

# **Waltham Police Department**

## **CHAPTER 81**

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

***General Order #: GO-01 2009***

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***Accreditation Standard #'s: 2.1.3, 81.1.2, 81.2.3, 81.2.4, 81.2.6, 81.2.8, 81.2.12***

#### **POLICY:**

It is the policy of the Waltham 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 ensure that the communications system facilitates the operations of all other components of the Department.

The communications procedures of the Waltham 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 telephones, teletype, computer terminals, and radio. The department has established a number of communications procedures so that communications will be orderly, documented, and effective.

#### **PROCEDURES:**

##### **1. ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION:**

##### **a. RESPONSIBILITY OF EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS DIVISION:**

The communication component for the Waltham Police Dept. will be located and operated from the E911 Dispatch Center under the command of the Division Commander – Emergency Telecommunications Division, and shall include: radio, telephone, and automated data communications, and alarm monitoring. This communication component is the basis for the operation of the patrol division of the Waltham Police Dept. As a result, it shall be the responsibility of the Division Commander to ensure that the policies and procedures of the department are followed and maintained by the Emergency Telecommunication Dispatchers.

**b. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER – ADMINISTRATION DIVISION:**

The Commanding Officer – Administration Division has the responsibility of monitoring the operation of the entire E911 Telecommunications Center. They act as the liaison officer between the Waltham Police Department and the Chief ETD. They receive suggestions, and complaints regarding the E911 system and works with the Chief ETD to address these issues.

**c. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE OFFICER-IN-CHARGE (OIC):**

The Officer-In-Charge oversees and commands all aspects of the given shift on duty. They will be located in the Operations Area of the Police Department and is responsible for monitoring all Radio Transmissions to ensure that the appropriate resources (response) are assigned. They will maintain contact with the Emergency Telecommunications Division either by telephone or by utilizing the radio override capabilities. Any directions or assignments that flow through the communications personnel are a direct delegation of the Officer-In-Charge.

**d. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE POLICE PATROL SUPERVISOR:**

The Street Patrol Supervisor has secondary command responsibilities and works directly with the Officer-In-Charge. They are directly responsible for the operations of all officers assigned to that given shift. They are also responsible for ensuring that the appropriate response is dispatched to every call for service. They are in a position to impart any unique or prior knowledge concerning a person, location, or call for service. The Patrol Supervisor shall also have the responsibility of informing the Emergency Telecommunications Division of the need to decrease or increase the number of responding units.

**e. RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESPONDING UNITS:**

Responding Officers shall have the responsibility of answering promptly when called by the Emergency Telecommunications Division. They shall also be responsible for keeping the Emergency Telecommunications Division apprised of their location during those functions that may pose a danger to them or other officers responding to the scene. The responding officer shall also be responsible for informing the Emergency Telecommunications Division of the need for additional or less units to respond. They shall also impart any unique or prior knowledge concerning persons, locations, or prior calls for service to the Emergency

Telecommunications Division to keep them properly aware of these situations.

**f. RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL OFFICERS:**

All officers shall be responsible for monitoring all radio transmissions. They shall also impart any information that may enhance officer safety or assist in the proper response to a given call for service. Communications with the designation of “**Operations**” are directed to the Operations Section of the Patrol Division. The Designation “**Control**” will be directed to the Emergency Telecommunications Division.

- 2. RADIO COMMUNICATIONS: [2.1.3f], [81.2.4A]** The radio represents a street officer's primary source of communication with the station and/or other officers. Uniform radio procedures and the proper utilization of communications equipment are essential to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Each officer assigned to field duty will have access to radio communications at all times and shall promptly notify the station in advance, if possible, whenever initiating any police action that may have potential for danger. Such actions include but are not limited to motor vehicle stops, field interviews, building searches, and group disturbances and/or situations that may require assistance. [81.2.4A]

- a. BAPERN SYSTEM: [2.1.3f], [81.2.4D]** The Waltham Police radio system is part of the Boston Area Police Emergency Radio Network (BAPERN).

