



## Newport News Police Department - Administrative Manual

### ADM-420 - ALTERNATIVE RESPONSES

[Communications 6.29]

Amends/Supersedes: ADM-420 (04/24/2019)

Date of Issue: 01/09/2023

#### I. GENERAL

- A. When a call for service fits the criteria for an alternative response, it shall be the responsibility of the patrol and Communications Division supervisors to monitor calls for service to determine whether the correct responses are occurring and ensure that public safety and welfare remain first in any decision made on whether to dispatch an officer.
- B. An officer responding to a call for service, or conducting a follow-up to an alternative response measure, should not refer a citizen to the telephone reporting system instead of working the call or report.
- C. For purposes of this policy, the term “alternative response” is defined as a call for service fitting the set policy criteria that are either referred to another agency or organization by the call taker (in most instances, personnel from the Communications Division, Precincts, or Records Unit), handled as a telephone report, an online report treated as a deferred call, or handled in a manner other than the dispatch of a police officer.

#### II. PROCEDURE - CALL REFERRAL/DEFERRED DISPATCH

##### A. Procedure

1. Upon receiving a call fitting the set criteria, the call taker shall employ professionalism, compassion, and diplomacy in responding to the complainant. When the complainant is referred to another organization, every effort shall be made to ensure that any reference number given to the complainant is accurate. The complainant will not be referred to another organization without providing valid contact information.
  - a. If the caller does not accept the alternative response method, the call taker will notify a supervisor and/or contact a police supervisor in the precinct where the offense occurred to resolve the situation. It is at the discretion of the police supervisor if an officer will be dispatched in response to the call.

NOTE: An officer should not be dispatched unless there is a potential that the situation will escalate into violence or property damage.

2. Any call for service requiring priority police and/or fire response to prevent injury or loss of life will be referred to the 911 Center and dispatched.
3. If a call meeting the criteria for an alternative response is dispatched, the patrol supervisors have the responsibility to monitor the police radio and intercept the dispatch. The supervisor shall:
  - a. Contact the Communications Division for the caller’s contact number;
  - b. Call the complainant and explain the department’s policy;
  - c. Evaluate the complainant’s circumstances and make a final determination on whether to dispatch an officer.

- B. The following calls for service fit the referral or deferred dispatch criteria (also see Appendix A regarding alternative offenses):
1. *Animal Problem* - Animal Welfare will respond if the potential for injury exists.
  2. *Dead Animals* - Animal Welfare will respond unless the dead animal's carcass is a traffic hazard.
  3. *Children out of Control* - Unless there is a potential for injury, the complainant is to contact Juvenile Intake to speak with an intake officer about CHINS (Child in Need of Services) information.
  4. *City Code Violations (Non-Criminal)* - After determining the complaint is within Newport News; complainants will be referred to Newport News Codes/Compliance. During hours when Codes/Compliance is not open, advise the caller they may leave a message.
  5. *Fire Department (Forcing Doors/Medical Calls)* - Fire Department calls involving forcing doors, and medical emergencies shall be handled exclusively by the Fire Department unless they request police assistance.
  6. *Found/Lost Property* - A police unit will be dispatched when available unless the recovered or found item is a weapon, which requires a more immediate response. All firearms, knives, and other weapons shall be recovered as soon as possible.
  7. *Homeless Transportation* - The transportation of homeless individuals shall be handled as follows:
    - a. During P.O.R.T. (People Offering Resources Together) operational times, they shall be contacted;
    - b. When P.O.R.T. is not operational, or their bus is not running, an officer shall be dispatched to act as transportation of the homeless individual only if it may become a life-threatening situation for the individual (EX: inclement weather).
  8. *Illness Calls* - Unless requested by Emergency Medical Services, only EMS is to be dispatched in calls specifically regarding illness.
  9. *Speeding or Reckless Driving* - The Communications Division will broadcast a BOL unless the complainant is following or reporting a possible DUI. In this case, an officer will be dispatched.
  10. *Threats by Telephone* - Threats by telephone will be handled by the report taker as outlined in the following sections regarding telephone and online reporting (Sections III and IV), **except** in cases where an imminent danger or threat is present (i.e., the suspect is on his way to the caller's location), in which case an officer will be dispatched.
  11. *Vehicle Crashes* - (See also: [OPS-330 Traffic Crash Investigation](#))
    - a. Crashes - Callers involved in a vehicle crash shall be advised to remove their vehicles from the roadway if able to do so ([§46.2-888](#) Code of Virginia).
    - b. Minor Crashes on Public Property
      - 1) If available, a police aide shall be dispatched to minor vehicle crashes. Upon scene arrival, if the police aide finds there are injuries or the crash damage is such the crash fits the criteria for a major vehicle crash, they will request a police officer respond.
      - 2) If one of the involved drivers is reporting the crash, they shall be advised that they may exchange personal contact and insurance information;
    - c. Private Property Crashes - Handled as set out in [OPS-330 Traffic Crash Investigations](#) and do not require the dispatch of a police officer unless there are reported injuries or extenuating circumstances such as disorderly citizens.

