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# Communications

## 801.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes guidelines for the basic functions of Talbot Center. It addresses the immediate information needs of the Office in the course of its normal daily activities and during emergencies.

## 801.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Talbot County Sheriff's Office to provide 24-hour telephone service to the public for information and for routine or emergency assistance that complies with Md. Code PS § 1-304. The Office provides two-way radio capability for continuous communication between Talbot Center and office members in the field.

## 801.3 TALBOT CENTER SECURITY

The communications function is vital and central to all emergency service operations. The safety and security of Talbot Center, its members and equipment must be a high priority. Special security procedures should be established in a separate operations manual for Talbot Center.

## 801.4 RESPONSIBILITIES

### 801.4.1 DISPATCHERS

The responsibilities of the dispatcher 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 office members in the field and support resources (i.e., fire department, emergency medical services (EMS), allied agency law enforcement units).
  - 5. Other electronic sources of information (e.g., text messages, digital photographs, video).
- (b) Documenting the field activities of office members and support resources (i.e., fire department, EMS, allied agency law enforcement units).
- (c) Inquiry and entry of information through Talbot Center, office and other law enforcement database systems (i.e., Maryland Electronic Telecommunications Enforcement Resource System (METERS), National Crime Information Center

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(NCIC), National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS), Division of Parole and Probation, etc.).

- (d) Monitoring office video surveillance systems.
- (e) Maintaining the current status of members in the field, their locations and the nature of calls for service.
- (f) Notifying the Shift Sergeant of field supervisor of emergency activity, including, but not limited to:
  - 1. Vehicle pursuits.
  - 2. Foot pursuits
  - 3. Assignment of emergency response.

Dispatchers report to the Communications Supervisor.

#### **801.5 CALL HANDLING**

This office 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 dispatcher 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 four key questions:

- Where?
- What?
- When?
- Who?

If the dispatcher 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 dispatcher determines that the caller is a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individual, the dispatcher 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 Talbot Center, the dispatcher should immediately connect the LEP caller to the authorized interpreter.

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

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

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#### **801.5.1 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 dispatcher has obtained all necessary information to ensure the safety of the responding office members and affected individuals.

Emergency calls should be dispatched immediately. The Shift Sergeant shall be notified of pending emergency calls for service when office members are unavailable for dispatch.

#### **801.5.2 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 dispatcher to handle a higher priority or emergency call.

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

#### **801.6 RADIO COMMUNICATIONS**

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

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

The Communications Supervisor shall be notified of radio procedure violations or other causes for complaint. All complaints and violations will be investigated and reported to the complainant's supervisor and processed through the chain of command.

#### **801.6.1 FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION COMPLIANCE**

Talbot County Sheriff's Office radio operations shall be conducted in accordance with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) procedures and requirements.

#### **801.6.2 RADIO IDENTIFICATION**

Radio call signs are assigned to office members based on factors such as duty assignment, uniformed patrol assignment and/or member identification number. Dispatchers shall identify themselves on the radio with the appropriate station name or number, and identify the office member by his/her call sign. Members should use their call signs when initiating communication with the dispatcher. The use of the call sign allows for a brief pause so that the dispatcher can

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acknowledge the appropriate office member. Members initiating communication with other law enforcement or support agencies shall use their entire radio call sign, which includes the office station name or number.

#### **801.7 DOCUMENTATION**

It shall be the responsibility of Talbot Center to document all relevant information on calls for service or self-initiated activity. Dispatchers 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, the following:

- Incident control number
- Date and time of request
- Name and address of the reporting person, if possible
- Type of incident reported
- Involvement of weapons, drugs and/or alcohol
- Location of incident reported
- Identification of members assigned as primary and backup
- Time of dispatch
- Time of the responding member's arrival
- Time of member's return to service
- Disposition or status of reported incident

#### **801.8 CONFIDENTIALITY**

Information that becomes available through Talbot Center may be confidential or sensitive in nature. All Talbot Center members 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 Motor Vehicle Administration records, warrants, criminal history information, records of internal sheriff's files, or medical information 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.

#### **801.9 TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION**

All dispatchers shall successfully complete training within six months of employment using a curriculum approved by the state Emergency Number Systems Board which includes training on Public Safety Answering Point orientation, communication skills, electronic systems, policies and procedures, call processing, documentation, stress management, administrative duties and disaster and major incidents (COMAR 12.11.03.10).

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Any dispatcher receiving and dispatching Emergency Medical Service (EMS) or Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) duties shall also have (COMAR 30.02.02.03):

- (a) Accumulated 2,000 hours of public safety call-taking or call-allocating experience.
- (b) Successfully completed an EMD program and exam approved by the state EMS Board.
- (c) Obtained a license by achieving a passing score on an EMD written licensure exam administered by the Maryland Institute for EMS Systems (MIEMSS).
- (d) Current CPR certification.