

Seattle Police Department Manual

12.010 – Communications

Effective Date: 08/01/2021

Some parts of this manual section are exempt from disclosure to the public by [RCW 42.56.240\(2\)](#). Only Seattle Police employees may access these internal links from a department computer.

12.010-POL-1 Communications General Principles

This policy applies to all employees communicating by means of radio or MDT.

The cooperative relationship between communication dispatchers and field units is essential to the successful mission of the Department.

1. The Chief of Police Gives Communications Dispatchers the Authority and Responsibility to Manage Field Unit Resources

The Communications Dispatcher has authority and responsibility for the overall management of resources on an immediate basis.

Availability, duty skills, and location will determine how resources are assigned.

2. Field Units Will Promptly Acknowledge Dispatchers When Called on Radio

Exception: This requirement does not apply when acknowledging by voice threatens the safety of the officer or others or they are physically unable to do so.

Field units will answer assignments from the dispatcher without providing further comment unless additional information becomes necessary.

3. The Communications Section Determines the Deployment of Assigned Personnel During the Shift

The Communications Section maintains the responsibility for call-by-call distribution of field units.

12.010-POL-2 Deployment

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1. Watch Lieutenants Will Determine Personnel and Staffing Numbers Assigned to General Field Duty

This staffing and resource pool becomes the Communications Section's assigned personnel to deploy during the assigned shift.

The Watch Lieutenant may, during a shift, change the strength of the staffing for special purposes by coordinating with the Communications Section.

Should the Watch Lieutenant choose to override the dispatcher's judgment as to the allocation of available resources, the Watch Lieutenant will assume responsibility for the proper response to all incidents within the affected area from that moment, until the control of available resources reverts to the dispatcher.

2. The Responsibility for Taking Proper Actions in Any Situation Remains with the Individual Responding Field Units and Supervisors

3. Sergeants and Lieutenants Will Monitor and Supervise the Status of Their Assigned Personnel

Supervisors will monitor their assigned personnel's use of downtime, call assignments and the duration of the calls.

4. Supervisors Will Monitor and Supervise the Status of Calls and Ensure the Prompt Handling of High Precedence Calls

Supervisors will assist the Communications Section in requesting units to clear and respond when asked by Dispatch prior to cross-precinct dispatching on high precedence calls.

If necessary, supervisors may reroute their personnel to handle holding high precedence calls.

Supervisors may also elect to handle the call-in place of a patrol unit if additional patrol units cannot clear to respond.

5. All Units, Including Sergeants and Lieutenants, Will Log in at the Beginning of the Shift

All units will log in to service even if assigned to court or administrative duties.

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6. Field Units Will Remain Available Until 30 Minutes Prior to the end of their Shift

Exception: This does not apply if handling an arrest or completing a report.

7. Sergeants Expedite Roll Call When Necessary

When call-load requires, sergeants coordinate roll call response to respond to priority calls (see 12.010-TSK-1).

12.010-POL-3 Using Radio Channels

1. The Radio Shop Programs and Maintains All Patrol Radios

The Radio Shop will program department radios with zones 1 to 25.

2. Units Assigned with Specialized Radio Programming Will Retain These Radios When Personnel Leave the Unit

Some radios have specialized programming assigned to specific units, sections, or positions. These radios have additional channels and features that impact the work related to the specific unit in which assigned.

Employees must return these specialized portable radios to the quartermaster when reassigned or promoted.

3. The PTAC Channel Will Remain the Designated Channel for Unmonitored City-Wide Car-to Car Radio Traffic

Interim channels for precinct car-to-car communication are as follows:

NW – North Precinct

SW – South and Southwest Precinct

PTAC – East and West Precincts

4. The Database Channel (Data) Operates 0700-0300 Hours Daily as Staffing Allows

Database may assist with:

- Warrant & Stolen Checks when impractical by patrol

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- Warrant & Stolen Verification
- Tow requests
- Access Queries
- Agency coordination
- Stolen Recovery process
- Victor Units logging into service
- Miscellaneous phone calls, when practical and feasible

6. Multi-Agency Responses May Utilize SPD Interoperability Channels: KCIO02-KCIO15 (located on zones Z13-Z14)

Field Units will advise SPD Communications, when feasible prior to and upon switching to an SPD Interoperability channel.

