



Somerville Police Department 	TYPE: GENERAL ORDER		POLICY NUMBER: 411				
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Purpose

The basic function of the communications system is to satisfy the immediate information needs of the Somerville Police Department in the course of its normal daily activities and during emergencies. The latter situation places the greatest demand on the communications system and tests the capability of the system to fulfill its functions. Measures and standards of performance are necessary to assess the effectiveness with which any organization, large or small, uses available information technology in the fulfillment of its missions.

Policy

It is the policy of the Somerville Police Department to maintain an efficient flow of information. It is 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.

Procedures

1. Organization and Administration of Dispatch Area

The dispatch area is staffed by certified E-911 personnel who are under the immediate control of the Shift Commander.

- A. Dispatchers receive all oral communications from the public and public safety personnel coming into the Somerville Police Station. By following established policies and procedures, appropriate police personnel and resources are dispatched when requested.
- B. Only assigned personnel and those authorized by the Chief of Police, or his/her designee, shall have access to the dispatch area. The Shift Commander may allow officers to enter the area to assist communications personnel, obtain teletype printouts, etc., provided however, that such instances shall be at times when they do not disrupt the communications operations and the officers leave the area after accomplishing their purpose for entering. [81.3.1(a)]

- C. Access to all communications equipment shall be secured at all times. Access to such equipment shall be made available only to qualified and authorized personnel. Keys to communications equipment rooms are kept in the Commanders Office. Unless equipment is being serviced, the doors to the all communications equipment rooms shall remain locked. [81.3.1(b)]
- D. The Shift Commander shall provide a daily duty roster to the E-911 Call Taker/Clerk. This will include officer-in-charge, officer assignments, and all other personnel working that shift. The E-911 Call Taker/Clerk will electronically enter assignments into the CAD system for call purposes. The dispatch system includes a visual map to assist with the dispatching of officers to areas for calls for service. All residential employees' contact telephone numbers are available to communications personnel. This information is located in CAD under the Rolodex feature. [81.2.5]
- E. **Dispatcher Resources:** All communications personnel shall have immediate access to the following resources: [81.2.5(f)]
1. Officer in Charge.
 2. Duty roster of Departmental personnel.
 3. Residential telephone numbers of all sworn and unsworn personnel.
 4. Maps detailing the City of Somerville.
 5. Officer status information via the CAD system.
 6. Procedures and telephone numbers for emergency external services to the agency, including, but not limited to:
 - a. National Grid (Gas)
 - b. Eversource (Gas/Electric)
 - c. Verizon
 - d. Comcast
 7. City Departments and Officials
 - a. Department of Public Works (DPW)
 - b. School Department
 - c. Mayor
 - d. IT personnel
 - e. Fire Department
 8. The Department's Dispatch Emergency and Tactical Plans can be found in [Policy 105-All Hazards Plan](#). This plan can be located in Policy Tech and a hard copy can be located in the Commanding Officers Office.
 9. All telephone numbers for law enforcement agencies are located at each E-911 public safety answering point (PSAP).

2. Audio and Radio Recording

- A. Dispatchers shall comply with Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 41, Section 98F, regarding the daily logs, which reads as follows:

Each police department and each college or university to which officers have been appointed pursuant to the provisions of section sixty-three of chapter twenty-two C shall make, keep and maintain a daily log, written in a form that can be easily understood, recording, in chronological order, all responses to valid complaints received, crimes reported, the names, addresses of persons arrested and the charges against such persons arrested. All entries in said daily logs shall, unless otherwise provided in law, be public records available without charge to the public during regular business hours and at all other reasonable times; provided, however, that any entry in a log which pertains to a handicapped individual who is physically or mentally incapacitated to the degree that said person is confined to a wheelchair or is bedridden or requires the use of a device designed to provide said person with mobility, shall be kept in a separate log and shall not be a public record nor shall such entry be disclosed to the public. In addition to MGL Chapter 41 Section 98F, dispatchers shall record all requests for police service and self-initiated activity using the in house computer CAD system and shall, as accurately as reasonably possible record the following:

