



Sheridan Police Department  
Policies and Procedures  
13.1 Replaces 301  
Chapter 13 – Communications  
Section 1 – Operations

Date: January 1, 2013  
Revised: 10/24/2013, 01/12/2015, 01/13/2022

Signature:

Successful law enforcement radio communications requires the coordinated efforts of all users.

**13.1.1 Administration**

- A. The Sheridan Police Department has twenty-four (24) hour, two (2) way radio capability, providing continuous communication between the communications center and every emergency agency in Sheridan County. City of Sheridan patrol vehicles are equipped with mobile radios and mobile data terminals and every officer is equipped with a portable radio.
- B. The communications center shall be staffed and operated on a twenty-four (24) hour basis to provide continuous communications and support services to Sheridan County. Shift assignments, days off, and suitability to a specific assignment, are recognized as having a distinct effect on the operations of the center. The chief of police or his or her designee may make staffing adjustments as needed in order to further the department's mission, maintain adequate personnel levels, and ensure a high quality of service.
- C. The communications center provides:
  - 1. Radio communications;
  - 2. Mobile data communications;
  - 3. Telephone communications;
  - 4. Dissemination of emergency 9-1-1 calls for service;
  - 5. Dissemination of non-emergency calls for service;
  - 6. WCJIN and NCIC information;
  - 7. Local law enforcement records information;
  - 8. Teletype communications;
  - 9. Fax communications;
  - 10. TDD communications;
  - 11. Recording of radio and telephone communications;
  - 12. Inter-agency communications; and
  - 13. Operations of the Computer Aided Dispatch System (CAD).
- D. The FCC is a regulatory agency that is charged with managing the use of the radio spectrum in a manner that protects the public interest. Radio communications shall be conducted in accordance with FCC procedures and requirements.
- E. FCC regulations prohibit radio misuse such as profane language, inappropriate transmissions, intentionally "covering" other radio transmissions, and failing to yield to emergency communications. Priority shall be given to communications involving potential harm to persons or property. Any misuse of the radio is a serious and potentially dangerous breach of protocol.

- F. The police department shall maintain Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licensing.
- G. The radio and MDCs will be used for official business only. Communications will be conducted in a clear, business-like manner.
- H. Radio identification numbers of field units shall be assigned by the chief of police or designee.
- I. The use of personal electronic devices while on duty shall be authorized for limited use. The use of devices such as smart phones, tablets or laptop computers may be used by dispatch and patrol officers for periodic personal use. Such use will be subject to audit or inspection upon request, based on situations of suspected abuse or misuse if the device is connected to the department's and/or city's wireless internet. The use of such devices may be revoked at any time by a supervisor if performance falls below acceptable levels due to possible distraction from personal devices, or violation of any confidentiality policy already in place.
- J. Department owned Chromebooks may be used for work related functions only such as checking work email, accessing shared files and folders on Google for information, completing necessary documents for tasks like Agency TAC or FTO, and other job related functions. The Chromebooks are not to be used for personal matters such as random searches, shopping, downloading of books or accessing personal email accounts.
- K. The communications center shall serve as the after-hours contact point to respond to victim/witness requests for information and/or services.
- L. A unique case number will be assigned by the CAD system to each request for law enforcement service. This number will serve as the basis for filing and retrieving subsequent reports and facts of the incident.
- M. All personnel shall follow policy and training regarding the appropriate use and care of agency equipment and are responsible for the security and protection of the equipment.

#### **13.1.2 Communication Center Procedures**

- A. Personnel assigned to the Sheridan Police Department's Communications Center shall at all times provide a courteous, timely, and efficient response to all persons that call for assistance, while simultaneously providing for, to the maximum extent possible, the safety of the field units.
- B. Communications center staff's primary responsibility is to receive, screen, and prioritize calls for police services, dispatch the appropriate units and monitor field units.
- C. Communications personnel will be familiar with the policies and procedures of the police department and the information that is necessary for various types of reports and incidents. Communications personnel shall obtain relevant information necessary for each call for service including whether an emergency or non-emergency response is required and complete data entry per the approved data entry protocol.
- D. When communications personnel receive a call for service, the operator will ascertain sufficient information to prioritize the call. Priorities are determined by the severity of the incident, whether the incident is in progress or has just occurred, or whether the likelihood that a delay in response might cause the situation to deteriorate. To assist in making that decision, the operator shall determine the following as quickly as possible:
  - 1. Nature and location of incident;
  - 2. If the crime or incident is in progress;
  - 3. If a weapon is involved; and
  - 4. If persons have been injured or are at risk of injury.