KCIO02-KCIO08 – All Police

KCIO06-KCIO07 – SPD

KCIO09-KCIO15 – All Fire

12.010-POL-4 Radio Procedures

1. Radio Communications Will Follow Protocols

All forms of communication between field units and the Communications Section will remain professional and business-like, using proper language and correct procedures.

All personnel broadcasting over radio will focus on five key principles while transmitting:

1. Brevity
2. Enunciation
3. Audible volume
4. Normal, even, and steady voice
5. Plain verbiage

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Field units will keep the Communications Dispatcher advised of their "in" and "out of service" status during their shift either by voice or MDT. The unit may state that they intend to go "out of service," and briefly stating the nature of the activity.

When a Field Unit receives a call by means of the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT), they may indicate their enroute status via the MDT.

Field units responding to a voiced dispatched call will advise their status to the Communications Dispatcher over the air (e.g., enroute, arrived)

Field Units must request all coffee breaks and lunch breaks from their dispatcher.

Field Units may use their MDT to log to minor, non-seizure on-view incidents that do not require an additional officer.

All field units must log to all traffic stops.

Officers and Communications Section personnel will promptly report violations of radio procedures or other causes for internal complaint, specific to the workload management to their supervisor. The complainant's supervisor will handle the complaint process through the chain of command, as appropriate.

2. Dispatchers May Broadcast Lower Precedence 3 and 4 Calls So Auxiliary Units Can Assist with Handling the Call

This gives patrol and other units (e.g., CPT, ACT, SWAT, or Traffic) nearby the location or have recently traveled through the area a chance to clear the call.

Examples of appropriate calls handled in this manner: area checks for mischief, minor hazards, etc.

3. Officers Will Use Final Type (MIR) Codes to Clear Calls for Service

Field Units will MIR all primary police actions except for routine patrol and follow-up (secondary) action conducted by follow-up units.

Officers in vehicles not equipped with an MDT will give their MIR and disposition to the dispatcher via radio.

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Officers will document police actions via radio or MDT, as appropriate. Documentation of police action may include:

1. The nature of the incident,
2. The location of the incident,
3. Time the complaint was received, or the on-view incident occurred,
4. Time logged out of service,
5. Time of arrival at scene,
6. Time returned to service, and
7. Disposition of incident.

4. The Unit of Assignment and Rank Will Determine an Individual Unit's Radio Call Sign

The Radio Shop assigns a unique number to each radio. The Quartermaster assigns the radios to employees and logs the radio number assigned. The Communications Section maintains the list of radio assignment call signs through the CAD system.

Patrol Captains and above

- Car followed by 1 or 2-digit number (e.g., Car1 or Car 33).

Patrol Lieutenants

- 3-digit number representing Rank-Precinct-Watch (e.g., 232 Lieutenant-South Precinct-2nd watch).

Patrol Sergeants

- Watch 1, 2, or 3 followed by the sector letter (e.g., 2W – 2nd watch sergeant of William sector).

Patrol District Units

- Watch 1, 2, or 3 followed by sector letter and beat number (e.g., 2S1 – 2nd watch unit in Sam sector, beat number 1).
- Additional units assigned to the beat identify by the watch, sector, beat and a number 1 through 9, (e.g., 3S31 – additional 3rd watch unit in Sam sector, beat number 3).

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Umbrella Units

- Units assigned to cover entire sectors or with no designated beat(s) identify by a call sign designated by the watch, sector, a zero and a number 1 through 9. Units assigned to extra patrol for the sector will use numbers 01 through 06 and be available for 9-1-1 calls (e.g., 3N01 3rd watch-Nora Sector-01).
- Unmarked, surveillance or dedicated pro-active units will use numbers 07 through 09 and be available for emergency calls only (e.g., 3N09 3rd watch-Nora Sector – 09).

Uniformed Walking Beat Units

- Walking beat officers identify by a call sign designated by watch, sector and a two-digit number 51 through 59 (e.g., 3E51, 3E55). Walking beat sergeants identify by a call sign designated by the watch, sector, and the number 50 (e.g., 3E50).