- 1.** The current BAPERN system consists of the following channels:

CHANNEL 1 – WALTHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT – **Primary**

CHANNEL 2 – WALTHAM 2

CHANNEL 3 – AREA WIDE 3

CHANNEL 4 – AREA WIDE 4

CHANNEL 5 – CENTRAL DISTRICT: Is the system-wide channel reserved for specific and relevant law enforcement law enforcement notifications that are of interest beyond a local district. “Area Wide 3” is also used when an agency enters our city on a mutual aid assist. See Chapter 2 Jurisdiction and Mutual Aid in WPD Policies and Procedures for communication procedures with regard to mutual aid assists. [2.1.3f]

CHANNEL 6 – BENTLEY POLICE

CHANNEL 7 – BRANDEIS POLICE

CHANNEL 8 – NEWTON POLICE

CHANNEL 9 – WATERTOWN POLICE

CHANNEL 10 – BELMONT POLICE

CHANNEL 11 – LEXINGTON POLICE

CHANNEL 12 – LINCOLN POLICE

CHANNEL 13 – WESTON POLICE

CHANNEL 14 – WALTHAM FIRE DEPARTMENT 1

CHANNEL 15 – WALTHAM HIGH SCHOOL

CHANNEL 16 – WALTHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT 1

2. Most department radio communication is conducted on Channel 1, which is the department's primary channel. Communications on this channel are restricted to Waltham Police radios and are not repeated on other BAPERN channels.
  3. Other channels available on the BAPERN system allow Waltham Police communications personnel, mobile units, and individual officers to communicate with other police departments within the BAPERN network.
- b. **BAPERN TRANSMISSION FORMAT:** The standard format to be used in transmitting messages as set forth in the BAPERN Network guidelines and department procedures is as follows: **[81.2.4 D]**
1. All transmissions on the BAPERN network must be given in plain language (no codes).
  2. All units are required to identify themselves by department and cruiser or route number. If the cruiser or route is changed for any reason during a tour of duty, the officer(s) involved in the change shall notify communications of their new designation.
  3. The communications center shall always be referred to by the

Department name followed by “Control.”

**EXAMPLES:** Waltham 452 to Newton Control  
Waltham Control to Watertown 467

4. Officers must request permission prior to switching from Channel 1 to any other channel. This will prevent confusion and missed transmissions within the network.

c. **OPERATING MODES:** The Waltham Police radio system allows both mobile and portable units to operate in either a “Repeat” or “Emergency” mode. [81.2.4G]

1. **REPEAT MODE:** Radio transmissions should be conducted in the repeat mode. The repeat mode boosts the strength of the signal and transmits it throughout the entire radio system allowing all other units to receive the transmission.
2. **EMERGENCY MODE:** Mobile and portable radios are also equipped with an Emergency or Officer in Trouble button. When activated, the radio will transmit an alert tone and the radio identification number will flash on the Dispatcher's console. Once the button has been activated it remains on until it is reset in the Dispatch Center and on the radio itself. The dispatcher must try to contact the officer whose emergency button went off to determine if it was accidental or real. Dispatchers must then attempt to find the location of the officer if not known and dispatch units appropriately to the location.

d. **RADIO OPERATION CHECKS:**

1. At the beginning of each tour of duty the Dispatcher shall initiate a radio check to ensure that all cruiser and portable radios are functioning properly.
2. All officers who are assigned radios shall, prior to assuming their duties, initiate a radio check if circumstances prevent the Dispatcher from initiating it.

e. **TRANSMISSION REQUIREMENTS:** The radio is to be used for official Department business only. Unnecessary communications will not be allowed. [81.1.2]

1. All FCC rules and regulations will be adhered to.

2. Military time shall be used in all transmissions.
3. Messages are to be clear, concise, and accurate so that transmission time is kept at a minimum.
4. Courtesy is most essential for the efficient and effective operation of the radio system. Discourtesy, sarcasm, or arguments will not be tolerated.
5. Personal names will not be used during transmissions. Officers will be identified by their proper call sign (Police vehicle number)  
[81.2.4C]
6. Profane and obscene language is a violation of FCC rules and regulations. Employees must not use loud, uncivil, indecent, or profane language even under the greatest provocation.
7. Officers will be personally responsible for proper radio communications.
8. The names of complainants **shall not** be broadcast over the air unless it is necessary as a part of the call or assignment. Officers shall use discretion in the use of complainant names, keeping in mind that in order to prevent retaliation in some cases, we should maintain the confidentiality of the names of a complainant or witness. In doubtful cases the Officer-In-Charge should be consulted on this issue.

