

DEKALB POLICE DEPARTMENT

Subject: **Communications Phone Answering Protocols**

Policy #: **301.5**

Effective Since: 7-1-17

Revision Effective: 1-1-19

Reference Material: APCO and NENA National Standards

ILEAP Standards Covered: ADM.24.02(b)

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PURPOSE: The purpose of this policy is to outline the department's general phone answering procedures for Communications personnel.

POLICY: It is the policy of the department to use the phone system for official use only and to follow certain protocols for its use. The department requires its members to use professional language and demeanor, provide for the necessary public safety response to calls for service, and use the phone system efficiently and effectively. [ILEAP ADM.24.02(b)]

DEFINITIONS:

PSAP: Public Safety Answering Point, or the 9-1-1 Communications Center.

TC: Abbreviation for Telecommunicator.

ANI/ALI: Automatic Number Identification and Automatic Location Identification.

TDD/TTY: Telecommunications Device for the Deaf / Teletypewriter.

RD, or RD Number: The initiation of documentation of a call for service; Report Definition number.

EMD: Emergency Medical Dispatch.

VOIP: Voice Over Internet Protocol.

NFPA: National Fire Protection Association.

NENA: National Emergency Number Association.

APCO: Association of Public Safety Communications Officials.

Next Generation or NextGen 9-1-1: Advanced 9-1-1 system with provision for text-to-9-1-1.

Phone System: this term includes:

- A. All general phone lines.
- B. All 9-1-1 emergency lines.
- C. The fire emergency line (ext. 8452).
- D. All internal phone lines.
- E. Radio room cell phone(s).

Overview of 9-1-1 Wireless Technology:

Phase 0 (zero): A wireless 9-1-1 call is delivered to the PSAP without callback or location information.

Phase 1: A wireless 9-1-1 call is delivered to the PSAP with a callback number, the location of the tower handling the call, and the wireless service provider responsible for the wireless phone service.

Phase 2: A wireless 9-1-1 call is delivered to the PSAP with the approximate location of the wireless caller based on the X, Y (longitude and latitude) coordinates determined by the system in conjunction with the wireless carrier.

PROCEDURES:

I. Emergency and Non-emergency Phone Answering

- A. It is the goal of the department to answer a minimum of 90% of all 9-1-1 calls within 10 seconds, or within three rings. During particularly busy periods, 95% of

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all 9-1-1 calls will answered within 20 seconds. [NFPA 1221 Standard; NENA 56-005]

- B. All 9-1-1 calls shall be answered “9-1-1, Where is your emergency?”
- C. All non-emergency phone calls are to be answered with “DeKalb Police, how may I help you?”
- D. All communication shall be professional in nature. Professional language and demeanor are required at all times.
- E. Hostile or abusive callers should be asked to state the nature of their request. Department personnel shall remain professional but have authorization to hang up on a hostile or abusive caller when it is determined there is no request or apparent need for a public safety response and the caller is only trying to be hostile, abusive, or harassing. Prior to hanging up, the TC will advise the caller that the call is being ended.

II. Phone Answering Priority

- A. First priority: 9-1-1 and emergency 10-digit number phone lines
- B. Second priority: All non-emergency lines
- C. Third priority: Administrative and/or internal phone lines
- D. Fourth priority: Radio room cell phone

III. Address Verification

- A. The TC shall verify every address of all 9-1-1 calls and other calls for service by asking the caller their location. It is preferred to repeat the address back to the caller for verification.
- B. If a caller is unsure of where they are, the TC shall make every effort to help them determine their location.

IV. Translation Services

- A. When a call is received from a non-English speaking person, the TC will try to determine the language needed and advise the caller they are going to transfer the call to a translation service.
- B. The TC will then use the contracted translation service.
- C. Once the TC has conferenced with the interpreter, advise them of any facts already obtained and proceed with standard information gathering.
- D. Dispatch the appropriate response when enough information is obtained.