1. The control/call number (incident number) [81.2.3(a)]
 2. Date and time of request [81.2.3(b)]
 3. Name and address of complainant, if possible [81.2.3(c)]
 4. Type of incident reported [81.2.3(d)]
 5. Location of incident reported [81.2.3(e)]
 6. Identification of officer(s) assigned as primary and back-up[81.2.3(f)]
 7. Time of dispatch [81.2.3(g)]
 8. Time of officer arrival [81.2.3(h)]
 9. Time of officer return to service [81.2.3(i)]
 10. Disposition or status of reported incident. [81.2.3(j)]
- B. All calls received through the emergency alternative line(617-625-1212) and individual extensions, 7220(Detective Clerk), 7244(Records), 7250(Stationman 1), 7253(Commander), 7254(Stationman 2), 7259(Patrol Supervisor), and 7266/7267

(Details) are recorded on the DSS Logger voice recorder. The DSS Logger voice recorder also records all radio transmissions.

- C. The department provides continuous toll free service through communications on business line 617-625-1600, emergency alternative line 617-625-1212, 911, and 311 during off-hours. The department's telephone system is designed to separate emergency from non-emergency calls. [81.3.3]
- D. Instant playback is available for calls received on the 911 System. This includes 911 calls, calls received on the two-way line, and on the one-way line. Radio transmissions are also available for instant playback. The purpose of the playback must only be for training or quality assurance, criminal investigative purpose, to review a call prior to release to the media, or to comply with a court order such as motion for discovery. Any other reason must be expressly approved by the Chief of Police. [81.2.8(c)]
- E. The E-911 digital recordings and radio transmissions shall be retained for at least one (1) year (MGL Chapter 6A, Section 18G) provided no litigation is pending. E-911 call detail records will be retained for a period of not less than three (3) years (MGL Chapter 6A, Section 18A-F). Since the State 911 Department installed new systems at all PSAPs, there are no longer any digital discs to change. No maintenance is required by PSAP personnel. The new system records and stores all voice transmissions in digital format to a logging recorder called the Acorn System, which is located in the Server Room. The entire recording system is locked in the Server Room. [81.2.8(a)(b)]
- F. The Administrative Captain is in charge of the DSS system, but the Court Liaison Sergeant and the Chief's Administrative Aide are responsible for the day-to-day duties associated with retrieving and copying voice recordings. The Captain, Court Liaison Sergeant and the Chief's Administrative Aide shall have access to the DSS DLR system. No one shall listen to, playback, or record any tapes from the recorder without permission from the Chief or his/her designee. This shall not include immediate playback of a call for the purpose of rechecking or verifying information. The DSS DLR system may be accessed by an authorized VPN issued by the State 911 or by the stand-alone machine located in the former Station Officer area. Playback of recordings from the DSS DLR system shall only be done by an authorized individual (Authorized by the Chief) who has been trained in the system's use. The purpose of the playback must only be for training or quality assurance, criminal investigative purpose, to review a call prior to release to the media, or to comply with a court order such as motion for discovery. Any other reason must be expressly approved by the Chief of Police. [81.2.8(c)]
- G. Requests for copies of 911 tapes shall be handled in accordance with the department policy on records request or discovery. The Court Liaison Sergeant shall handle court related 911 request. The Chief's Administrative Aide shall handle all other 911 request. In the absence of the Court Liaison Sergeant, the Chief's Administrative Aide may serve as a back up to the 911 request, and vice versa.

3. Back-Up Resources

- A. The police department has a diesel-powered generator as a backup source of electrical power. This generator performs an automatic weekly self-test. In the event the generator fails to start, an audible alarm sounds in the garage area. The generator is tested and/or operated under full-load at least once a year. [81.3.2]
- B. In the event that the E-911 telephone system fails, the Verizon E-911 Customer Care Center (CCC) shall immediately be notified. The CCC phone number is 800-391-1435. The alternate PSAP's shall also be notified. [81.3.1(c)]
- C. In the event the department's phone lines fail:
 - 1. Notify all the on-duty officers
 - 2. Notify the fire department
 - 3. Notify the telephone company of the emergency situation
 - 4. Make use of the phone lines (one-way or two-way) on the E-911 system.
 - 5. Make use of the Mobile Data Terminals provided in dispatch and patrol vehicles.
- D. In the event that the primary radio fails, the portable police radio located in dispatch may be used as an alternative source of communication. [81.3.1(c)]

