



Phone Dispatcher Procedure Manual

San Diego County Sheriff's Office

Communications Center

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Procedure 1. Phone Dispatcher Discretion

1. When phone dispatchers are faced with a situation where discretion can be exercised, they must evaluate the circumstances, consider the available resources, and rely on their training, Sheriff's Office policies and procedures, statutory law, and supervisory direction in making the appropriate decision.
2. In addition, within each situation, the appropriate decision should:
 - a. Accomplish the intent of the law.
 - b. Comply with the Sheriff's Office Policies and Procedures.
 - c. Prioritize public and officer safety.

Procedure 2. Classification of Incidents

1. An incident shall be considered in-progress if one or more of the following criteria exists:
 - a. The incident is reported within 15 minutes of occurrence.
 - b. The suspect of a crime is on scene regardless of when the crime occurred.
 - c. The victim of a felonious crime was incapacitated or confined due to the criminal act and is reporting the crime at their earliest opportunity.
 - d. When medical aid is necessary and/or requested regardless of when the incident occurred.
 - e. Where there is an increased likelihood of apprehension of the suspect and/or protection of persons and/or property.
2. Crimes and incidents that do not meet the in-progress criteria will be entered as a report call for service.

Procedure 3. Call Processing

The following procedures are to be performed by phone dispatchers when answering telephone calls and processing calls for service. When practical, the phone dispatcher will elicit and document relevant information.

1. For administrative calls, the greeting will be "Sheriff's Communications, Dispatcher (ARJIS)."
2. For 9-1-1 calls, the greeting will be "9-1-1 emergency."
3. If the caller requests assistance from a field unit, pursuant to Sheriff P&P section 2.23 - Request for Assistance, phone dispatchers shall enter a call for service.
4. A call for service will be created for incidents that occur within Sheriff's jurisdiction. Unless otherwise specified in this manual, callers will be transferred or referred to the appropriate agency for incidents in other jurisdictions.

5. A certified translator will be used when doing so will be more efficient or when a caller requests one.
6. The Communications Center supervisor(s) shall be advised of notable, critical, or life-threatening incidents.
7. The phone dispatcher shall not provide legal advice.
8. Phone dispatchers will not document profanity, potentially offensive or derogatory language, direct quotes, or personal commentary.
9. All applicable fields within the computer aided dispatch system will be completed.
10. The most relevant event type will be selected.
11. The location shall indicate where the field unit is to respond. The phone dispatcher will confirm the location including the community or city, apartment, suite or space number, and any other identifying information. The following exceptions will apply:
 - a. When a field unit is to respond to a patrol station or substation to contact a caller, the location shall be the address where the incident occurred.
 - b. When a field unit is to contact a caller over the phone, the location shall be the address where the incident occurred.
 - c. When a caller is requesting a phone call from a specific field unit, the location field shall be that field unit's patrol station or substation.
12. Every attempt will be made to obtain the caller's information.
 - a. In the event the caller refuses information or requests to remain anonymous, the call will be documented accordingly.
13. When applicable and practical, calls for service will include the following elements of text:
 - a. The time or timeframe the incident occurred
 - b. An extension of the location
 - c. An extension of the event type
 - d. Text supporting the event type
 - e. Officer and public safety information as outlined in Procedure 4
 - f. More to Follow (MTF) to indicate that the phone dispatcher will be providing more to follow and/or No Further Details (NFD) to indicate there are no further details
14. When applicable, the phone dispatcher shall confirm whether the caller is requesting contact from a field unit.
15. When new information is received for an existing call for service, documentation shall be updated accordingly.
16. The following calls for service will be created regardless of the caller or victim's cooperation:
 - a. Suicide threats or attempts

- b. Domestic violence
 - c. Elder abuse
 - d. Child abuse
17. When an incident requires documentation but does not require field unit response or notification, a documentation-only call for service will be created.
 18. The reason shall be documented when cancelling or requesting to cancel a call for service.
 19. Alarm activations received from an alarm company will only be cancelled at the request of the alarm company.
 20. All active calls for service reporting identical incidents will be combined.
 21. Calls for service describing the same incident will be combined in chronological order.
 22. Calls for service which are a direct result of a previously existing call for service will be linked in computer aided dispatch.
 23. Calls for service shall not be reopened if more than one hour has passed since the call was closed.

Procedure 4. Officer and Public Safety

The following procedures are to be performed by phone dispatchers when processing calls for service in order to prioritize officer and public safety. All relevant actions taken will be documented.