### C. Calls at Secondary Employment Locations

1. When a call for service is received for a location where any Department officer is working secondary employment, that officer will be dispatched to the call. (See [ADM-360 Secondary Employment](#)).
2. Police Watch Units shall serve as a backup in such circumstances.

### D. Communications Personnel Screening

1. If the received call fits within the guidelines of a telephone report (Section III) or an online report (Section IV), Communications personnel should screen the call (see [COM-302 Telephone Call Processing](#)) to determine the following before referring the complainant (for appropriate alternative response offenses see [Appendix A](#)):
  - a. The complainant is requesting an officer;
  - b. The complainant does not have internet access (online reporting system only);
  - c. The crime is in progress; or
  - d. There is evidence that could lead to the identity of the suspect.

NOTE: If the answer to any criteria is “yes,” the complainant will not be referred to telephone reporting or the online reporting system.

2. During Communications Division incoming call screening, if it is determined the call can best be handled by use of an alternative response, the complainant will be advised:
  - a. The incident they wish to report is normally handled by telephone or online and does not require an officer’s response;
  - b. Whichever alternative reporting method is chosen, the report will receive the same attention as if an officer responded to the scene; and
  - c. Depending on which best suits their needs and circumstances, they may choose to employ either the telephone or online reporting method.
  - d. The Communications Division complaint taker shall ascertain adequate information from a reporting party to determine that the call is appropriate to be taken as a telephone report or an online report.
  - e. In telephone reporting cases, the call will not be transferred immediately just because a citizen advises they wish to make a report. After the call is screened correctly, the caller must accept the transfer of the call to the Records Unit or one of the precincts.

## III. PROCEDURE - TELEPHONE REPORTING

### A. Telephone Reporting Procedure

1. All telephone crime reports may be handled by records technicians in the Records Unit, precincts, or any other trained employee approved to handle reports over the phone. Telephone reporting may be used in the following areas:
  - a. Incident reports as dictated herein;
  - b. The complainant requests information or advice;
  - c. When providing information to the police;

- d. Reporting problems that need police attention later (e.g., speeding complaints during specified periods).
2. Any questions regarding qualifying calls should be addressed to an on-duty supervisor.
3. This does not prevent divisions from continuing to handle all non-criminal calls at their levels.
4. A call for service (as indicated in “Appendix - A”) may be handled by a records technician as a telephone report if it is determined:
  - a. The suspect has left the scene;
  - b. Physical evidence does not appear to be present. If physical evidence is present, an officer will be sent to the complainant to process the scene when available. (See [OPS-490 Incident Report Management System](#))

NOTE: Records technicians taking the call will complete the report, and an officer will be dispatched to process the scene following Section III.A.3.(c).

5. When screening an incoming call (as set out in section II.D. above), if the Communications Division determines it can be handled by a telephone report, the complainant will be advised that the incident he wishes to report is typically handled by telephone and does not require a responding officer.
  - a. If the complainant accepts telephone handling of the report, the call will be transferred to the Records Unit or Precinct administrative staff, who will gather the necessary information to process the call and make written reports or give appropriate information/advice.
    - 1) Complete information will be gathered by the records technician taking the call concerning the offense committed (i.e., date, time, location, and complainant’s personal information).
    - 2) A description of any suspects or suspect vehicles will be obtained.
    - 3) The records technician taking the call will ascertain if the complainant will prosecute in a criminal court of law and note this information on the incident report.
    - 4) If suspect information is available, and the report is made within 15 minutes of the offense occurring, the Records Section or Precinct Administrative Assistants taking the call will notify the Communications Division of the information to dispatch a BOL to all units. The call taker may place the caller on hold, relay the BOL information to the Communications Division, then resume the report. Under no circumstances will the call taker transfer the complainant to the Communications Division for BOL information and request that they be transferred back to file the report or advise the complainant to call the Communications Division to request the BOL be initiated.
  - b. If the complainant refuses telephone handling of the report, the records technician will contact a police supervisor in the precinct where the offense occurred and advise them of the situation. The police supervisor can decide if an officer will be dispatched to the location to make the report. If the supervisor advises that no officer should be dispatched, the complainant will be advised of the option to make the complaint in person at the appropriate location.
  - c. With the possibility that physical evidence is present, or other facts indicating a field unit should respond come to light while the records technician is taking the report, the report preparer will:
    - 1) Complete the report and have the Communications Division dispatch a police officer, advising the officer a report has already been taken by phone.

- 2) Advise the caller that a police officer will be dispatched according to call management policy.
6. The same procedures are outlined in Section III. A.3.a applies if a citizen calls the Records Section or one of the Precincts directly. [81.2.3(b,c,d,e)]

NOTE: Reports of missing person(s) and runaways will NOT be processed as telephone reports. (See OPS 440 *Runaways & Missing Persons* and OPS 441 *Missing Persons Age 21 & Older*) Runaway investigations MUST be initiated within two hours of a received report. If a caller making a report of either type is located in another jurisdiction or state, -the person taking the call shall obtain the complainant's name, call-back number, and the last known location of the missing individual (if available). The call taker shall immediately notify an on-duty supervisor, from the corresponding precinct, per OPS 440 or 441. (If the information on the missing individual's general whereabouts is unknown, then the precinct supervisor is notified at the call taker's discretion.)