f. **TRANSMISSION PROCEDURES:** Before transmitting, an Officer should: [81.2.4b, c]

1. Plan the message before transmitting, when possible.
2. Listen to make sure another message is not being interrupted.
3. Hold the mic 1 - 3 inches from the mouth. Do not attempt to transmit with the mic still attached to the dashboard or radio console.
4. Depress the transmit button and wait 3 seconds (it takes 2 - 3 seconds for identification mode in the radio to transmit). Any verbal transmission during this time period will be lost.
5. Speak normally and clearly, using an evenly modulated tone of voice, as in a phone conversation. Avoid vocal displays of emotion

such as temper, nervous excitement, sullenness, etc., which tend to distort a radio transmission.

6. Identify the unit by using the proper call sign (Cruiser number) and by giving the correct location.
7. Give the dispatcher time to acknowledge the transmission.
8. Avoid, if possible, lengthy messages. If the message is long, transmit a portion of it to ensure that it has been acknowledged, and then continue.
9. Acknowledge all calls promptly by giving your unit and location.

**EXAMPLE:** “Waltham 437, Prospect St. at Main St.” [81.2.4C]

10. Report arrival at the scene promptly.

**EXAMPLE:** “Waltham 437 arriving.”

11. Clear the call promptly.

**EXAMPLE:** “Waltham 437 clear.”

12. Officers shall advise the dispatcher when they are going out of service and returning to service. The Dispatcher will use CAD System to record and track [81.2.4 B, C] each officer’s status.

- g. **PHONETIC ALPHABET:** The standard phonetic alphabet shall be used to clarify the spelling of words or when transmitting messages containing letters (e.g., vehicle registrations).

A – ALPHA	H – HOTEL	O – OSCAR	V - VICTOR
B – BRAVO	I – INDIA	P – PAPA	W - WHISKEY
C – CHARLIE	J – JULIET	Q – QUEBEC	X – X-RAY
D – DELTA	K – KILO	R – ROMEO	Y - YANKEE
E – ECHO	L – LIMA	S – SIERRA	Z – ZULU
F – FOXTROT	M – MIKE	T – TANGO	
G – GOLF	N – NOVEMBER	U – UNIFORM	

This phonetic alphabet will maintain uniformity as well as comply with guidelines set forth within the BAPERN Network.

**EXAMPLE:** (Unit) requests a listing on MA Reg. 1-2-3-Alpha-BravoCharlie (123- ABC), or (Unit) requests a listing on MA Reg. 1-2-3-A-Alpha, B-Bravo, C- Charlie (123-ABC).

- h. CRITERIA FOR ASSIGNMENT:** The Officer-In-Charge and the Patrol Supervisor shall ensure that a sufficient number of officers are dispatched to a call, and shall cause the Patrol Supervisor to be assigned to calls when the need for their presence can be anticipated or is mandated by department regulations. Examples of such calls would be, but not limited to: **[81.2.4 E, F]**

1. All code three responses.
2. Requests for assistance for arrests for felonies or serious misdemeanors.
3. Fleeing suspects.
4. Domestic disturbances.
5. Serious felonies (robberies, homicide, sexual assault, etc.).
6. Missing persons involving children and elderly, as well as others if necessary.
7. Serious M/V or pedestrian involved accidents.
8. Bomb threats.
9. Care and Protection orders.
10. Cruiser accidents.
11. M/V pursuits.
12. Psychological evaluations.
13. Sudden deaths.