- E. Judgment of communications personnel remains key in determining the priority of the call and communication operators should adjust the priority as appropriate. Calls will be dispatched according to the seriousness of the call.
- F. In the event of an emergency, the operator shall dispatch an available unit as soon as possible.
  - 1. The caller should be asked to stay on the phone to provide further information unless the caller does not feel safe and can escape the situation.
  - 2. If the incident involves a prowler, burglar, family violence or any other incident in which the caller may have a weapon, the caller should be asked and responding officers alerted to that information.
  - 3. Any indicators of urgency or severity should be transmitted to the responding officers.
- G. Calls received through the 911 line will be considered an emergency until determined otherwise. An officer will be dispatched to the location of the call, unless the communications operator is able to determine an emergency obviously does not exist. Officers may still respond as appropriate.
- H. Information is often critical to the success of the case. If possible, information to be recorded for calls for service includes, but is not limited to:
  - 1. Date and time of the request;
  - 2. Complainant's name, address, date of birth and telephone number (if available);
  - 3. Type of incident reported;
  - 4. Location of incident reported;
  - 5. Identification of units assigned;
  - 6. Time of dispatch;
  - 7. Time of officer arrival;
  - 8. Time of officer's return to service; and
  - 9. Disposition or status of reported incident.
- I. The above information will be recorded for all requests including those received by telephone, reported to officers in the field and those self-initiated by officers.
- J. Communications center personnel will advise the caller that an officer will be dispatched, if his or her situation requires police response, and if appropriate the approximate time of the officer's arrival. Communications center personnel will refer a caller who does not require a police response to the appropriate assistance agency.
- K. In the event the communications center receives a call for service that should be directed to another agency, it should be determined if the call is of an emergency nature.
  - 1. If the call is not an emergency, the caller should be given the appropriate agency's telephone number.
  - 2. If the call is an emergency, communications personnel shall transfer the caller and/or relay the information to the appropriate agency as quickly as possible.
- L. Communications personnel will dispatch all calls for service without unnecessary delay.
- M. When an officer has arrived at the scene of a call for police service or checks out on any self-initiated activity, communications personnel will check the officer's status and welfare within a responsible time based on the type of incident and available information. In the event the unit cannot be reached another unit shall be assigned to check on him or her.
- N. Anonymous call information will be dispatched in accordance with priority guidelines. Officers responding to the call will be advised the caller was anonymous.

- O. Communications personnel will notify the shift supervisor of requests by other agencies to back-up or assist their department. The shift supervisor will then determine what action will be taken and which officer(s) will be assigned the task.
- P. The telephone is the primary means by which the public requests the service of this department. For this reason, all incoming calls will be answered promptly to determine if a need for department services exists.
- Q. Personnel must keep in mind that the department is an emergency organization and that there are a limited number of telephone lines available to the department. For this reason, personal calls must be kept to a minimum.
- R. The communications center shall have immediate access to the following department resources:
  - 1. Shift Supervisor -- The communications center shall have the capability of establishing immediate contact with the shift supervisor. This contact may be established by, but is not limited to telephone, cellular telephone, radio, or in person.
  - 2. Duty Roster of Personnel -- Supervisors are to ensure that daily duty rosters are forwarded to the communications center prior to the start of the shift.
  - 3. Personal Telephone Numbers of Every Member -- All members of the department must provide their current telephone number and address to the chief's office. This roster will be updated as needed and forwarded to the communications center.
  - 4. Visual Maps Detailing the Department's Coverage Area -- Maps will be available in Spillman CAD depicting the city.
  - 5. Officer Status Indicators -- Communications personnel will have access to the current status of all available officers by utilizing the computer aided dispatch system. Officers shall keep their status up to date.
  - 6. Communications personnel shall be provided with a copy of the Sheridan Police Department's Policies and Procedures manual for reference purposes.
  - 7. Communications personnel shall have immediate access to telephone numbers for procuring emergency and necessary external services to the department, such as other law enforcement agencies, medical personnel, utility services, etc. These telephone numbers shall include any pertinent after hours numbers.
  - 8. Communications personnel shall have immediate access to manuals for hazardous material incidents and other disasters. See section 21.4.1.
- S. Communication operators shall ensure that work areas are kept neat and organized. All documents and materials should be filed appropriately. Those which are no longer needed, and are of a confidential or sensitive nature, should be shredded.

