



COMMUNICATIONS			608.00	
<div></div> <div>TEXT (SHORT MESSAGE SERVICE) TO 9-1-1</div> <div></div>				
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PURPOSE

The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to establish guidelines for all 9-1-1 calls received via Short Message Service (SMS) text messaging.

SCOPE

This procedure shall apply to all Punta Gorda Police Department personnel.

DISCUSSION

The delivery of emergency messages is a basic and legitimate function of law enforcement. However, guidelines are necessary in order to ensure that Police personnel are able to operate efficiently and achieve necessary objectives.

PROCEDURE

I. GENERAL PROCEDURES

- A. SMS text messaging to 9-1-1 provides access to 9-1-1 services for those callers that are unable to hear or speak. This may be due to a physical condition or out of fear of being heard. A call taker processing text 9-1-1 calls will follow the same protocols as they do for voice calls by gathering the same information, confirming location information, dispatching appropriate units, relaying scene safety information and providing the same pre-arrival or post instructions and maintaining professionalism throughout.
- B. Calls received via SMS messaging can only be received on 9-1-1 and will not be received on administrative lines. Text messages may be received at any active Vesta 9-1-1 position.
- C. When a text to 9-1-1 system is unavailable, callers will receive a text message indicating the text to 9-1-1 is not available, and that a voice call needs to be established.
- D. A caller should not be called back in cases where their safety, or the safety of another, is in question. If an officer requests that a callback be made on a request for service that was initially received via SMS messaging, the call taker will inform the officer of the possibility of a safety issue. If the officer still requests a callback at that point, the request will be completed only when authorized by the watch commander.
- E. The passing on of text sessions at shift change between operators shall include information related to the open sessions. All queues are to be checked at shift change.
- F. Records Retention – Retention of records shall be in accordance with General Records Schedule GS1-SL – *State and Local Government Agencies* item # 434.
- G. All abandoned text message calls that are followed up via dispatch cellular telephone will be archived in the city's email system.

II. ANSWERING A TEXT CALL

- A. When a text call is received on the Vesta 9-1-1 System, an audible tone will sound as it does with voice calls but will be a distinct sound as to differentiate between a voice call and a text call. During the conversation, each time a message is sent or received, there will be an audible indicator. Because there may be delays in conversation, the call taker will listen for these audible indicators.
- B. When a text call is received, it remains available for (2) two minutes before transitioning to an abandoned state. Once the call has been abandoned, the call taker will not be able to engage in the text conversation via the Vesta 9-1-1 system. Text messages will be treated as any other call and will be answered in order of priority.

- C. The Vesta 9-1-1 system will allow (5) five text conversations to be open at a time. If a call taker should answer more text messages at any one time than he or she capable of handling efficiently, the call may be transferred back to the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office, allowing another call taker to pick up the text call.
- D. Calls received but meant for Charlotte County Sheriff's Office or Sarasota County Sheriff's Office may be transferred. If the call is meant for an agency that is not capable of receiving text, the call taker shall obtain the information necessary and relay it to the appropriate agency.
 - 1. Neighboring agencies capable of receiving text calls are:
 - a. Cape Coral Police Department
 - b. DeSoto County Sheriff's Office
 - c. Fort Myers Police Department
 - d. Glades County Sheriff's Office
 - e. Lee County Sheriff's Office
 - f. Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office
 - g. Sarasota County Public Safety Communications Center
 - h. North Port Police Department
 - i. Charlotte County Sheriff's Office
- E. During incidents of multiple text sessions, text messages will be prioritized in the same manner as 9-1-1 calls. The highest priority text-to-9-1-1 call will be determined by the nature of the emergency. Make sure each message is responded to, and if multiple texts are received about the same call, ensure that they are, in fact, the same and not a different call.
- F. The need to multi-task may be necessary. It is possible to answer voice 9-1-1 calls during an open text conversation.
- G. If a text to 9-1-1 message is received that is non-emergency in nature, the call taker will encourage the caller to make a voice call to the designated non-emergency line if the caller is capable of doing so.
- H. When engaging in conversation with a caller, the call taker may use free text or pre-set messages made available within the Vesta 9-1-1 system.

- I. The caller should be encouraged not to use 'texting' lingo, shortcuts, or acronyms in order to eliminate confusion by either sending or receiving party. Callers however, are not required to oblige. In the event it becomes difficult to understand a caller's needs due to the use of these shortcuts, the call taker will ask the caller if they can voice call in.
- J. At no time will a call taker use 'texting' lingo, shortcuts, or acronyms. All correspondence with the caller will be in full-length form, with the exception of common acronyms, which include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. St for street;
 - 2. Av for avenue; and
 - 3. Rd for road.
- K. The call taker will not release the text call until either units have arrived on scene or it is certain that the caller does not require any additional assistance. Once a call is released, a message will be sent to the caller, indicating that the session has ended.

III. NON-RESPONSE/ABANDONED TEXT MESSAGES

- A. In the event that a caller has disconnected the text call, it is not possible to initiate a text call using the Vesta 9-1-1 to reconnect with the caller. In this type of situation, a communications operator will attempt to reconnect with the caller using a cell phone located at the fire console. The communication's operator will advise the caller via text to either make a voice call to 9-1-1 if it is safe to do so. If it is not safe, then text 9-1-1.
- B. Responding to a non-response text would depend upon the initial text that is received. If there is language within the message to indicate it might be a legitimate 9-1-1 text, then the call taker shall text message back "If you have an emergency, text or call 9-1-1." If there is still no response, the caller taker will follow [Standard Operating Procedure 603.00 - 9-1-1 Call Procedure](#), section II. ABANDONED CALLS.
- C. If the language within the text is garbled and might indicate a misdialed or accidental text then the call taker shall text message back "If you have an emergency, text or call 9-1-1." If there is still no response, the caller taker will follow [Standard Operating Procedure 603.00 - 9-1-1 Call Procedure](#), section II. ABANDONED CALLS.
- D. The call taker shall ensure the caller is not in danger prior to making voice contact, as is noted in the abandoned wireless 9-1-1 call back procedure. When in doubt only use text message communication.

IV. NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING TEXT MESSAGES: If a call taker is unable to communicate with text caller, due to a language barrier, the call taker will attempt to use

Google translate or equivalent. Once a location has been identified, appropriate units shall be dispatched. Language line cannot be contacted to establish a text link for language line assistance.

V. **MULTIMEDIA:** Carriers have the ability provide multimedia (pictures) along with text messages. In the event that a picture is sent, there will be a message displayed on the call taking console that there is a picture associated with the text message and has been sent to dispatch@cityofpuntagordafl.com. The call taker will advise the watch commander that a picture related to the call is being sent to their email. If the picture is not received, the call taker shall contact Motorola: [\(See Appendix Section VI \(D\)\(1\)\)](#) to determine the status of the multi-media.

VI. TEXT TO 9-1-1 TESTING

A. A minimum of three 9-1-1 text test calls shall be conducted monthly; one per console - on each shift. (Personnel shall not conduct all three tests on the same day.) The telecommunicator shall record the testing on the P drive at: P:\Support Services\Communications\Training\Text to 9-1-1 Training. The report shall contain the following information:

1. Date;
2. Console; and
3. Public Safety Dispatcher.

VII. INQUIRY PROCEDURES

A. Discrepancy forms must be filled out on and submitted via the Vesta phone system when the following occurs:

1. The *Class of Service* source field populates anything other than "TEXT".

APPROVED



PAMELA R. SMITH, CHIEF OF POLICE

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