The following are examples of calls for which two or more officers should be assigned:

1. All code three response calls.



2. Group disturbances.
  3. Request for assistance for a felony or violent misdemeanor arrest.
  4. Cardiac arrest and heroin overdose calls.
  5. Fleeing suspect(s).
  6. Domestic disturbances.
  7. All 911 hang-ups or abandoned calls.
- i. **PURSUIITS:** The communications procedures for “Pursuits” are found in Chapter 41, Section 24 of this manual.
- j. **POSSIBLE DIVERSION OR “HOAX” CALLS:** Officers and Dispatchers should be aware of the possibility that calls for service may be made as an attempt to divert police resources for a variety of reasons. A diversion call is intended to draw a large number of police personnel away from a specific target to aid in the execution of a crime (i.e., bank robbery).
- As always, personnel will use plain language and avoid the use of codes. When personnel become aware of an incident that is suggestive of a possible diversion call, they shall assume the call is real and respond accordingly.
- When an officer, supervisor or dispatcher believes the facts suggest a diversion call, they will state over the air “All available units be aware of secondary locations in your sector”. Available sector units will then respond to high-risk locations, considering likely crime targets and/or escape routes as well as any possible public safety concerns. In all instances, the OIC of Patrol should be notified.
- k. **NON-RESPONSE TO RADIO COMMUNICATIONS:** If, after calling a unit twice, the dispatcher receives no answer, the dispatcher should sign off the air and try to contact the unit again. If the call requires an immediate response, another unit will be dispatched. If the unit cannot be reached after a reasonable period of time, the dispatcher should inform the Operations Supervisor.
- l. **MULTI-VEHICLE RESPONSE TO CALLS:** [81.2.6] When a call is given that involves the response of more than one cruiser, or a cruiser and other emergency vehicles, such as fire apparatus and/or ambulance, the officer arriving at the scene first shall notify the station as soon as possible as to the necessity for the other responding units to slow down, accelerate

their response time, or disregard. The Dispatcher shall immediately relay this information to the responding units and ensure that the units acknowledge receipt of the transmission.

- m. **STANDBY:** If the Dispatcher finds it necessary to put an officer on "standby" for any reason (e.g., an urgent phone call), they shall be responsible for re-establishing contact with the officer as soon as possible.
- n. **BACK-UP POWER:** The electrical and radio system is backed up by a gas-powered generator. This unit is maintained and checked on a weekly basis by the City of Waltham's Wires Department. The system is charged every week on Monday between 0500 and 0530 hrs. Records are maintained in the Supervisory Log in Dispatch. **[81.3.2-2A, 5A]**

- 3. **TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS:** Efficient telephone communications is essential to the operations of the department. The following procedures are intended to ensure that information of vital importance to the department is received in a proper manner.

- a. **ANSWERING OF TELEPHONES:**

- 1. The telephone shall be answered promptly and courteously; priority shall be given to answering calls on the emergency lines.
- 2. The Call-Taker shall identify the department and themselves, and inform the caller that the call is being recorded:

**EXAMPLE: ON EMERGENCY LINE(S)** "911 This line is recorded. where is your emergency?"."

**EXAMPLE: NON-EMERGENCY LINE(S)** "Waltham Police, Officer Smith, your call is being recorded."

- 3. Call takers shall judge the characteristics of calls to determine whether an emergency or non-emergency response is required, and inform the caller of the department's response. **[81.2.6-1]** If it is an emergency call for service see below in section C. All other calls for service shall be entered in the CAD system. This automatically generates the appropriate response based on incident type entered. For example, a fight call, loud noise, domestic, etc. are already programmed into the computer system. **[81.2.6-2A]**

4. When a call is transferred within the department, the receiving officer shall answer the phone by Name, Title, and “May I help you?”

**EXAMPLE:** “Officer Smith, Community Services Division, May I help you?”

- b. **INFORMATION TO BE RECEIVED AND RECORDED REGARDING CALLS FOR INFORMATION OR SERVICE:** The following information shall be obtained and entered into the CAD System, if known, when a request for criminal, non-criminal service is received or when a self-initiated request is made. [81.2.3-2], [81.2.6]

1. Name and address of complainant [81.2.3D] Type and location of incident reported. [81.2.3E, F]
2. Identities of officers and additional support units dispatched, their time of arrival and return to service. [81.2.3G, H]
3. Disposition and/or status of incidents reported. [81.2.3L]

