

# WEST PALM BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

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## IV-20 COMMUNICATIONS

**EFFECTIVE: 04/04/2006**

CALEA Standards: 81.1.2, 81.2.1, 81.2.2, 81.2.4, 81.2.5e,  
81.2.6, 81.2.7, 81.2.8, 81.2.11, 81.2.12, 81.2.13, 81.3.1, 81.3.2  
CFA Standards: 33.01 THRU 33.16

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**I. POLICY:** The basic function of Dispatch Operations is to receive, screen, and prioritize calls for service and to subsequently dispatch the appropriate response in an efficient and coordinated manner. Telephone communications provide the necessary link between citizen requests for service and the appropriate police, fire and/or EMS field units. The Dispatch Operations Center receives emergency and non-emergency calls for service. Radio communication is the primary means used by dispatchers to relay information to police and fire and/or EMS. Communications by radio will be in accordance with procedures and regulations established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

### **II. LIMITED ACCESS TO THE DISPATCH OPERATIONS CENTER:**

A. Access to Dispatch Operations is limited to the following personnel:

1. Dispatch Operations personnel on duty;
2. Supervisory personnel on official business;
3. Maintenance and service personnel;
4. The Chief of Police and Administrative Staff on official business; and
5. Those other persons on official business upon approval of the Dispatch Operations Shift Supervisor:
  - a. To enter the Dispatch Center, contact the Dispatch Shift Supervisor or a designee through the use of the intercom located beside the entry doors.

B. Protection of Personnel and Equipment:

1. The Dispatch Operations Center is located in an inaccessible area out of view of the general public.
2. Windows in the Dispatch Operations Center with public exposure are fitted with shutters for storm and possible assault protection.
3. Blinds on the windows with public exposure remain closed at all times to disguise the space occupied by the Dispatch Center.
4. Transmission lines, antennas, and power sources are protected by limiting access to areas where they are housed or are accessible.
5. Alternate power sources are available in the form of battery back-up and diesel electric generators in the event of an electrical failure.
  - a. The back up system can power the communications apparatus for a minimum of ten (10) days.
  - b. Back-up systems are located within the secured area of the Police Administration building.
6. Two additional/alternative (back-up) dispatch positions and equipment are located in the Training Room adjacent to Dispatch Operations.
  - a. When catastrophic emergency conditions require abandoning the Dispatch Operations floor, essential functions and equipment will be transferred to the emergency connections, which is located in room 1110 across from the Field Operations Bureau Commanders office.

b. Dispatch functions will be restored through the connection of a mobile CAD computer to the data lines and use of portable radios for voice communications. Telephones are present at all times at the emergency connections.

7. Entrances to the Dispatch Operations Center are controlled by electronic locks.

C. Dispatch personnel are issued a key card for access. This card is for the person's exclusive use until employment is terminated.

### **III. RECORDING OF RADIO TRANSMISSIONS:**

A. All telephone conversations and radio transmissions routed through, from, or into the Dispatch Operations Center are recorded.

B. Recordings are made utilizing box files and are retained for a ninety (90) day period. These recordings are not editable and are saved in their original format.

C. Emergency requests to review recorded radio transmissions or telephone conversations will be granted by the on-duty Dispatch Operations Shift Supervisor when the request meets one of the following criteria:

1. The request is made by a West Palm Beach Police Department Supervisor.
2. The request is related to an active criminal or internal investigation.

D. Routine requests for recorded radio transmissions or telephone conversations will be in writing, routed through the on duty shift supervisor to the Dispatch Operations administrative supervisor for processing.

1. All requests will be handled in accordance with applicable public records laws.

E. The computer aided dispatch or (CAD) positions are equipped with recall software for recording and immediate playback of telephone calls or radio transmissions.

### **IV. 911 PHONE ACCESS:**

A. The West Palm Beach Police Department is a member of the E-911 emergency system which provides toll free emergency telephone access throughout the City. The Dispatch Operations Center provides 24 hour telephone coverage of both the E-911 emergency system and non-emergency telephone lines. Phone systems are able to separate emergency from non-emergency calls.

B. The 911 emergency number will be printed each year in the phone directories as the single number to call for emergency service in the City of West Palm Beach.

C. The 911 Emergency Phone System will only be used by Department personnel in an emergency.

### **V. HANDLING MISDIRECTED CALLS:**

A. The Dispatch Operations Center receives emergency calls for service. In the event a misdirected emergency call is received, the call taker will immediately use one of the following methods to redirect the calls:

1. Misdirected 911 calls will be transferred immediately by way of the direct transfer buttons or manually dialing the appropriate agency number.
2. In cases where it is evident the caller will not be able to wait or repeat critical information, the Complaint Operator will take the necessary information then personally and promptly relay it to the appropriate agency.
3. In the event a misdirected call on 911 is not an emergency, the caller will be provided with and instructed to dial the appropriate non-emergency number.

