

Emergency Communications Center

704.1 VERSION

Review Date	Effective Date	Approving Authority
5/10/18	7/9/18	Eric D. English, Chief of Police

704.2 POLICY AND PURPOSE

This policy establishes guidelines for the basic functions of Emergency Communications Center. It addresses the immediate information needs of the Department in the course of its normal daily activities and during emergencies. It is the policy of the Harrisonburg Police Department to provide 24-hour telephone service to the public for information and for routine or emergency assistance. The Department provides two-way radio capability for continuous communication between Emergency Communications Center and department members in the field.

704.3 ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

All employees are expected to fully comply with the guidelines and timelines set forth in this policy. Responsibility rests with the supervisor to ensure that any violations of policy are investigated and appropriate training, counseling and/or disciplinary action is initiated. This directive is for internal use only, and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violation of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

704.4 RESPONSIBILITIES

704.4.1 DIRECTOR OF THE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

The Chief of Police serves on the advisory board that coordinates and recommends operations of the Director of the Emergency Communications Center.

The responsibilities of the Director of the Emergency Communications Center include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Overseeing the efficient and effective operation of Emergency Communications Center in coordination with other supervisors and CALEA standards.
- (b) Scheduling and maintaining communicator time records.
- (c) Supervising, training and evaluating communicators.
- (d) Ensuring the radio and telephone recording system is operational.
 1. Recordings shall be securely stored and maintained in accordance with the established records retention schedule and as required by law or at the discretion of the ECC Administrative Board to be no less than the retention time period.

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- (e) Processing requests for copies of Emergency Communications Center information for release.
- (f) Maintaining Emergency Communications Center database systems.
- (g) Maintaining and updating Emergency Communications Center procedures manual.
 - 1. Procedures for specific types of crime reports may be necessary. For example, specific questions and instructions may be necessary when talking with a victim of a sexual assault to ensure that his/her health and safety needs are met, as well as steps that he/she may take to preserve evidence.
 - 2. Procedures for circumstances that require the presence of a supervisor at the scene may be necessary (e.g. notification of a supervisor to request his/her presence at an incident).
 - 3. Ensuring communicator compliance with established policies and procedures.
- (h) Handling personnel complaints
- (i) Maintaining a current contact list of City personnel to be notified in the event of a disaster/service emergency.
- (j) Maintaining a database containing the following information:
 - 1. The name of the officer in charge.
 - 2. A roster containing the contact telephone number of every sworn agency member.
 - 3. Duty schedule for incoming shifts.
 - 4. Visual maps detailing the Harrisonburg Police Department's service area.
 - 5. Officer status information.
 - 6. Written procedures and telephone numbers for procuring emergency and necessary external services to the Harrisonburg Police Department.

704.4.2 COMMUNICATORS

Communicators report to the Director of the Emergency Communications Center. The responsibilities of the communicators include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Receipt and handling of all incoming and transmitted communications, including:
 - 1. Emergency 9-1-1 lines.
 - 2. Business telephone lines.
 - 3. Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)/Text Telephone (TTY) equipment.
 - 4. Radio communications with department members in the field and support resources (e.g., fire department, emergency medical services (EMS), allied agency law enforcement units).
 - 5. Other electronic sources of information (e.g., text messages, digital photographs, video) where is applicable.

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- (b) Documenting the field activities of department members and support resources (e.g., fire department, EMS, allied agency law enforcement units).
- (c) Inquiry of information through Emergency Communications Center, department and other law enforcement database systems (e.g., VCIN, DMV, NCIC).
- (d) Maintaining the current status of members in the field, their locations and the nature of calls for service.
- (e) Notifying the Patrol Commander or field supervisor of emergency activity, including, but not limited to:
 - 1. Vehicle pursuits.
 - 2. Foot pursuits.
 - 3. Assignment of emergency response.

704.5 CALL HANDLING

This department provides members of the public with access to the 9-1-1 system for a single emergency telephone number.

When a call for services is received, the ECC Communicator will reasonably and quickly attempt to determine whether the call is an emergency or non-emergency, and shall quickly ascertain the call type, location and priority by asking five key questions:

- (a) Where?
- (b) What?
- (c) When?
- (d) Who?
- (e) How?

If the communicator determines that the caller has a hearing and/or speech impairment or disability, he/she shall immediately initiate a connection with the individual via available TDD/TTY equipment or Telephone Relay Service (TRS), as mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

If the communicator determines that the caller is a limited English proficiency (LEP) individual, the communicator should quickly determine whether sufficient information can be obtained to initiate an appropriate response. If language assistance is still needed, the language is known and a language-appropriate authorized interpreter is available in Emergency Communications Center, the communicator should immediately connect the LEP caller to the authorized interpreter.

If no authorized interpreter is available or the communicator is unable to identify the caller's language, the communicator will contact the contracted telephonic interpretation service and establish a three-party call connecting the communicator, the LEP individual and the interpreter.

Communicators should be courteous, patient and respectful when dealing with the public.

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704.5.1 EMERGENCY CALLS

A call is considered an emergency when there is an immediate or potential threat to life or serious property damage, and the timely arrival of public safety assistance is of the utmost importance. A person reporting an emergency should not be placed on hold until the communicator has obtained all necessary information to ensure the safety of the responding department members and affected individuals.

Emergency calls should be dispatched immediately. The patrol supervisor shall be notified of pending emergency calls for service when department members are unavailable for dispatch.