1. The phone dispatcher shall attempt to obtain and document any information that may threaten officer and/or public safety.
2. Responses received from law enforcement databases regarding persons and/or vehicles will be reviewed without delay.
3. Any location a field unit will respond to shall be queried in computer aided dispatch for recent calls for service or special notation(s).
4. When applicable and without jeopardizing the caller's safety, the phone dispatcher should remain on the line to obtain updates regarding an in-progress incident or if requested by the caller.
5. Instructions to the caller from a field unit will be relayed without delay.
6. The phone dispatcher shall not provide instruction which may jeopardize the caller's safety.

Procedure 5. 9-1-1 Calls

The following procedures are to be performed by phone dispatchers when processing 9-1-1 calls. All relevant actions taken will be documented.

1. If contact is made with a caller on 9-1-1, the phone dispatcher will confirm the presence or potential of an emergency.
 - a. If an emergency exists, a call for service will be entered.
 - b. If no emergency exists, a documentation-only call for service will be created.
2. Information received via Automated Number Identification and Automated Location Identification (ANI/ALI) shall be confirmed with the caller when possible.
 - a. Any discrepancies received in ANI/ALI information from a landline shall be reported without delay.
3. On calls received from a wireless device, the latitude and longitude will be utilized as the location unless a more accurate location can be obtained from the caller or by other means.
 - a. The Class of Service and latitude and longitude shall be included in the text of the call.
 - b. When latitude and longitude is utilized as the location, the sector, meters, and percent of accuracy displayed in the ANI/ALI shall be documented in the call for service.
4. If a caller is reporting an in-progress incident in another public safety agency's jurisdiction, the caller will be transferred to the appropriate agency without delay.
5. When transferring a 9-1-1 call to another public safety agency, the phone dispatcher shall announce the transfer once the receiving agency answers the call.
6. An attempt to communicate using the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf will be made on all 9-1-1 open lines with no response to a verbal inquiry.
7. When an open 9-1-1 call from a landline is received, the phone dispatcher shall remain on the line and enter a call for service.
8. When an open 9-1-1 call from a wireless device is received, the phone dispatcher shall remain on the line for a reasonable amount of time to determine if an emergency exists.
 - a. If distress is heard, a call for service shall be entered.
 - b. If no distress is heard, the line will be disconnected and a documentation-only call for service shall be created.
9. A 9-1-1 hang-up or abandoned call from a landline will be handled as follows:
 - a. If distress was heard before the line disconnected, a call for service shall be entered prior to making a call back.
 - b. If no distress was heard before the line disconnected, the callback shall be made before entering a call for service.
 - c. If a busy tone is received, a second callback shall be made.
 - d. If an answering system is reached on callback, no message shall be left.

- e. If there is no answer on callback or the phone dispatcher was otherwise unable to speak with a person, a call for service shall be entered.
10. A 9-1-1 hang-up call from a wireless device will be handled as follows:
- a. If distress is heard on a 9-1-1 hang up from a wireless device, a call for service shall be entered prior to making a call back.
 - i. If there is no answer on callback, a message will be left if possible and subscriber and/or location information will be obtained from the Wireless Service Provider.
 - b. If no distress is heard on a 9-1-1 hang up from a wireless device, a documentation-only call for service will be entered. No callback will be made.
11. Abandoned 9-1-1 calls from wireless devices shall be cleared from the phone system by the designated phone dispatcher. No call for service shall be created.
12. Subscriber information will only be obtained when a wireless device called 9-1-1 and distress was heard or upon field unit request.
13. Electronic information on a wireless device, which includes location and subscriber information, will only be obtained in compliance with California Penal Code Section 1546.1.
14. If one or more 9-1-1 calls are in the queue waiting to be answered, any phone dispatcher actively handling a non-urgent administrative call shall place the call on hold to answer the pending 9-1-1 call(s).
15. When the San Diego Police Department or California State University San Marcos Police Department experience a 9-1-1 system failure and 9-1-1 calls for those jurisdictions are routed to the Sheriff's Office, incoming calls for service will be processed according to Sheriff's policies and procedures.

Procedure 6. Text-to-9-1-1 (Text Call)

The following procedures are to be performed by phone dispatchers when processing Text Calls. All relevant actions taken will be documented. Text Calls will be given the same priority as 9-1-1 calls. Phone dispatchers assigned to answer 9-1-1 are responsible for answering Text Calls. All other phone dispatchers will answer Text Calls when 9-1-1 dispatchers are busy handling other 9-1-1 calls.