**VI. INFORMATION BY TELEPHONE:**

A. Dispatch Operations personnel will elicit as much information as possible from complainants in order to enhance the safety of the officer and assist in anticipating conditions to be encountered at the scene.

1. All Dispatch Operations personnel, when occupying a call taker position, have access to a "Complaint Taker's Guide" which contains pertinent questions to be asked for each type of incident.

B. The Dispatch Operations Division utilizes a CAD system to permanently record specific information for all requests for service.

C. Information to be obtained and/or automatically recorded will include, but is not limited to:

1. Location of incident;
2. Type of incident;
3. Complainants name and address (if possible);
4. Time/date call received;
5. Time dispatched;
6. Time of officer arrival;
7. Time of officer completion/return to service;
8. Officer unit and I.D. number; and
9. Disposition or status of a report.

D. Upon completion of the incident, issued case numbers will be permanently stored in the Records Management System.

**VII. ACCESS TO DEPARTMENT RESOURCES:**

A. Current address, phone number and other relevant off-duty contact information of every Department member is immediately available to Dispatch Operations personnel.

1. Contact information will not be broadcast over any radio channel or given to anyone who is not a member of the Department.

B. Division schedules are provided to Dispatch Operations personnel at the beginning of each shift, or as requested, by designated division personnel.

C. Dispatch Operations personnel have immediate access to the Shift Commander or other officer in charge at all times by issued police radio, cellular telephone, and/or pager.

**VIII. PROCURING OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE:**

A. Each call taker's console within the Dispatch Operations Center is equipped with a speed dialer capable of rapid connection with local emergency service agencies. The numbers of those agencies not on the speed dialers are accessed through the telephone rolodex system.

B. Agencies to be contacted by Dispatch Operations personnel for assistance include, but are not limited to;

1. Fire Department - Dispatch Operations dispatches for police, fire, and EMS. Ambulances or other appropriate agencies are contacted as needed.

2. Wreckers - The City of West Palm Beach contracts with local towing services. When a field unit or other authorized Department member requests a wrecker, a contracted service will be called on a rotating basis unless otherwise specified.
3. Taxis - The Dispatch Operations Division may be called upon to assist citizens in need of transportation for various reasons, i.e., intoxicated persons, stranded motorists, etc. The call taker will advise the citizen of available taxi service in the area and assist by calling, if necessary.
4. Lockouts - In the event of an emergency where someone is needed to assist with an entry, an officer will be dispatched and/or fire or other appropriate entities, such as a locksmith, may be notified.
5. Social Service Agencies - Request for social service agency assistance received over the phone will be handled by supplying the caller with the correct name and phone number of the agency best equipped to handle the caller's particular needs.
6. Hazardous Material - In the event Department personnel encounter, or a call is received advising of a situation involving, hazardous material, an officer and/or the West Palm Beach Fire Department will be dispatched. The supervising fire personnel at the scene of the hazardous material will analyze the circumstances and notify the appropriate hazardous material agency.
7. Public Utilities - In the event an emergency occurs involving damage or the malfunction of City owned or maintained equipment, Dispatch Operations personnel will immediately notify the City Engineering and Public Works Department or the Utilities Department, as appropriate. If an incident occurs after normal business hours, Dispatch Operations personnel will notify the Utilities Communication Center for call out.
8. Aircraft/Helicopter- The West Palm Beach Police Department maintains a helicopter in the event that air support is needed. If the helicopter is unavailable, Dispatch Operations will request assistance from the appropriate agency as needed.

#### **IX. TACTICAL DISPATCHING PLANS:**

- A. A Tactical Dispatch Plan is available to all Police personnel in the policy and procedure manual (Appendix A).
- B. A copy of the Tactical Dispatch Plan will be available at each console.
- C. All Dispatch Operations personnel will be familiar with the Tactical Dispatch Plan.

#### **X. HANDLING CONTACT MESSAGES:**

##### A. Emergency messages:

1. Emergency notifications involving cases investigated by the West Palm Beach Police Department will be handled by the on-duty officer in charge of the investigation.
2. Requests received by telephone in the Dispatch Operations Center from other agencies to locate or notify next of kin will be confirmed by teletype message from the requesting agency. The Dispatch Operations personnel receiving the request will obtain the name and phone number of the person making the request. Depending on the nature of the information to be relayed, Dispatch Operations personnel will determine the number of units to be dispatched and if it is necessary for a Patrol Supervisor to assist.
3. Requests to other agencies will be handled by the investigating officer who will make the initial contact with the agency by telephone. After being notified by the investigating officer, Dispatch Operations personnel will send a confirmation teletype message.

