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|  |            | <b>Policy &amp; Procedures</b> |  |                   | <b>No. 1.35</b>   |  |
|                                                                                   |            | Subject:                       |  |                   |                   |  |
|                                                                                   |            | <b>Dispatch Functions</b>      |  |                   |                   |  |
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## CALEA STANDARDS

81.2.3

81.2.9

### Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe the general operations and resources of the Dispatch Center of the Canton Police Department.

This document provides an overview of the dispatch function during routine and emergency activities. It lists the various types of information that dispatching personnel are expected to know, the tasks they are expected to perform, and the resources available to perform those functions.

### 1. Overview of Dispatch Duties and Functions

Dispatch personnel serve as the central core of the department. It is the primary coordination point between the needs of the caller/community and the department personnel, both sworn and non-sworn, who address those needs. They serve as the first point of contact with the public. For clarity purposes, the title of “dispatcher” is used throughout, but refers to the employee filing the duties; sworn and non-sworn as well as full-time and part-time.

Dispatchers assign, coordinate, monitor and document all routine and emergency calls, as well as all police department communications.

Dispatchers must be familiar with a variety of equipment, computer programs, and resources. In addition, they must be able to find all pertinent information as needed. Dispatchers must quickly and correctly exercise informed judgment in response to reported emergencies. Decisions made by dispatchers are vital to the police department’s mission.

Dispatchers accomplish their assigned tasks using the following critical systems and equipment. Some of these have already been addressed in other policies.

- Telephone systems - See Central Dispatch Telephone and Radio Use Policy
- Radio systems - See Central Dispatch Telephone and Radio Use Policy
- Emergency notification systems - See Central Dispatch Telephone and Radio Use Policy
- Other resources

## **2. IMC Computer Aided Dispatch**

The department uses a computer aided dispatch (CAD) program called IMC. This software program serves as the core of our department's information system. Information typed into dispatch calls flows into various other "modules" of the software, and propagates fields in Reports, Property, Master Name files, and many other areas. The information we derive from these "modules" is only as good as the information put in.

- A) The system plays a critical role in the department. The initial entries into Dispatch Calls are often the cornerstone of our recorded activities such as our response to community reports of crime, our response to officer initiated activities, or our response to requests for police assistance.
- B) The following overview of components and standard expectations reflect a summary of areas covered in training provided to all employees. If any of the following areas are unclear, they should be discussed with a Supervisor.
  - Mobile Data Access Policy #4.05 addresses the allowed and prohibited use of computer systems. It applies to entries made or retrieved from CJIS and any other electronic sources available in dispatch, or other locations or devices connected to this system.
  - Accuracy of entries shall always be a priority. If circumstances or activity levels require minimal or abbreviated initial entries, all reasonable efforts shall be made to review and complete those records during the same shift.
  - All applicable information and entry fields shall be completed unless specifically exempted by a supervisor.
    - o The F1 and F2 keys initiate HELP screens and are available in most areas of the software, and the F3 and F4 keys offer pull down menus or "search" fields. These should be utilized as needed.
    - o If an employee's training or the HELP screen does not allow an employee to complete all applicable information, a supervisor is to be notified for assistance.
  - Email is a primary means of communication within the department, and must be checked at least once per working shift by all employees.

- Dispatch calls serve as the base of information for subsequent reports, court activity, public and press daily logs, statistics and activity analysis, and many other applications.

Therefore:

- Each call should serve as a stand-alone record;
- Call reasons, narrative descriptions, and all other content should reflect the best information at the end of the documented event or activity;
- Even though a caller may initially report something incorrectly, it should be adjusted to best reflect the true nature, as the call is closed out;
- Officers generating reports based on the calls should change incorrect coding or information, if their involvement provides better information than was initially available;
- Narratives should contain plain English wording, avoiding unclear abbreviations, police jargon, or slang, unless it directly pertains to the situation;
- Each call record should reflect high professional standards of grammar and spelling to reflect best upon the department and the author.

C) Briefly described below are features or functions within IMC, and the required use, unless specifically exempted by a supervisor: **81.2.3**

- **Attendance** must be kept current and accurate. Assignment entries for each shift should be made promptly. It should be noted in the attendance when an officer normally scheduled is not available for service.
- **Assignments** shall be kept current and accurate. Officers shall be assigned as indicated by the supervisor.
  - This may be as an individual, as part of a two person unit, or as a team of several members. They may be assigned using a vehicle number, motorcycle number or a bicycle number.
- **Call Source** shall reflect the most accurate information. Choices include the following:
 

|                       |          |            |
|-----------------------|----------|------------|
| A- alarm system       | E- 911   | W- walk-in |
| B- well-being calling | H- other |            |
| C- cellular phone     | R- Radio |            |

- **Call Reason**, as noted, has implications in various other applications and should best reflect the actual final determination. **81.2.3 E**
  - You may use the code that best fits your initial information, but revise it based on additional facts received. For example, an initial report of suspicious activity may need to be changed if it is found to be a breaking and entering incident.
- **Location fields**, with associated street addresses, should also reflect the most accurate description, based on the final information received. **81.2.3 F**
  - It may be the name of a building or parking lot or specific outdoor space.
  - Walk-in reports should be coded for the event location, not the station address.
  - **Site number codes** reflect a specific location, and for preloaded alarm sites and types. These should be used when applicable, and checked for accuracy after the call has been closed.
- **Calling Party** and other Person information should be filled in as completely and accurately as possible, and reviewed and completed as a call is closed out. It is important to check on the proper spelling of the individual's name for once it is entered into IMC, a Master Name file is created. It is also important to obtain accurate contact information including a cell phone number. This information can be vital for reports, follow-up contact by officers, court personnel, etc. **81.2.3 D**
  - Their proper designation as the calling party of the involved party is helpful to accurately reflect their involvement or status.
- **Call Narratives**, with their free text format, can be the most important component of the call.
  - Preliminary facts or information, coupled with subsequent entries, can best reflect an evolving situation.
  - The time stamps of entries can provide important references for reports and analysis and should be as accurate as possible.
  - The narrative will tie together all the information about the situation.
  - The narrative is the key to each call serving as a stand-alone document, telling a complete story of an event.

### 3. Other Resources

This final section of critical systems and equipment lists the primary resources available to Dispatch Center personnel. This is an overview listing of the systems, equipment, or resources which are important links in the effective provision of services to officers and the community.

Dispatching personnel are required to be familiar with a variety of equipment and reference materials in order to effectively perform the duties of the position.

This includes the following:

- CJIS/LEAPS- The Criminal Justice Information System is a computer based system linking law enforcement agencies throughout the state of Massachusetts. Our agency has indirect access to CJIS/LEAPS; password protected. CJIS/LEAPS also provides links to the following additional databases: **81.2.9**
- NCIC- The National Crime Information Center system coordinates law enforcement databases and standardized sharing protocols and interfaces for the sharing of information on people, warrants, law enforcement alerts, and vehicle information;
- RMV- The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles system provides driver and vehicle information, allows for the input of drunk driving arrest information, and a host of other functions;
- Department resources and reference materials, generally both computer-based and hard copy, including:
  - o Policies, procedures, memos, and spreadsheets on the department computer server;
  - o Reference books and notices from other agencies maintained in dispatch
  - o Duty rosters, department personnel files, on-call schedules
- Camera security system both inside and outside the building. These cameras are linked to monitors in the dispatch.