### **13.1.3 Communications To and From Field Personnel**

- A. To ensure employee safety and efficiency, field personnel shall stay in contact with the communications center by radio or MDC. Field personnel shall keep the communications center advised of their location and status while on duty.
- B. Field units shall have portable radios to stay in constant radio contact with the communications center, whenever it is necessary for them to be away from their vehicles or out on foot. Constant contact permits employees to:
  - 1. Respond to calls for service;
  - 2. Request assistance, if necessary;
  - 3. Receive orders or instructions; and

4. Exchange pertinent information.
- C. Officers are required to ensure the operational status of their equipment to allow for communications with the communications center and other units.
- D. When using the radio there should be a slight hesitation between keying the microphone and beginning a transmission. Radio transmissions shall be given in a clear and concise manner using a normal tone of voice and plain language. Transmissions shall begin with the called unit identifier followed by the calling unit's number. ("PD, Paul 24.") The employee shall wait for a response before proceeding with further transmissions. For officer safety purposes the following four 10 codes may be used:
- 10-0 Caution
  - 10-61 Personnel in the area
  - 10-99 Wanted/Stolen indicated
  - 10-96 Mental Subject
- E. When using conventional channels, to avoid interference with communications in progress, a user should listen to the channel on which he or she intends to transmit for a sufficient period to ascertain his or her transmission will not cause interference.
- F. Field units shall advise the communications center, by either voice or electronic message, of their status in the following situations:
1. When beginning their shift;
  2. When going off-duty;
  3. When commencing and ending a call out;
  4. Upon arrival at calls for service;
  5. Upon clearing calls for service;
  6. When engaging in any activity that will affect the unit's availability to handle calls for service;
  7. When conducting a vehicle stop, officers shall provide the communications center with the vehicle state of origin, vehicle license number, vehicle make and/or model, the location of the stop and any other appropriate information pertaining to the location, the vehicle, or the subject(s) in the vehicle.
  8. When contacting suspects or suspicious persons, officers shall provide the communications center with the location, description of person(s), and reason for contact;
  9. When making an arrest and transporting prisoners;
  10. Officers will inform dispatchers of their location, the nature of the situation, and other important details in on-view situations.
- G. All officers will respond immediately to calls from the dispatcher by giving their unit number and location.
- H. Officers will respond to dispatched calls as soon as practical.
- I. Whenever necessary, officers en route to, or on the scene of a call may request backup units. The first officer to arrive on the scene may cancel back-up units at the point that they determine the additional assistance will not be needed.
- J. Communications is to be advised of which unit has command authority upon the arrival of officers at any situation where confusion may arise as to command structure.
- K. All units will keep the talk group clear in vehicle pursuit situations so that the unit in pursuit can maintain continuous radio contact with the dispatcher.