V. Non-Emergency Calls Received on the Emergency Line

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- A. If a non-emergency call is received on the emergency line, the TC will advise the caller to call the non-emergency number.
- B. The TC will provide the non-emergency phone number 815-748-8400 to the caller, speaking clearly so the caller can understand the number.
- C. The TC can also use their own discretion as to how to handle this due to the individual circumstances of the call or caller; for example, the TC can elect to allow the caller to remain on an emergency line if time and circumstances permit.

VI. Disconnected and Silent 9-1-1 Calls

- A. The TC will attempt to call back a telephone number when a 9-1-1 call is routed to the PSAP and the call disconnects before personnel can determine if assistance is needed.
- B. For immediate hang-up calls with no conversation, TCs will call the number back to determine the nature of the call.
 - 1. If the phone is busy or there is no answer, additional attempts to contact the caller are not required.
 - 2. If the callback attempt goes to voicemail, no message will be left.
 - 3. If the ANI/ALI plots to an actual address or specific location, police will be dispatched to that address or location.
 - 4. The TC should check in-house records for the phone number to see if there is a local residence for the phone owner.
- C. If attempts to contact the caller are unsuccessful but a potential location is known, a CAD call will be entered with the location as known or provided.
- D. Two officers will be sent to all disconnected or silent 9-1-1 calls when a potential address or location is known.
- E. **All silent calls will be interrogated with a TDD/TTY to determine if the caller is attempting to report an emergency using a special communications device for hearing-impaired individuals.**
- F. If contact is made with the caller, Communications personnel will follow call-handling procedures as established in this policy.
- G. Any evidence of an emergency situation requires that TCs initiate and continue efforts to re-contact the caller to determine the nature of the incident and an accurate location for the appropriate public safety response.
- H. A phone trace should be attempted through the caller's telephone provider when there is any evidence that an emergency situation exists.
- I. Extraordinary attempts to locate a Phase 1 or 2 wireless 9-1-1 disconnect caller will only be required for instances where an emergency situation is clearly indicated.

VII. Servicing 9-1-1 Calls

- A. TCs should pay close attention to background noise, tone and word choice of the caller as indicators on how to assist with the determination of the status of a 9-1-1 call.
- B. The time of day and location of the caller may be additional clues to indicate whether a public safety response is necessary.
- C. In any situation where the call taker believes an emergency situation may exist, an appropriate public safety response will be initiated.

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- D. A 9-1-1 call is classified as a misdial when the caller stays on the line and acknowledges the misdial, with no indication of the need for a public safety response.
- E. A 9-1-1 call is classified as unintentional when the 9-1-1 personnel can hear conversation, radio, television etc. in the background and the TC has listened sufficiently to determine there is no apparent need for a public safety response.
- F. In the event the nature of the call requires an emergency service response, the TC should take the following action:
 - 1. If the caller's location is not known, but a wireless phone number was displayed, the TC should contact the wireless service provider to request the address the phone number is registered to.
 - 2. The exigent circumstances form should also be completed as required and sent to the telephone service provider to make the request.
 - 3. When an address has been determined, the appropriate response will be sent.
- G. Prank 9-1-1 Calls:
 - 1. Prank calls should be treated as a real emergency until proven otherwise.
 - 2. TCs will call back a suspected prank caller as needed and may request a phone trace to determine the identity and/or location of the caller if necessary.
 - 3. Intentional prank 9-1-1 calls may be investigated by police personnel for criminal charges.

VIII. Information Gathering and In -Progress Calls

- A. In addition to the address, the TC will make every effort to obtain the following information:
 - 1. The caller's name;
 - 2. The caller's call back number;
 - 3. The suspect's information;
 - 4. If any weapons are present;
 - 5. If any other hazards are present.
- B. If the crime reported is in-progress, the TC shall stay on the line and obtain further information until officers are on scene.
- C. Under no circumstances is the TC to ask the caller if they would like to remain anonymous. Always ask the caller for their name and callback number.
- D. If the caller is unable to speak to the TC, the line shall remain open until officers arrive on scene.
- E. TCs shall also attempt to stay on the line with domestic disputes or other interpersonal conflicts where both parties are in the same proximity and the possibility of situational escalation is present.