4. Radio Procedures

- A. The Somerville Police Department employees will adhere to Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules and regulations which may be found on the FCC Homepage: http://wireless.fcc.gov/index.htm?job=rules_and_regulations. [81.1.2]
- B. Under the rules of the FCC (Code of Federal Regulations, Part 47), it is unlawful to:
 - 1. Transmit superfluous signals or messages of a personal nature
 - 2. Transmit false calls or distress signals
 - 3. Use profane, indecent, or obscene language
 - 4. Willfully damage or permit radio equipment to be damaged
 - 5. Cause unlawful or malicious interference with other radio communications
 - 6. Intercept and use or publish the contents of radio messages without expressed written permission of proper authorities
 - 7. Make unnecessary or unidentified transmissions

8. Transmit without first making sure that the transmission will not cause harmful interference
 9. Make adjustments, repairs, or alterations to radio transmitters without correct licenses
 10. Transmit call signals, letters, or numerals which have not been assigned
 11. Deny access to radio equipment if properly identified representatives of the FCC ask to inspect it at reasonable times.
- C.** Officers and other field personnel will maintain radio communications at all times during their tours of duty and will notify dispatch when they are out of service for meal breaks, or when leaving the city. [81.2.4(b)]
- D.** Officer status indicators will be used by dispatch personnel to note the status of field personnel. Officers (field personnel) will keep dispatch personnel advised of their status including: [81.2.4(a)]
1. Informing dispatch of all changes in duty status
 2. Clearing assignments through dispatch as quickly as practicable
 3. Advising dispatch when responding to, or present at, incident scenes
 4. Informing dispatch of all motor vehicle stops
 5. Notifying dispatch when out-of-service
- E.** Radio transmissions will be as clear, precise, and calm. Only pertinent information will be transmitted to minimize use disruptions and maximize radio use for efficient delivery of police services.
- F.** In order to minimize repeat broadcasts, officers should either write, or take other steps to record or retain, necessary information received from dispatch. Dispatchers shall request that officers be prepared to copy information if dispatch is about to give a broadcast containing a substantial amount of information.
- G.** Confidential information such as Criminal Offender Record Information, or other information which is unusually sensitive, should not be routinely broadcast over the radio unless immediate communication is essential for officer safety purposes. This information should be transmitted using the MDT's or by cell phone. [81.2.4(a)]
- H.** Personal information about employees, including home addresses and telephone numbers, will not be transmitted over the radio.
- I.** Employees will not knowingly transmit with the intent of interfering with other units, e.g., purposely transmitting at the same time as other units or microphone clicking.

- J. Background noises in dispatch and in the cruisers (e.g., car AM/FM radio) will be minimized, if at all possible, before transmitting. Courtesy is most essential for the efficient and effective operation of the radio system. Discourtesy, sarcasm, banter, or arguments will not be tolerated.
- K. The dispatch console radios, cruiser radios and officer's portable radios shall be programmed with the capability to communicate with other law enforcement agencies. This would include BAPER, NEMLEC, Boston, Cambridge, Medford, Arlington and Tufts. Included are the Somerville DPW, and Somerville Fire Department. Examples of communication will include, but are not limited to, mutual aid request, motor vehicle pursuits into surrounding cities and towns, notification of presence for investigations or arrest, escorts, ambulance request, and road hazard notifications. [81.2.4(d)] [81.3.4]

5. Radio Identification

- A. Dispatch shall be called "Somerville Control" or "Control" when using the radio system.
- B. Officers (field personnel) will use their assigned cruiser number to identify themselves when calling on the radio. Superior officers will use the designated staff number assigned to their position, and field personnel not assigned to a cruiser (such as when on a detail) shall identify themselves by their portable radio number. [81.2.4(c)]
- C. All officers shall be assigned a portable radio with a distinct identification number, two batteries, and a charger. This radio is to be carried by all officers while on duty or detail. Officers also have the ability to communicate with dispatch or cruiser-to-cruiser mobile data terminal. This will ensure two-way communication capabilities between the dispatch and the officer. [81.2.2]
- D. The radio ID numbers are posted in the dispatch area by the radio console and on SPIN.
- E. Officers (field personnel) may activate the emergency alarm on the portable radio in cases such as: officer needs assistance, officer in trouble, felony in progress, life saving situations, and other similar events. In these cases, the dispatcher will immediately check the portable ID number by the radio console and attempt to contact that officer. Units will be dispatched to the last known location of that officer in response to the emergency request. [81.2.4(g)]

