol Commander / Supervisors – The Patrol Division Commander and all patrol Lieutenants shall be identified as “Lincoln” units with a 3 digit numerical identifier assigned to the Division Commander and each Lieutenant. (Example: L121). Patrol

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Sergeants shall be identified as "Lincoln" units with a 2 digit numerical identifier assigned. (Example L30)

10. Special Assignment Task Force Unit - Units established to address a specific need, such as a Property Crimes Task Force, shall be identified as "Zebra" units with a numerical identifier assigned to each officer. (Example: Z43)
 11. Off Duty Officers – Officers working an off-duty detail shall be identified as "Ocean" units with a numerical identifier assigned to each unit. (Example: O40)
 12. The type of apparatus and/or the fire district to which they are assigned shall identify fire units. (Example: Pumper 7; Rescue 1, etc.)
- K. Communications Unit personnel shall identify any outside agency personnel utilizing the Fort Smith Police Department frequency by their given unit identifier.
- L. Communications Unit personnel shall dispatch no less than two (2) police units on the following types of calls for service:
1. All felony crimes involving violence against a person or crimes against property which are reported to be in progress;
 2. Any disturbance or fight in progress;
 3. Domestic disturbances (in progress or when all parties are present);
 4. Any "stand-by";
 5. Person armed with any type of weapon;
 6. Hold-up or panic alarms at residences or businesses;
 7. Traffic accidents at busy intersections or during periods of large amounts of traffic; and
 8. Any other type of calls for service in which Communications Unit personnel have additional information that indicates more than one unit may be needed.
- In any case, the first officer to arrive on the scene may cancel back-up units at the point that they determine the additional assistance will not be needed.*
- M. Generally, Communications Unit personnel will dispatch single units on all other types of calls for police service unless requested otherwise by responding officers. Officers should briefly inform the Communications Unit personnel as to the reason additional units might be needed.
- N. In order to assume command, a patrol supervisor shall be notified to respond to the scene of any of the following incidents:
1. Bomb threat;
 2. Fire involving street closure or traffic control by multiple officers;
 3. Officer involved in a shooting or discharge of his/her firearm;

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4. Officer involved in a traffic accident (on or off duty);
 5. Any major investigative scene;
 6. Chemical spills;
 7. Events involving multiple injuries or deaths or large scale property damage;
 8. Tactical situations;
 9. Officers requesting a supervisor;
 10. Missing children under the age of ten (13) or any adult, whom is mentally ill or mentally incompetent, and severe weather conditions or other life-threatening circumstances exist requiring immediate search procedures.
 11. Any other situation in which it is felt that a supervisor's presence may be needed.
- O. In the event of a tactical or special operation, the supervisor in charge shall inform the Communications Unit of the nature of the event. A radio channel will then be designated and shall only be utilized by those involved in the operation until its completion. A tactical Telecommunicator shall be notified by the Communications Unit Supervisor or the Operation Supervisor, if after hours, to monitor traffic on this channel for the duration of the event.
- P. The role of the Tactical Dispatcher is to support staff with accurate and timely documentation of events during high-risk operations and major incidents in which a command post is activated. Inherent in this responsibility will be the processing and posting of tactical and operational information, including communication procedures, to support the command and control protocol for the management of critical operations. In addition, the objective is to allow the Fort Smith Police Department to maintain normal operations in handling other emergencies while utilizing a tactical dispatcher.
1. The Tactical Dispatcher will be equipped/trained in the skills and knowledge necessary to:
 - a. Understand and/or decipher tactical communications traffic.
 - b. Process and verify information collected from the incident.
 - c. Understand the policies regarding departmental deployment procedures.
 2. The Tactical Dispatcher shall report to the on-scene incident commander to receive a situation briefing to include activities, suspect information, threat condition, incident site information (maps, diagrams), location of officers, equipment and resources staged or on scene.
 3. The Tactical Dispatcher shall keep the incident commander informed of operational information to include any changes in status or personnel. When requested, the Tactical Dispatcher will disseminate information to personnel over a designated channel and will be responsible for notification of resources as deemed necessary (i.e., hospitals, Red Cross, utilities, chaplains, HazMat, coroner).

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4. At NO time shall the Tactical Dispatcher violate confidentiality.
5. Once the incident has concluded, the Tactical Dispatcher shall secure all documents pertaining to the incident and turn them over to the incident commander for evidence.
6. Tactical Dispatchers should have an interest in the program, be a reliable team player with a positive attitude, possess the ability to follow direction and maintain confidentiality, have the ability to document and relay information in an accurate and efficient manner with the ability to work in high-stress and unusual circumstances, and be on call 24/7.
7. A Tactical Dispatcher Coordinator shall be appointed by the Administrative Services Commander or his/her designee. The coordinator shall assist in recruitment of future Tactical Dispatchers and applicable training of such.
8. Qualifications:
 - a. Must be a full-time employee who has been released to work as a solo operator for a minimum of three (3) months.
 - b. Available to respond for training and 24/7 response.
 - c. Maintain a satisfactory or above performance/work record.
9. Selection Process:
 - a. Telecommunicators interested in becoming a Tactical Dispatcher will submit a letter of interest to the Communications Center Supervisor or his/her designee with their qualifications with a written recommendation by one of their supervisors.
 - b. Qualified applicants will then be interviewed by a review board following procedures which are outlined in FSPD Policy 1101.24, Specialized, Criminal Investigations, and Temporary Assignments.
10. Training:
 - a. Completion of a tactical dispatch course from a reputable source within one year of selection.
 - b. Attend in-house training and operational procedures necessary to keep current on operational procedures.
 - c. Attend team training exercises as necessary for annual training.
11. Response:
 - a. Primary response will be the on-duty Tactical Dispatcher with the approval of the Communications Center Supervisor.