704.5.2 NON-EMERGENCY CALLS

A call is considered a non-emergency call when there is no immediate or potential threat to life or property. A person reporting a non-emergency may be placed on hold, if necessary, to allow the communicator to handle a higher priority or emergency call.

The reporting person should be advised if there will be a delay in the communicator returning to the telephone line or when there will be a delay in the response for service.

704.6 RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

The police radio system is for official use only, to be used by communicators to communicate with department members in the field. All transmissions shall be professional and made in a calm, professional manner, using proper language and correct procedures. Such transmissions shall include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Officers acknowledging the communicator with their radio identification call signs.
- (b) Communicators acknowledging and responding promptly to all radio transmissions.
- (c) Officers keeping the communicator advised of their status and location.
- (d) Officer and communicator acknowledgements shall be concise and without further comment unless additional information is needed.

Points of laws, policy, or procedural decisions, etc. will not be made by a communicator regarding operations performed by mobile units. If an officer needs advice or assistance, a supervisor is to be requested.

Supervisors are expected to monitor the radio traffic of personnel under their command to ensure that excessive numbers of units do not respond to calls. On most non priority calls for service requiring a back up unit, no more than one back-up unit shall respond unless a request is made by a unit at the scene or enroute of the event, or additional units are required by a supervisor.

Radio procedure violations or other related complaints will be reported to a supervisor and processed through the chain of command.

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704.6.1 RADIO IDENTIFICATION

Radio call signs are assigned to department members based on factors such as duty assignment, uniformed patrol assignment and/or member identification number. Members should use their call signs when initiating communication with the communicator. The use of the call sign allows for a brief pause so that the communicator can acknowledge the appropriate department member. Members initiating communication with other law enforcement or support agencies shall use their entire radio call sign, which includes the department station name or number.

704.7 DOCUMENTATION

It shall be the responsibility of Emergency Communications Center to document all relevant information on calls for service or self-initiated activity. Communicators shall attempt to elicit, document and relay as much information as possible to enhance the safety of the member and assist in anticipating conditions that may be encountered at the scene. Desirable information would include, at a minimum:

- (a) Call for service (CFS)
- (b) Date and time of request
- (c) Name and address of the reporting person, if possible
- (d) Type of incident reported
- (e) Involvement of weapons, drugs and/or alcohol
- (f) Location of incident reported
- (g) Identification of members assigned as primary and backup
- (h) Time of dispatch
- (i) Time of the responding member's arrival
- (j) Time of member's return to service
- (k) Disposition or status of reported incident
- (l) A log of the data captured by the computer system, if using a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system
- (m) Vehicle mileage and transport time when a member is transporting a juvenile or a person of the opposite sex

All appropriate data will be retained in accordance with an established retention schedule. Data will be purged when it has exceeded the established retention time or at the discretion of the ECC Administrative Board to be no less than the retention time period.

704.7.1 EVENT TYPES AND CLEARANCE

The following event types are for use for events which are typically unconfirmed prior to the arrival of field personnel. These events are not for the initial dispatch of units. In each case, on-scene investigation is required to establish these classifications. Any event may be reclassified by field personnel via radio or by telephone at any time.

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Literal/Plain Language

- (a) Traffic Crash - Fatal
- (b) Traffic Crash - Fatal - Hit and Run
- (c) Unlawful Assembly
- (d) Murder
- (e) Rape

Activities shall be cleared using one of the following codes:

- (a) Incident or Crash Report
- (b) Supplement Report
- (c) Canceled Enroute
- (d) Unfounded/Gone on Arrival
- (e) Service performed/Handled by Officer
- (f) Arrest or Summons
- (g) No Response
- (h) False Activation
- (i) Warning Issued

704.8 CONFIDENTIALITY

Information that becomes available through Emergency Communications Center may be confidential or sensitive in nature. All members of Emergency Communications Center shall treat information that becomes known to them as confidential and release that information in accordance with the Protected Information Policy.

Automated data, such as Department of Motor Vehicle records, warrants, criminal history information, records of internal police files or medical information or other critical Fire/EMS personnel, shall only be made available to authorized law enforcement personnel. Prior to transmitting confidential information via the radio, an admonishment shall be made that confidential information is about to be broadcast.

704.9 TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

Emergency Communications Center members whose duties include dispatching law enforcement personnel and who were hired on or after July 1, 1988, must meet compulsory minimum training standards and shall be certified by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services within 24 months of employment (Va. Code § 9.1-102; 6 VAC 20-60-30).

704.10 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER ALTERNATIVE POWER SOURCE

The Harrisonburg Fire Department and Emergency Communications Center shall:

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- (a) Maintain an alternate electrical power source sufficient for continued operations of emergency communications equipment absent primary power.
- (b) Maintain energy resources adequate for 3 days operation of the alternate power source.
- (c) Ensure readiness of the alternate source through scheduled routine testing.
- (d) Provide and inspect security measures to protect the power source and control/service panels.

704.11 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER SECURITY

The communications function is vital and central to all emergency service operations. The safety and security of the Emergency Communications Center, its members and its equipment must be a high priority. Special security procedures, including but not limited to the protection of the Emergency Communications Center equipment, should be established in an operations manual for the Emergency Communications Center.

Access to the Emergency Communications Center shall be limited to Emergency Communications Center members, the Patrol Commander, command staff and department members with a specific business-related purpose.

704.12 FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION COMPLIANCE

Harrisonburg Police Department radio operations shall be conducted in accordance with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) procedures and requirements.