##### B. Non-emergency messages:

1. Non-emergency contact messages will be assigned to the appropriate zone unit. Non-emergency

messages which do not include a specific location for the recipient will be handled by an "attempt to locate" broadcast.

2. When received as a request from another agency, a teletype confirmation is required prior to the message being delivered.

3. The investigating officer may request Dispatch Operations personnel to make a non-emergency notification, i.e., officer on the scene of an accident. Telephone contact and a confirmation teletype message will be sent to the other agency.

#### **XI. OFFICER STATUS INDICATORS:**

A. Through the use of the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, an officer's change in status is recorded when entered by either the Dispatcher or the officer.

1. The dispatcher will check on the well being of any officer at a call for service or any situation where circumstances indicate a hazardous condition may exist.

2. These checks will continue at two (2) minute intervals or less until the officer has cleared the scene or has advised code 4.

B. Dispatch Operations personnel assigned to a call taker position can view officer status by way of the CAD System.

C. A record of an officer's radio transmissions indicating "out-of-service" times are recorded on the digital recording system. Tapes are retained for a 90 day period unless otherwise requested.

#### **XII. MAP OF SERVICE AREA:**

A. Zone and county maps are maintained in a notebook at each console for a quick, ready reference.

#### **XIII. ALTERNATE ELECTRICAL POWER SOURCE/BACK UP RESOURCES:**

A. The West Palm Beach Police Department has, as an alternate source of electrical power, a generator capable of producing sufficient electrical power to maintain continuous emergency communications. The emergency generator is secured within the police complex.

B. A generator inspection and test of the alternate power source will be conducted weekly for a duration of one hour under full load by the Police Facility Supervisor or designee to ensure readiness. Generator tests will be logged.

**XIV. REFERENCE:**

- SOP # IV-13 Notification of Next of Kin.
- SOP # IV-21 Radio Procedures and Identification.
- FCC Manual.

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**Delsa R. Bush Chief of Police**

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Old SOP # 6.200.001 Telecommunications Functions, 6.200.005 Authorized Personnel in Communications, 6.200.009 E-911 Phone Access, 6.200.007 Recording and Review of Radio Conversations, 6.200.011 Access to Department Resources, 6.200.012 Outside Department Assistance, 6.200.013, Handling Misdirected Calls, 6.200.014 Handling Requests for Service, 6.200.015 Information by Telephone, 6.200.016, Officer Out of Service Times, 6.200.019 Playback Phone/radio Conversations, 6.200.021 Handling Emergency Messages, 6.200.023, Emergency Service Agencies, 6.200.024 Alternate Electrical Power Source, 6.200.025 Department Map of Service Area, 6.200.026 Officer Status Indicators, 6.200.027 Emergency/Non-emergency Phone Systems, 6.200.028 Twenty- Four Hour Two-Way Radio Communications 6.200.038 Use of Tactical Dispatching Plans  
Revision Dates: 03/01/99, 12/15/1999, 04/15/2002, 01/01/2005, 04/04/2006

Job Title Task Files: Police Facility Supervisor

**Appendix A****TACTICAL DISPATCH PLAN**

This plan contains guidelines to be followed directing resources and obtaining information during crimes in progress, burglary and robbery alarms, and crimes having just occurred. These guidelines have been formulated as if all conditions were ideal.

- Guidelines may be waived in order to ensure the safety of persons, property, officers or when prompt response is necessary for criminal apprehension.
- Nothing herein should be construed to mean that a call will be held until the prescribed number of units is available, when inappropriate.
- In cases of multiple unit response, one unit will be assigned as the primary unit and will be responsible for coordinating all other responding units. The primary unit may cancel back-up or request additional units at his discretion and depending on circumstances surrounding the call. (NOTE - 2 units will mean two separate units, not one two-person unit).
- A silent panic and/or hold-up alarms:

In addition to the guidelines in the chart that follow, these procedures should be followed:

1. It will be the call takers responsibility to obtain the telephone number of the business or residence of the alarm.
2. While units are responding, the dispatcher will call the business or residence in an attempt to speak with someone who can authenticate the alarm.
3. In the event the alarm is determined to be accidental, the dispatcher will instruct that person to step outside, after obtaining their name, clothing description and door location he or she will exit. This information will immediately be given to the responding officers.
4. If there is any doubt the alarm is accidental, responding officers will be advised immediately.
5. If the information received indicates a crime has or is occurring, the responding officers will be supplied with all available information.
6. If circumstances dictate, Dispatch Operations personnel will notify the Shift Commander.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

A. Disturbance calls, fights, etc., require a minimum of two (2) units to be dispatched. Depending on the number of individuals involved, or circumstances surrounding the incident, additional units will be dispatched.