The CAD System will automatically, upon entering an incident, record incident number [81.2.3A], date and time of request [81.2.3B, C], time of dispatch, time of officer arrival and time of officer’s return to service. [81.2.3I, J, K]

- c. **EMERGENCY CALLS:** During emergency calls, the call taker should obtain the basic information and then, keeping the caller on the line, dispatch the units’ necessary, filling in additional information as it is received. Although speed is of obvious importance regarding the receipt of emergency information, reliability and accuracy are of primary importance. In the cases of emergency calls, as all other calls, the caller shall be informed of the agency’s response. [81.2.6-2B]
- d. **HOLD:** Callers should not be put on “hold” for any unreasonable length of time. If there is going to be a delay, the caller should be advised of the reason. Emergency calls should never be placed on hold.
- e. **CALLS MISTAKENLY MADE TO THIS DEPARTMENT:** In the event that a caller mistakenly reaches this department, the following will be done: (81.2.12)
  1. **EMERGENCY CALLS:** If the call requires an immediate

response, the call-taker will take all pertinent information and then relay it to the appropriate agency, to include law enforcement, and or referral to other agencies or references. Prior to transferring any emergency call, the call-taker shall advise a calling party that the call is about to be transferred and to please remain on the line.

**[81.2.6-A, B]**

2. **NON-EMERGENCY CALLS:** In non-emergency cases, the caller will be referred to the appropriate agency. **[81.2.6-1]**

3. **POLICE AGENCY DIRECTORY:** To facilitate this procedure, a directory of phone numbers for neighboring police departments and law enforcement agencies shall be maintained in the operations area.

f. **TELEPHONE FAILURE:** In the event the telephone fails, the Officer-In-Charge shall ensure that appropriate measures are taken. Such actions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Notify the Communications Center, who will notify the City of Waltham IT Department of the failure.

2. During emergencies, such as complete power failures during hurricane, etc., address systems may be used to provide information to the public.

3. By public address systems and social media, advise citizens that if an emergency arises which requires immediate action, they should go to where aid and/or necessary communications will be available. Cruisers will be placed in a central location.

4. **AUTOMATED DATA COMMUNICATIONS:** Operations and Communications personnel have immediate access to several automated data communications systems. The Operations Supervisor shall ensure that access is strictly limited to authorized personnel and is used for proper police functions. They shall also ensure that individuals accessing the systems do so in accordance with the proper procedures as specified in the respective operations manuals.

a. **THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION SYSTEM (CJIS):** Is the Massachusetts computerized record system for law enforcement agencies. The records are stored in nine separate files. Through this state system, users have access to F.B.I. National Crime Information Center (NCIC).

1. Stolen vehicles (including aircraft).

2. Wanted persons.

3. Missing persons.
  4. License plates.
  5. Article files.
  6. Gun files.
  7. Boat files.
  8. Security file.
  9. Suicide file.
- b. **ATLAS PROGRAM**: Stores and provides Registry of Motor Vehicle license and registration information.
- c. **NATIONAL CRIMINAL INFORMATION CENTER (NCIC)**: Stores records for Massachusetts as well as every other participating state and/or U.S. Territory. This gives the department access to an abundance of information from a variety of sources.
- d. **NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT TELE-COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM (NLETS)**: Users are capable of communicating with other state systems via NLETS. NLETS is a computerized, high-speed message switching system created for and dedicated to the criminal justice community. Its purpose is to take messages from one state, prepare it for its destination, and send it to its destination.
5. **RECORDING/PLAYBACK OF RECORDED TELEPHONE AND RADIO COMMUNICATIONS**: The Communications Console and equipment is located in the E911 Emergency Communications Center. Located in the Communications Center is the manual which explains the operation of the Equature DLR system. This records all telephone calls, including 911 recordings and radio recordings in the dispatch center and on selected operations area telephones, and all radio communications. The manual also explains the process of using and storing of tapes for this machine. [81.2.8-2A, 8A]
6. **ALARM**: [81.2.13] Alarm procedures are the responsibility of communications personnel.