1. The phone dispatcher will attempt to obtain the location of the emergency without delay.
 - a. The phone dispatcher will make reasonable attempts appropriate to the nature of the text received to determine the location of the Text Caller. Actions taken to determine the location of the Text Caller include, but are not limited to:

- i. Making a voice call to the device
 - ii. Contacting the wireless provider to obtain subscriber information
 - iii. Conducting a search for prior calls for service
 - b. The latitude and longitude will be utilized as the location unless a more accurate location can be obtained from the Text Caller.
 - i. The Class of Service and latitude and longitude shall be included in the text of the call.
2. If contact is made with a Text Caller the phone dispatcher will confirm the presence or potential of an emergency.
 - a. If the presence or potential of an emergency exists, a call for service will be entered.
 - b. If no emergency exists, a documentation-only call for service will be created.
3. If a Text Caller stops responding, after a reasonable amount of time, the phone dispatcher will consult with a dispatch supervisor prior to releasing the Text Call.
4. Prior to voice calling a Text Caller, the phone dispatcher will confirm with the Text Caller that it is safe to do so. The following exception will apply:
 - a. The Text Caller is unresponsive and further information is necessary.
5. If a Text Caller is reporting an in-progress incident in another public safety agency's jurisdiction, the Text Caller will be transferred to the appropriate agency without delay.
 - a. When transferring a Text Call to another public safety agency, the phone dispatcher will confirm the public safety agency has received and responded to the Text Call prior to releasing the Text Call.
 - b. Text Call transfers to other agencies will only be done when it would clearly be advantageous for best handling of the call (e.g., medical aid that may benefit from medical instructions).
 - i. If there is no clear advantage, phone dispatchers will relay the information to the appropriate public safety agency.
6. Electronic information on a wireless device, which includes location and subscriber information, will only be obtained in compliance with California Penal Code Section 1546.1.
7. If one or more Text Calls are in the queue waiting to be answered, any phone dispatcher actively handling a non-urgent administrative call shall place the call on hold to answer a pending Text Call.

8. Phone dispatchers will only handle one Text or Voice Call at a time. During unusual and/or emergency situations, dispatch supervisors have the discretion to provide temporary alternative directions to handle the workload demands.
9. Text Calls will be handled in English
 - a. For Text Calls received in any language other than English, the phone dispatcher will use Google translate to translate the received message(s) to English to confirm if an emergency exists or whether a location was provided.
 - i. If the presence or potential of an emergency exists, make a voice call to the Text Caller using the translation service.
 - ii. If no emergency exists, the canned message advising Text Calls will only be handled in English will be sent.
10. A voice call will be made to wireless devices when Abandoned Text Calls are received unless the text indicates no presence or potential of an emergency.
 - a. If there is no answer on callback, handle as outlined in procedure 6 section 1.
 - b. If there is an answer on callback, handle as outlined in procedure 6 section 2.

Procedure 7. Fire Communications Center Notifications

The following procedures are to be performed by phone dispatchers when evaluating the need for and notifying the fire department. Every attempt shall be made to obtain and document the information below.

1. The fire department will be notified without delay of known or potential injuries or upon a caller's request.
2. An information-only call for service will be created for any incident the fire department is responding to which does not require a field unit response.
3. A call for service requiring a field unit to respond with the fire department will be created for the following incidents:
 - a. Situations which require life-saving measures
 - b. Potentially hazardous situations which may threaten public safety
 - c. Any situation that could be harmful for emergency medical personnel
 - d. Any medical aid where there is a suspicion of abuse and/or neglect
 - e. Reports of death
 - f. All medical aids on the Grossmont College and Cuyamaca College campuses
4. The fire department will be notified of all instances in which the victim indicates strangulation occurred or displays any visible or non-visible symptoms thereof.

5. After transferring a caller to the fire department, the phone dispatcher shall remain on the line for the duration of the call, unless the following conditions exist:
 - a. One or more 9-1-1 calls are in the queue waiting to be answered, *and*:
 - b. The fire dispatcher has obtained enough information from the caller that indicates the nature of the call requires only medical or fire response and does not require a Sheriff's Office response.
6. Incidents outside of the Sheriff's jurisdiction requiring the fire department shall be transferred to the fire department of jurisdiction prior to notifying the appropriate law enforcement agency when necessary.

Procedure 8. Other Notifications

The following procedures are to be performed by phone dispatchers when evaluating the need for and making other notifications. Every attempt shall be made to obtain and document the information below.