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IX. Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD)

- A. When a call is determined to be a medical call requiring an ambulance, the TC shall dispatch an ambulance as soon as the address and nature of the call have been obtained.
- B. The TC will then stay on the phone and give EMD pre-arrival instructions as applicable.
- C. In the case of a medical emergency, the TC shall stay on the phone with the caller until responders arrive.
- D. If no EMD pre-arrival instructions are needed, the TC shall ask the caller if they would like to stay on the phone until first responders arrive.

X. Transferring Emergency Calls to Other PSAPs

- A. When a TC receives a telephone call for service of an emergency incident that is occurring or has occurred within the jurisdiction of another PSAP agency, the call taker will determine if the telephone call can be transferred to the other PSAP.
- B. If the call is received via 9-1-1, the TC can see on the 9-1-1 monitor if the other PSAP has their own 9-1-1 line available to transfer the call.
- C. If the call is received on a ten-digit telephone line, transfer of the call must be attempted through connection via a ten-digit telephone line of the other PSAP.
- D. If the other agency is able to readily receive the transferred telephone call, the call taker will advise the caller, "Do not hang up; I am transferring you to (name of the other agency)," then complete the transfer, staying on the line long enough to ensure a successful connection has been made.
- E. If the other PSAP is unable to immediately receive the transferred telephone call, the call taker shall stay on the telephone with the caller, following the policies and procedures as implemented by the call taker's PSAP.
- F. In the event pre-arrival instructions are required and the telephone call is not transferred, the call taker will provide such, following the policies and procedures as implemented by the call taker's PSAP.
- G. In the event an emergency call for service is not able to be transferred or otherwise communicated to the other PSAP, the call taker will ensure that dispatch is made to the appropriate agency by whatever means are available, such as dispatching the call on the other agency's radio channel or mutual radio channel or making a telephone call to a representative of the other agency.

XI. CAD2CAD Operations for Transferring Emergency Call Information

- A. When the electronic CAD2CAD connection is available and operational between our PSAP and the agency having jurisdiction of the emergency call, and the TC has already entered or has elected to enter the call information into CAD instead of or in addition to transferring the phone call, the call taker will then transfer the information through the CAD2CAD transfer function.
- B. Upon the successful transfer of the telephone call to the other agency, or upon the conclusion of the telephone call if the call is not transferred, the TC will immediately transfer the CAD information via CAD2CAD to the agency having jurisdiction.
- C. Once the call for service information is entered into CAD and transferred via CAD2CAD, the TC receiving the call for service will then ensure the other agency

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has received the CAD2CAD by either verbal communication via telephone or other electronic means as available between the agencies.

XII. Transferring Non-Emergency Calls

- A. When a TC receives a call for service of a non-emergency incident that is occurring or has occurred within the jurisdiction of another agency, the call taker may transfer the call to the other agency.
- B. If the non-emergency call is unable to be transferred due to other circumstances, the call taker shall gather the complete information from the caller.
 - 1. The call taker should advise the caller that the call will be handled by the other agency, so any necessary callbacks with updates or additional information should be made to that agency's non-emergency telephone number.
 - 2. The call taker can then disconnect with the caller, advising them that the appropriate response from the other agency will be made as soon as possible.
 - 3. A TC will then attempt contact with the agency having jurisdiction as soon as possible.

XIII. CAD2CAD Operations for Transferring Non-Emergency Call Information

- A. When the electronic CAD2CAD connection is available and operational between our PSAP and the agency having jurisdiction of the non-emergency call, and the TC has already entered or has elected to enter the call information into CAD instead of or in addition to transferring the phone call, the call taker will then transfer the information through the CAD2CAD transfer function.
- B. Once the call for service information is entered into CAD and transferred via CAD2CAD, the TC receiving the call for service will then ensure the other agency has received the CAD2CAD by either verbal communication via telephone or other electronic means as available between the agencies.

Policy originally issued 8-21-03; this revision becomes effective on 1-1-19 by authority of the Chief of Police.

NOTE: This policy and procedure summarizes the department's position on this specific matter. This policy is for general direction and guidance primarily designed for use by the department's members. This policy is for internal use only and does not create or enlarge an employee's liability in any way. This policy shall not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violations of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of an internal departmental complaint and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.