- a. **ALARMS ARE RECEIVED IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER:** Alarm/Security agencies or security companies bring many alarms to our attention.
  - b. **RESPONSE TO ALARMS: [81.2.13]** It is the policy of the department to respond to all alarms, even when an individual contacts the station and advises that we disregard the alarm.
    - 1. **REQUEST TO DISREGARD:** Occasionally a request is made to disregard an alarm by an individual claiming to have set off their alarm accidentally or by an individual claiming to be working for an alarm company. All such instances shall be responded to unless the Officer-In-Charge determines otherwise.
    - 2. Alarms Set Off by Power Failures, Electrical Storms, etc.: Occasionally many alarms will be set off as a result of wide-ranging electrical disturbance.

When this occurs, the Officer-In-Charge shall be immediately advised. They shall determine what shall be the appropriate response.
    - 3. “Trouble Alarms” shall be handled in the same manner as a regular alarm. The cutting of a telephone line could cause a trouble alarm.
  - c. **ALARM REPORTS:** Officers shall report all false alarms to communications for entry into the CAD system. These reports shall be monitored and notifications shall be made in accordance with the city's false alarm ordinance.
- 7. **EMERGENCY MESSAGES:** All emergency messages received by the department will be relayed and/or acted upon by the means deemed to be most appropriate by the Officer-In-Charge (i.e., death notification, family emergencies, etc.). [81.2.11]
  - 8. **NOTIFICATION OF FIRE DEPARTMENT:** In all cases involving fire - and/or rescue- related calls, the fire department shall be notified immediately.
  - 9. **OPERATIONAL MANUALS:** Special Operational Manuals outlining dispatch plans to extraordinary circumstances (i.e., Hazardous Materials, Hostages, etc.) shall be maintained at the Emergency Dispatch Center.
  - 10. **EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM- CODE RED:**

- a. The Emergency Notification System allows user to quickly target a precise geographic area and saturate it with hundreds of calls per minute. The system's interactive technology provides immediate interaction with recipients and aids in rapid response to specific needs. The system is designed to respond to Public Safety and HazMat emergencies, to gather and report information about criminal activities, or to assist with weather related evacuations.
- b. There may be other situations in which public alerting become necessary. It is not practical to define all cases in which the Emergency Notification System will be used. The following criteria should be used as a general guideline for determining the need to issue an alert:
  - 1. **SEVERITY**: Is there a significant threat to public life and safety?
  - 2. **PUBLIC PROTECTION**: Is there a need for members of the public to take protective action in order to reduce loss of life or substantial loss of property?
  - 3. **WARNING**: Will providing warning information assist members of the public in making the decision to take proper and prudent actions?
  - 4. **TIMING**: Does the situation require immediate public knowledge in order to avoid adverse impact?
  - 5. **GEOGRAPHIC AREA**: Is the situation limited to a defined geographic area? Is that area of a size that will allow an effective use of the system, given the outgoing call capacity?
  - 6. Are other means of disseminating the information inadequate to ensure proper and timely delivery of the information?

**IF THE ANSWER TO ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS IS YES, THEN EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM ACTIVATION IS WARRANTED.**

c. **NON-EMERGENCY / INFORMATIONAL CALLING SESSIONS:**

- 1. All outgoing calling sessions shall only be made with the approval of the Officer in Charge of the 911 center, the Chief ETD or their designee.

2. Informational calling sessions shall only be made during reasonable hours. Informational calling sessions SHOULD NOT be made outside the default times set in the systems settings. Default setting for non-emergency calling is 0800 hours to 2000 hours.
  3. Informational messages should be delivered on any issue that could:
    - a. Adversely impact public health or well-being.
    - b. Have an impact on public safety; and/or cause serious public inconvenience, annoyance or alarm.
  4. The decision to use the REVERSE 911 system for informational calling sessions should be based upon the:
    - a. Usefulness of the message being delivered.
    - b. Timeframe and outgoing call capacity.
    - c. The accuracy of the information available.
    - d. The specific group[s] of people to be targeted by the message.
    - e. Inconvenience to phone customers.
    - f. The danger of causing unnecessary panic or alarm, and whether or not there are alternative methods available to deliver the same information more efficiently.
- d. **SEE CHAPTER 81A CODE RED EMERGENCY ALERT PROGRAM (EAP)**