1. California Highway Patrol will be notified of all crimes occurring on state property, traffic related incidents on a state route, interstate, or unincorporated road, and traffic collisions involving school busses occupied with children regardless of jurisdiction, with the exception of handicap and fire lane parking violations.
2. The appropriate transit authority will be notified of all hazards or collisions on trolley or train tracks.
3. The appropriate animal services agency will be notified of any animal causing a public safety or traffic hazard, or as directed by a field unit.
4. In the event the Sheriff's Office is handling a call for service known to be in the jurisdiction of California State Parks or the United States Forest Service the respective agency will be notified.
5. The United States Coast Guard Joint Harbor Operation Command shall be notified of any unusual or significant maritime related incident.
6. The Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations Center shall be notified of unusual or suspicious aerial and/or maritime activity.
7. The San Diego Police Department will be notified of all incidents occurring on the water at the following lakes and reservoirs:
 - a. Lake Morena
 - b. Lake Hodges
 - c. San Vicente Reservoir
 - d. Sutherland Reservoir
 - e. Upper and Lower Otay Reservoir
 - f. El Capitan Reservoir

- g. Barrett Lake
- 8. Rancho Santa Fe Patrol will be notified of any in-progress incidents occurring within The Covenant.

Procedure 9. Specific Incident Procedures

The following calls for service require the phone dispatcher to perform additional questioning or actions. All relevant actions taken will be documented.

- 1. Alarms Reported by Alarm Companies
 - a. The phone dispatcher will attempt to obtain and document the following information when an alarm company reports an alarm activation:
 - i. Business or resident name
 - ii. Alarm coverage
 - iii. Subscriber phone number and result if a call back was made
 - iv. Responder notification
 - v. Special instructions for the premise

2. GC 7922.000-Safety/Security Interest

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- 3. Information-Only Calls for Service
 - a. A call for service shall be created to inform field units of the following incidents:
 - i. The fire department responding to an incident that does not require assistance
 - ii. Traffic collisions in unincorporated areas of the county
 - iii. Private investigators conducting surveillance
 - iv. Outside agencies conducting law enforcement business in Sheriff's jurisdiction
 - v. Field personnel reporting sick for their shift
 - vi. Incidents occurring near Sheriff's jurisdiction that could impact officer safety or Sheriff's operations

- vii. When the Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) is responding to a location within Sheriff's jurisdiction.
- 4. Noise Complaints
 - a. The phone dispatcher shall document whether callers will sign a noise complaint.
- 5. Robberies and Thefts
 - a. The loss will be documented in the call for service.
- 6. Graffiti
 - a. A call for service shall be entered for all incidents of graffiti vandalism in unincorporated areas.
 - b. A call for service shall only be entered for incidents of graffiti vandalism in contract cities when one of the following conditions applies:
 - i. The crime is in-progress
 - ii. There is suspect information
 - iii. There is physical evidence other than the graffiti
 - iv. The vandalism was committed on a vehicle
 - v. The vandalism occurred on public school property
 - c. In the absence of one or more of the above conditions, the caller will be referred to the appropriate graffiti hotline.
- 7. Stolen Vehicle
 - a. A report of a stolen vehicle will be entered regardless of the availability of the license plate or vehicle identification number (VIN) information.
 - i. If the caller is unable to provide a license plate or VIN, the registered owner's information will be queried through the Department of Motor Vehicle's database.
 - ii. Known license plate or VIN information will be queried prior to entering a call for service.
 - b. Any person entrusted with the vehicle may report the vehicle stolen.
- 8. Fraud
 - a. The Sheriff's Office will handle reports of fraud from victims who live within its jurisdiction. Victims living outside of Sheriff's jurisdiction will be referred to their local law enforcement agency.
- 9. Crimes at Otay Mesa Detention Center operated by CoreCivic
 - a. Any crime that occurred inside the facility will be entered as a miscellaneous call for service. Information provided in the text of the call should indicate the details of the incident.
- 10. Injuries Reported by Health Practitioners

- a. A call for service shall be entered when a hospital, doctor or other person specified in Section 11160 of the Penal Code reports a victim of any wound resulting from a firearm or assaultive or abusive conduct regardless of the victim's cooperation.
- b. A call for service shall be entered when a victim of a sexual assault requests a medical evidentiary exam as specified in Section 13823.95(b)(1) of the Penal Code.

11. Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT)

- a. Mental health related calls for service within MCRT's jurisdiction shall be transferred to MCRT when the caller can confirm the following safety criteria are met:
 - i. No injuries to any person that would require a medical response
 - ii. No deadly weapons involved in the incident or known to be in the possession of the person in crisis
 - iii. The person is not suspected or involved in serious criminal activity related to the call, which would warrant immediate law enforcement action
 - iv. The involved person is not known to be wanted in connection with an ongoing law enforcement investigation. All agencies will adhere to pertinent laws and their own agency policies and procedures when querying individuals via California Justice Information System (CJIS)/ California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS).
 - v. No threat of immediate violence, reasonable potential for immediate violence, or use of violence against any person, including the person in crisis, MCRT members, or any other person. (This includes threats of immediate self-inflicted violence by the patient, such as a threat of a violent suicide.)
 - vi. Law enforcement not specifically requested.
- b. If a call is transferred to MCRT a documentation-only event will be created using the MCRT type code.
- c. A call for service will be entered for mental health related calls that do not meet the safety criteria or the caller specifically requests a field unit.
- d. When MCRT advises they are responding to a location within Sheriff's jurisdiction, an information-only call will be created. If they are requesting law enforcement assistance, an assist call will be created.

12. Notification of Potential Pipeline Rupture

- a. When notified by a pipeline operator of a potential rupture in their pipeline system, the phone dispatcher will:

- i. Enter a call for service using the applicable type code based on the information received.
- ii. Notify the fire department and the Communications Center supervisor

Procedure 10. Service Desk

The following procedures are to be performed by the phone dispatcher assigned to the Service Desk position.

1. The phone dispatcher assigned the Service Desk position is responsible for:
 - a. Processing requests in a timely manner based on priority.
 - b. Processing abandoned 9-1-1 calls.
 - c. Advising callers of a delay when a call for service has been pending for over one hour.
 - d. Answering administrative and 9-1-1 calls when not processing the above tasks.
 - e. Utilizing the Service Desk relief position as needed.
2. Once a request is processed, the phone dispatcher will document the appropriate information.

Related Sheriff's Policy and Procedures

In addition to the procedures outlined in this manual, the following sections from the Sheriff's Policy and Procedure manual govern the phone dispatcher's responsibilities.

2.21 Citizen Complaints

2.22 Courtesy

2.23 Request for Assistance

2.37 Dissemination of Information

3.1 Release of Information Concerning Sheriff's Personnel

3.2 Complaints Against Sheriff's Employees

3.4 Reporting Absences

6.11 Tip Sheets

6.34 Establishing Towing Services

6.57 Missing Persons Reporting Policy

6.97 Domestic Violence Incidents

7.2 Telephone Company Subscriber Information

7.3 Media Public Relations

7.6 Use of CLETS-NCIC-ARJIS and Local Information

7.9 Accepting Collect Phone Calls

7.12 Mobile Data Computers

Glossary

Abandoned call – A call placed to 9-1-1 in which the line disconnects before the call can be answered by the phone dispatcher.

Automatic Location Identification (ALI) – Identifying information of a 9-1-1 caller, including location and other details.

Automatic Number Identification (ANI) – Identifying information of a 9-1-1 caller, including the phone number

Case law – Law established by the outcome of court cases.

Class of Service – A designation of the type of telephone service.

The Covenant – A community in Rancho Santa Fe monitored by Rancho Santa Fe Patrol, a private, armed security company.

Documentation-only call for service – A call for service created and closed without notifying the radio dispatcher or field units.

Event type – The classification of an incident required to enter a call into computer aided dispatch.

Hang-up – A telephone call that connects with a phone dispatcher but is then disconnected by the caller.

Information-only call for service – A call for service created to notify field units of an incident but does not require a field unit response.

Jurisdiction – An area under the control and responsibility of a government entity.

Landline – A telephone line that utilizes a hardwired line to transmit a phone call.

Linked – Calls for service with a causal association attached to each other in computer aided dispatch.

Open line – A telephone call where the caller is not directly speaking to the phone dispatcher.

Sector – The section of a cell tower to which a wireless device connected.

Subscriber information – The name, billing address, user address, and/or alternate phone numbers of a wireless device user.

Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) – A device capable of information interchange between compatible units over a telephone network connection. Also known as teletypewriter or a TTY.

Wireless device – A cellular phone, tablet, or computer with the ability to make and receive phone calls and/or text messages.

Wireless Service Provider – A company that offers telephone and/or internet services to users.