Uniformed Emphasis Units & Sergeant

- Patrol officers assigned to special emphasis (e.g., gang suppression, target areas), identify by a call sign designated by the watch, sector and a two-digit number 61 through 69 or 71 through 79, (2M62, 2M79, etc.). Emphasis unit sergeants identify by a call sign designated by the watch, sector, and the number 60 or 70 (e.g., 2M70).

Uniformed Bicycle Beat Units & Sergeant

- Bicycle officers identify by a call sign designated by watch, sector and a two-digit number 81 through 89 or 91 through 99 (e.g., 2U83, 2U94). Bicycle unit sergeants identify by a call sign designated by their watch, sector, and the number 80 or 90 (e.g., 2U80).

Patrol Wagons

- A patrol wagon shall be identified by the sector, watch and the number "10" (e.g., 3K10, 2D10).

Mobile Precincts

- The mobile precincts will be designated by MP followed by their assigned precinct number e.g., MP1, MP2, and MP3.

Off Duty or Unassigned Personnel

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- Off-duty personnel using SPD radio will identify themselves by using their employee serial number preceded by the alpha designator "VICTOR" (e.g., V5348).

Special Event Radio Assignment Numbers

- Special events include large gatherings, V.I.P. security, special command operations and events such as Seafair, Hydroplane Races, and other city activities.
- Special event resources call signs use the following alpha designators: A – ADAM; I – IDA and Y – YOUNG, and the numbers 1 through 200. The numbers 1 through 5 may also precede the designator (e.g., Y25, A120, 5A75, 3Y130). Sergeants shall identify by using the alpha designator preceded by a number 1 through 20 (e.g., 3A, 12Y).

Harbor Units

- HBR followed by 1 or 2-digit number.

Traffic Units

- T followed by 2-digit number.

Parking Enforcement

- P followed by 2 or 3-digit number.

Real Time Crime Center

- RTCC followed by single digit number 1-9.

Crisis Response Unit

- CRT followed by single digit number 1-9.

Community Policing Team-CPT

- 400 number series.

Anti-Crime Team-ACT

- Precinct number followed by 90 (e.g., 490 East precinct ACT).

Canine Units

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- K9 followed by 2-digit number.

SWAT

- Z followed by 2-digit number (e.g., Z20).

Emphasis Unit

- Watch-Sector-2-digit number 60-79 (e.g., 2D62 2nd watch - David Sector-Emphasis unit).

Neighborhood Response Team

- V-2-digit number 50-59 (e.g., V59 Neighborhood Response Team (V), 50-59).

5. The Communications Section, in Cooperation with the King County 800Mhz Regional Communications Board, Has Authority Over the Utilization of All Seattle Police Department 800 MHz Talk Groups

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and department policy and regulations state:

It is unlawful to transmit any unnecessary or unidentified communication on the radio, use profane, indecent, or obscene language, cause interference with any other radio communications or transmit an unauthorized department call sign.

Violations of these policies can result in civil fines and/or possible departmental disciplinary action.

[\(Internal Link\) 12.010-POL-5 Planning Special Events](#)

[\(Internal Link\) 12.010-POL-6 Handling Emergency Transmissions](#)

[\(Internal Link\) 12.010-POL-7 Aggressive Dispatching](#)

[\(Internal Link\) 12.010-PRO-1 Planning Special Events](#)

[\(Internal Link\) 12.010-PRO-2 Handling Radio SPD Transmissions](#)

[\(Internal Link\) 12.010-PRO-3 Aggressive Dispatching](#)

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12.010-TSK-1 Sergeants Monitoring Calls and Personnel

Sergeant

1. **Coordinates** with the oncoming early car squads to get officers out quickly if needed
2. Early roll call sergeants for each shift **monitor** the number of holding precedence 1 calls waiting before roll call and **notes** that on the roll call sheet
3. **Ensures** Field Units make every effort to logon within 30 minutes of roll call start time and remain available until 30 minutes before the end of their shift

12.010-TSK-2 Officer Broadcasting Over Radio Procedures

When broadcasting information and requests over radio, the **Field Unit** will:

1. **Broadcast** their full call sign as identification and intent to transmit
2. **Pause** for the dispatcher to acknowledge with a repeating of the call sign and possibly go ahead
3. **Transmit** the intended message