6. Receiving Emergency Messages [81.2.11]

- A. Upon receiving information from another police agency, hospital, or other source reporting that a death, serious injury, serious illness, or any other type of emergency has occurred, communication personnel or officers shall ascertain the following information:
 - 1. The full names and addresses of the person or persons to be notified
 - 2. Name and callback number of person conveying the information to this department

3. Any other pertinent information that may help the officer making the notification
- B. Upon ascertaining all of the above information, the Shift Commander will be notified.
 - C. Emergency notification requests by other agencies should be supported by a teletype message or some other form of confirmation (when applicable).
 - D. When the above information is received by telephone, communication personnel or the officer receiving the call shall verify it by a return telephone call.
 - E. When all information has been verified, all notifications should be carried out promptly and in a considerate manner.
 - F. These emergency messages may include but are not limited to:
 1. Notification of serious or life-threatening injuries or illness;
 2. Notification of death or serious family circumstances; and
 3. Other messages of an emergency nature as authorized by the Commanding Officer.

7. Receiving Emergency Reports

- A. Dispatch may accept certain crime and incident reports by telephone in lieu of dispatching a police officer if the caller does not wish to speak with a police officer. This would include past incidents of crimes of a minor nature, traffic violations, and past vandalism that do not involve the collection or potential collection of physical evidence. The dispatchers should verify with the Shift Commander if there is doubt as to whether an officer should be dispatched. [82.2.5]
- B. If officers receive a crime or incident report by mail, the incident should be logged and appropriately investigated. The officer will gather all pertinent information from the complaint to complete an incident report when necessary. If the crime is of a serious nature, officers should consider requesting an officer from the jurisdiction where the victim resides to speak with the victim. Officers shall request a copy of the investigator's police incident report. [82.2.5]
- C. A person may file a complaint on the Somerville Police Department website or via Text-A-Tip. The complaint will then be forwarded to the appropriate division for investigation and follow-up. The investigating officers will notify the complainant of the outcome of the investigation. [82.2.5]

8. Recording Reported Incidents

- A. The majority of crimes and complaints received by this department from citizens do not require the submission of a narrative report. However, all citizen reports of crime and all

citizen complaints received by a Station Officer or a Dispatcher shall result in the creation of an incident in CAD describing the crime or complaint, recording the information of the complainant, unless it is an anonymous report. [82.2.2(a)(b)].

- B. All incidents resulting in the dispatching or assigning of an officer, or officers, shall be recorded as an incident in CAD. [82.2.2(c)]
- C. All criminal and non-criminal cases initiated by law enforcement employees, with the exception of minor motor vehicle offenses, shall be investigated and recorded in CAD. [82.2.2(d)]
- D. All arrests, citations, or summonses shall be recorded in CAD. [82.2.2(e)]

9. Call Numbering System

- A. The department computer system will automatically generate a number. The in-house computer will have a sequential numbering system beginning with a two-digit year followed by a sequential number for all incidents of law enforcement service, including traffic collision investigations, criminal investigations, offense reports, warrant service, and miscellaneous calls for service. [82.2.3]

10. Transfer Procedure for a Medical Call That Requires Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD)

- A. When an E-911 call requires emergency medical services, personnel shall advise the calling person to remain on the line and that the call is being transfer to EMS.
 - 1. E-911 personnel (Primary PSAP - public safety answering point) shall conference the Ambulance EMD Resource by using the (EMD Button) located on the E-911 monitor.
 - 2. Cataldo-Atlantic Ambulance will greet with “*Ambulance*”
 - 3. Primary PSAP will respond with, “*This is Somerville with a 911 transfer. The address is (callers location, e.g. 1234 Sample Street) Go ahead EMS.*”
 - 4. Primary PSAP may stay on the line and notify the Fire Department that they just transferred a medical to the ambulance service for location.