- L. Priority of call assignment depends on many factors, and it is normally the responsibility of communications personnel to make such assignments; however, an officer in the field may be required to decide whether to continue on an assigned call or handle a citizen's complaint or other observed event and cause his or her call to be reassigned. Such determination should be based upon the comparative urgency and the risk to life and property of the assigned call and the intervening incident.
- M. Times used in radio transmissions shall be in twenty-four (24) hour time.
- N. All operators should be aware that their manner of communication represents the degree of professionalism of the individual operator as well as the department as a whole, and their working relationship with other users on the system. The use of words or tones that convey the meaning of sarcasm, irritation, disgust or anger are not to be used. Members will not become argumentative on the police radio.
- O. Field units calling the communication center and receiving a standby response will hold their traffic unless it is an emergency situation. In emergency situations the user should state such and proceed with the message or give the information to a supervisor or another unit.
- P. Field units receiving a response that their transmission is unreadable should take steps to correct the situation instead of cluttering the air with repeated unreadable transmissions.
- Q. Personnel receiving information from caution indicator files from communications personnel shall be aware that the information is based on carefully scrutinized intelligence but is not probable cause for enforcement action. It is meant only as an alert to potential danger or potential criminal activity.
- R. Officers will not request communications personnel to make telephone calls to third parties in attempts to obtain information about a call for service that can be gathered once on scene unless:
  - 1. The call is an emergency and vital information is missing; or
  - 2. The call is necessary in a tactical situation.
- S. At no time will personnel broadcast sensitive information pertaining to the victims of crime. If necessary, such information should be sent via the mobile data computer or other means of communication.
- T. When relaying calls to Wyoming Highway Patrol, Sheridan Police Dispatchers will notify WHP dispatchers that they are about to transfer a telephone call from the Sheridan Police Department Communications Center to the WHP communications center. The notification, which will include an alert, type of event and location, will be made on Wyolink on the MAT-1 channel. The radio traffic will be concise.
  - 1. The communications officer will then transfer the telephone call to WHP. Communications officers are not required to take caller information as a matter of routine prior to the call transfer unless circumstances dictate a necessity.
  - 2. EXAMPLE: "Sheridan, Highway Patrol, prepare for call transfer for an accident at mile marker 5."

#### **13.1.4 Detective Division Radio Procedures**

- A. When responding to any crime in progress call, the responding detective will possess and monitor a portable radio when out of his or her vehicle.
- B. When contacting any suspect in person during a criminal investigation, the detective will contact the dispatcher by radio or telephone and notify them of the location that the contact is being made. If the contact is being made at other than a populated public place (i.e. - bank,

courthouse, etc.) the detective will possess a portable radio or cell phone in the event that assistance is needed.

- C. When making any traffic stop, the detective will contact the dispatcher and notify the dispatcher of the location of the stop and the vehicle's plate number or description of the vehicle if no plate is visible. The detective will also possess a portable radio and monitor it for radio traffic during the stop.

#### **13.1.5 Alert Tone and Channel (Talk Group) Marker**

- A. When an emergency situation with the potential for serious bodily injury exists an alert tone may be used to advise field units to clear all radio traffic and prepare to copy an emergency broadcast.
- B. The alert tone will only be utilized for serious crimes that are in progress.
- C. Once the initial broadcast is completed, the channel marker may then be activated on the operational channel of the incident. When an emergency situation has been declared and the radio system's channel marker has been activated personnel will cease further radio transmissions (except for other emergency traffic) until the emergency has been stabilized and the channel marker cleared.
- D. Using mobile data terminals does not affect the voice radio communications system and are permitted while a channel marker is in place. However, officers should limit their routine computer transactions to those that do not require immediate response by the communications operator until the channel marker is cleared

#### **13.1.6 Recording and Playback**

- A. The communications center has the capability of immediate playback of recorded telephone and radio conversations while it maintains continuous recording of radio transmissions and emergency telephone conversations.
- B. Recordings shall be retained in the communications center for a minimum of thirty (30) days.
- C. Review of the recordings shall be limited to personnel with a legitimate need such as investigative, administrative review, training, etc.

#### **13.1.7 Emergency Messages**

- A. Citizens or other law enforcement agencies may contact communications center personnel and request that the department notify third party individuals about an emergency situation.
- B. Emergency messages may include, but are not limited to:
  - 1. Serious illness or death of a family member;
  - 2. Injury as a result of an accident or crime;
  - 3. A hospital or law enforcement agency needing to speak to a family member; or
  - 4. Requests approved by the shift supervisor.
- C. Personal notification will be attempted. Officers shall deliver the message in a conscientious and professional manner. If personal contact cannot be made, a note to contact the requesting party will be left at the location.
- D. When accepting a request for emergency notification the call taker should:
  - 1. Obtain as much information from the requesting party as may be necessary to answer questions that may be asked by the person being notified.
  - 2. Obtain the name and telephone number of the person(s) the party being notified should contact for additional information.

3. If appropriate, obtain the name and address of a third party that may act as a support for the person to be notified.