B. For Tactical Dispatch purposes, escaped prisoners (Signal 6), will be subjects who have escaped from the custody of a West Palm Beach Police Officer or any law enforcement confinement facility. This will not include escapees from halfway houses, or other civilian detention facilities.

C. For Tactical Dispatch purposes, mental cases (signal 20), will mean violent subjects only.

D. Discretion will be used when dispatching units to a burglary in progress call. The number of units will be determined by the circumstances surrounding the call (i.e., size of building, time of day, etc.).

E. During cases of bomb threats, found devices, or explosions, the Bomb Squad and Fire Department will be notified.

**F. SILENT ALARMS**

Under normal circumstances, no silent alarm response will be canceled. Upon receiving a request to cancel it will be necessary for a unit to respond and verify the cancellation. Developments that have their own security force and monitor alarms in the development may respond and check the residence. Such security forces may verify the cancellation based on their response to the scene.

**G. AUDIBLE ALARMS**

Alarm companies will be considered a representative of their customer. Upon receiving a cancellation of any audible alarm from the alarm company, the call taker receiving the call will obtain the representative's company name and I.D. Upon receipt of valid information for cancellation the call taker will enter all documentation into CAD and notify the appropriate dispatcher of the cancellation.

It is necessary for a unit to respond and verify the cancellation of an audible alarm by the property owner.

When weather or uncontrollable circumstances, i.e. (power outages) cause alarms to be activated, it will be permissible to deviate from these guidelines at the discretion of the Road Supervisor.

Alarm companies will be advised to call the Department back when/if the responder information is received. Dispatch Operations will not call the alarm company back after being notified of the alarm unless the responding officer discovers a problem at the alarm site.

**H. ROAD BLOCKS:**

The shift commander or a designee will be responsible for establishing road blocks. Dispatch Operations will be responsible for maintaining communications between officers involved in the pursuit and the officers at the road block, for Tactical Dispatch purposes.

**I. HURRICANE, (TORNADOS, TROPICAL STORM, FLOODING, NATURAL DISASTERS), HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INCIDENT, MAJOR FIRE, TERRORISM, CIVIL DISTURBANCE, WATER/WASTE WATER MAJOR INCIDENT:**

The City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) located at the Water Treatment Plant Dispatch Center, will be activated in accordance with the City's Emergency Management Manual and the EOC Standard Operating Procedures.

The Dispatch Operations Supervisor or designee will coordinate communications between the Emergency Operations Center, the Police and Fire Departments, and outside agencies, as needed.

Dispatch Operations Supervisor will designate one radio frequency for use by all units participating in the situation, assigning at least one dispatcher to this frequency.

Notify command personnel as directed by the Shift Commander and Dispatch at least one paramedic unit and a fire truck to the Command Post upon request of the incident commander.

At the direction of the Chief of Police or his/her designee, inform complainants the Police Department will only respond to calls involving immediate danger to life or property until the situation is under control.

The Dispatch Operations Supervisor or a designee will maintain a list of road closures, power outages, damaged property, and other necessary information.

TACTICAL DISPATCH PLANS FOR IN PROGRESS/JUST OCCURRED CALLS								
SIGNAL	NUMBER OF UNITS	PRECEDE W/ ALERT TONE	NOTIFY ROAD SGT	SEND K-9 IF AVAIL.	AIR ONE IF AVAIL.	NOTIFY CID	NOTIFY FIRE DEPT	ADDITION INFO
0	2	X						A
6	2	X	X	X	X			B
10 IP	2				X			
20	2							C
21 IP	2	X		X	X			D
28	4	X	X	X	X			A
32	2		X				X	
33	2	X	X		X	X	X	
34	2	X	X			X	X	
35	2	X	X	X	X	X		
36	2							A
38	2							A
41/0 BUSINESS	2	X	X	X	X	X		
41/0 CARJACK	2	X	X	X	X	X		
45	2		X					A
46	2		X					E
49 AUDIBLE	1							G
49 SILENT BUSINESS HOLD UP	3	X BUSINESS ONLY		X	X			F
49 SILENT	2			X				F
50	2		X					A
55	2	X	X				X	E
58	2		X					A