- B. Category Priority Three complaints are handled by personnel if the presence of an officer is not needed or requested. [41.2.1]
  1. *Priority One*: Calls that indicate imminent life or community-threatening circumstances will be classified as emergencies and receive immediate attention from two or more units.
  2. *Priority Two*: Calls where circumstances indicate a reasonable potential for escalation to a more serious or violent level will be handled by two units, if available. Typically these calls will include disturbances, suspicious vehicles or persons, open doors or windows, domestics, unknown trouble, or any call involving a possible threat to the safety of the officers responding. [81.2.4(e)]
  3. *Priority Three & Four*: Non-emergency calls that concern minor breaches of public order, administrative service tasks, or public assistance that a single unit will handle.
  4. Calls, not police business, will be referred to the proper outside department or agency.

#### IV. PROCEDURE - ONLINE REPORTING

##### A. Process

[82.2.5]

1. When a member of the public is referred to the online reporting system, the referring personnel will ensure that:
  - a. The citizen has Internet access;
  - b. The citizen understands the online reporting process and the requirements to file the report successfully. The following points will be relayed to the citizen:
    - 1) There is no cost associated with using the online reporting system;
    - 2) Each online report is reviewed by police personnel for further investigative potential;
    - 3) The reporting citizen must provide the same identifying information (i.e., name, address, telephone number, date of birth) provided when filing a report with an officer. Additionally, they must provide a valid email address.
    - 4) The correct Department web address for the online reporting program;
    - 5) The report will be submitted online, and the citizen may print a copy for their records from the site.

- c. If at any point the citizen indicates a desire to file a report with an officer, or if the citizen attempts online reporting and calls back with difficulty completing the report, the incident will be reported as a telephone report or dispatched call for service.
2. Online reporting will not be used in cases of in-progress incidents, crimes with evidence or information which may lead to the identity and subsequent apprehension of the suspect, or if the incident just occurred and there is a likelihood that the suspect may still be in the area. (Accepted online submissions may be found in “Appendix A”)

B. Online Report Review (Initial)

[82.2.4]

1. Submitted online reports will be reviewed by Records Section personnel.
2. Once approved, the reports will be reviewed and imported into the Online Reporting System (ORS) queue and reviewed in a timely manner. If the citizen report is misclassified (For example, lost property instead of theft), the reviewing employee will classify the report according to the elements of the offense/incident described by the reporting citizen.
3. If the reviewing employee determines the report was misclassified, it may be modified to fit the most appropriate section. The reviewing employee shall ensure that reports contain adequate information to aid in subsequent investigation or prosecution.
4. A reviewing employee will reject a report if the incident does not fall within the scope of the online reporting system, such as a burglary. Reports will also be rejected if they do not occur within the jurisdiction. If rejected, the reason for rejection will be noted in the rejection box and sent via email to the citizen with a duplicate to the Records supervisor or assigned designee.
5. The reviewing employee may issue a follow-up request to the reporting citizen instead of approving or rejecting an online report. A follow-up request shall only be issued after first attempting to contact the citizen via telephone or email to clarify the issue.
6. Once the reviewing employee has successfully approved the report (including gathering follow-up information and correcting misclassifications), the report may be approved. At this time, it will automatically import into the RMS system.
7. When a complainant calls the Communications Division and requests an officer response to collect physical evidence associated with an ORS report before its review and import into the RMS, the responding officer will email the Records Supervisor and P&E email distribution groups with the temporary ORS number and the P&E Sheet (NNPD Form #8) number to prompt immediate review of the ORS report. (See [OPS-490 Incident Report Management System](#))

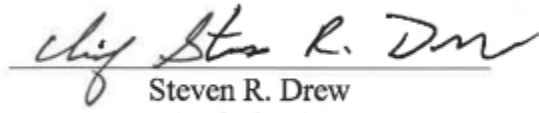
C. Online Report Follow-up

Most online incident reports will not require follow-up since the system was designed for reported incidents with no suspect information. However, for incidents in which follow-up is warranted, the following applies.

1. Incident Reports – Cases requiring follow-up will use the current workflow for case status control, as in [OPS-490 Incident Report Management](#). The on-duty supervisor will assign the case to an officer for investigation. [82.2.2(a)]
2. Records generated by the online system will be retained and destroyed under the Virginia Public Records Act of the Code of Virginia and procedures established by the Records Management and Imaging Services Division of the Library of Virginia.

#### D. System Administration

1. The online reporting system comes under the administration of the Records Unit supervisor. The system administrator will ensure the system is performing correctly. Any deficiencies in the system will be reported immediately to Police Information Technology Unit.
2. The system administrator will ensure the following reviews of the system are completed:
  - a. Concerns that are brought to the system administrator's attention will be forwarded to the attention of the appropriate supervisory personnel for follow-up.
  - b. An annual review will be done, which shows the community use, police personnel use, modifications, problems, and suggested improvements for the past year. This report will be submitted through the system administrator's chain of command.

  
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