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- b. If no on-duty Tactical Dispatcher is available, the Communications Center Supervisor or his/her designee shall attempt to call out one.
- c. The Tactical Dispatcher shall work from the Communications Center or a secure location unless otherwise notified with a radio and MDC/MDT.
- d. A Tactical Dispatcher will be assigned to all high risk, undercover and surveillance operations.

Q. The Communications Unit shall have immediate access to the following department resources or comparable equivalents:

- 1. Officer in Charge - The Communications Unit shall have the capability of establishing immediate contact with the highest ranking on-duty commander. This contact may be established by, but is not limited to, telephone, cellular telephone, by radio, or in person.
- 2. Communications Supervisor in Charge – The Communications Unit shall have immediate contact with the Communications Supervisors during their normal business hours. This contact may be established by, but is not limited to, telephone, cellular telephone, by radio, or in person. After normal business hours, Communications Unit personnel remain under the supervision of a Communication Center Supervisor but for informational purposes will have contact with the highest ranking on-duty officer and will have the capability of immediate contact with this officer in any manner as previously described.
- 3. Duty Roster of All Personnel - All division commanders are to ensure that all daily duty rosters are forwarded to the Communications Unit prior to the start of the shift.
- 4. Residential Telephone Numbers of Every Member - All members of the Fort Smith Police Department must provide to the Chief's Office their current telephone number and address. This roster will be updated as needed and forwarded to the Communications Unit.
- 5. Visual Maps Detailing the Fort Smith Police Department's Coverage Area - Maps will be posted in the Communications Unit detailing the incorporated city limits of Fort Smith in which the Fort Smith Police Department has jurisdiction. Additionally, the map shall graphically depict the patrol beats.
- 6. Officer Status Indicators - Communications Unit personnel will have access to the current status of all available officers by utilizing the Computer Dispatch System. If so equipped, officers shall update their status using the mobile data computer (FSPD Policy and Procedure # 1109.02).
- 7. Communications Unit personnel shall have access to a copy of the Fort Smith Police Department's Policy and Procedures for reference purposes. In addition, Communications Unit personnel shall have immediate access to telephone numbers for procuring emergency and necessary external services to the department, such as other law enforcement agencies, medical personnel, animal control, utility services, etc. These telephone numbers shall include any pertinent after hours numbers for utility and wrecker services.
- 8. In the event of a crime in progress, Communications Unit personnel shall obtain as much information as possible prior to dispatching the call. After dispatching the initial units to the call, Communications Unit personnel shall notify an on-duty

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Patrol Division supervisor and inform him or her of the situation. The Patrol Division supervisor shall then be responsible for directing the responding units appropriately in response to the call, and determine if additional resources will be needed. The supervisor should coordinate his or her actions with the Communications Unit.

9. Communications Unit personnel shall have immediate access to multi-casualty plans in the Sebastian County Emergency Operations Plan. It shall be the responsibility of the Telecommunicator to dispatch the appropriate amount of units according to the call type of the incident and then wait for further instructions from the Incident Command Supervisor. If the Incident Command Supervisor requests additional units or support, the Telecommunicator shall make the appropriate notifications.
 10. Communications Unit personnel shall have immediate access to HAZMAT plans in the Sebastian County Emergency Operations Plan. It shall be the responsibility of the Telecommunicator to dispatch the appropriate amount of units according to the call type of the incident and then wait for further instructions from the Incident Command Supervisor. With HAZMAT events, the Fire Department Battalion Chief is responsible for requesting additional units or for having EOC representatives respond. If requested, the Telecommunicator should contact those persons.
- R. Fort Smith Police Department Communications Unit personnel are prohibited from providing advice or information of a medical nature to persons who call. Instead, calls of this nature shall be immediately transferred to the Emergency Medical Services dispatch center where personnel trained specifically in handling this type call can assist.
- S. Telecommunicators shall ensure that work areas are kept neat and organized at all times. All documents and materials should be filed appropriately. Those which are no longer needed, and are of a confidential or sensitive nature, should be shredded daily. Confidential or sensitive materials may include, but are not limited to, the following:
1. Computer-Aided Dispatch Information.
 2. Information received via other law enforcement agency.
 3. Information received via ACIC/NCIC terminal.
 4. Other documents containing incident, victim, witness, offender, or personnel information.

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