11. Misdirected Emergency Calls

- A. In the event that a caller mistakenly reaches this department, the following procedures will be followed: [81.2.12]
 - 1. Emergency Calls – If the call requires an immediate response, personnel will take all pertinent information and then relay it to the appropriate agency. This will include advising the calling person that the call is being transferred and they should remain on

the line. The dispatcher or desk officer shall remain on the line and monitor the call until it is properly transferred to the other agency.

2. Non-Emergency Calls – In non-emergency cases, the caller will be referred to the appropriate agency.

B. To facilitate this procedure, a directory of telephone numbers for neighboring police departments and law enforcement agencies shall be maintained in the dispatch area.

12. Calls for Information or Services

A. Victims of crime or other events and/or witnesses to these events, may contact the department for information or additional services. Dispatchers will be responsible for ascertaining the nature of the call to determine whether an emergency or non-emergency response is required. [81.2.6(a)] [82.2.5]

B. If an emergency exists within the jurisdictional bounds of the department, the appropriate personnel shall be dispatched. [81.2.6(b)]

C. For calls falling outside the city's jurisdiction, the dispatcher will immediately notify the agency with jurisdiction. [81.2.6(b)]

D. If no emergency exists, the dispatcher will forward the call to the appropriate person within the department. If the officer is on-duty, the message will be relayed to the officer immediately. [81.2.6(a)]

E. If the officer is not on-duty, the caller will be told when they will be on-duty next, and then be given the choice of leaving a message (voicemail if applicable) or talking to an on-duty officer. Every reasonable effort will be made to answer the caller's requests or needs. [81.2.6(a)]

F. A list of available contact information to other agencies shall be kept in the dispatch area for victims and witnesses. Review policy: Victim and Witness Assistance for more information. [81.2.6(b)]

13. Dispatching Calls

A. Criteria for Assignment

1. The dispatcher will maintain the status of available officers in a visual format. This is normally done by the departments computer aided dispatch (CAD) system. [81.2.5(e)]

2. Response Assignments

- A. The dispatcher will normally assign officers to each call based on their patrol responsibilities.
- B. The Commanding Officer may vary the number of responders to a given call.

B. Dispatching Responders

1. Available units will be identified in the CAD with a “CLEAR” status.
 2. Dispatchers should use the following criteria when assigning responding units:
 - A. The unit’s area of assignment;
 - B. Availability;
 - C. Nature of the call; and
 - D. Location at the time of the call
 3. Responding units shall be dispatched by radio so that other units are aware of the call, unless the nature of the call dictates the need for secrecy.
 4. When responders are dispatched, their status shall be changed to “DISP.”
 5. As each responder arrives, the dispatcher shall change the status of the responder to “ONLOC” in CAD. [81.2.4(b)]
 6. When responding units finish the call and go back in service, the dispatcher shall change the responders’ status to “CLEAR” in the CAD.
- C. Multiple Officer Response: The following types of incidents require two or more officers to respond: [81.2.4(e)]
1. Disturbances;
 2. Officer requests for emergency assistance or duress alarm; [81.2.4(g)]
 3. Fleeing suspect(s);
 4. Crimes in progress;
 5. Domestic disturbances;
 6. Commercial or panic alarms;
 7. Drug law violation;
 8. Assaults or crimes of violence;
 9. B&E/Burglary;
 10. Noise complaints;
 11. Sex offenses;
 12. Warrants (when served);
 13. Weapons violations; and

14. Robberies.**D. Response Requiring a Supervisor [81.2.4(f)]**

1. A supervisor shall normally respond to and take command of the following types of incidents:
 - A. Missing child;
 - B. Robbery;
 - C. School disturbance;
 - D. Murder;
 - E. Hostage situations;
 - F. Bomb threats, bombings, large-scale fires or other critical incidents including the discovery of suspicious materials;
 - G. Unattended deaths or the discovery of dead bodies;
 - H. Major civil disturbances, whether organized or not;
 - I. Incidents where an employee's actions result in officer, citizen or suspect injuries;
 - J. Raids on property or premises;
 - K. Serious crimes or incidents, which are potentially dangerous to officers or the public;
 - L. Accidents involving police, fire or municipal vehicles; and
 - M. Motor vehicle accidents involving serious bodily injury or death.

2. When staffing is inadequate, mutual aid, including calls to the North Eastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (NEMLEC) or State Police, may be appropriate, at the discretion of the Commanding Officer.