



Training Bulletin

SANTA BARBARA POLICE DEPARTMENT



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Radio Etiquette

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INTRODUCTION

The Combined Communications Center functions to assist officers in the performance of their duties. For the most efficient radio transmission, it is necessary for officers and dispatchers to understand certain communications procedures. The radio is an important tool and a lifeline for officers in volatile situations.

THE ABCs of RADIO TRANSMISSIONS

Officers and Dispatchers should adhere to the following principles to ensure the most efficient use of the radio:
Accuracy – A misspelled name or transposed numbers may yield negative results. Accurate information is crucial for the appropriate response and efficient allocation of resources.

Brevity – Airtime is precious. Plan your transmissions and keep officer safety in mind.

Clarity – Speak clearly, using appropriate codes and phrases. Clear communication reduces the risk of misunderstandings and errors especially in high-stress and emergency situations.

Courtesy – Teamwork requires courtesy. Phrases like “Please” and “Thank You” are not necessary, however, officers and dispatchers will be courteous and respectful.

GENERAL TRANSMISSION PROCEDURES

Prior to transmitting, monitor the channel for a moment to avoid interfering with a unit’s transmission. Begin your transmission by raising the station or the unit you are trying to reach and identifying yourself. (Example: “55, 13C on a group 100 W Ortega”)

When transmitting, the following practices will ensure that radio transmissions are clear, concise, and professional:

- Key your mic, wait 2 seconds, transmit your traffic, unkey your mic
 - Pausing at the beginning and end of a transmission prevents clipped messages
- Speak at a moderate pace and in a normal tone of voice, yelling causes distortion
- Use clear and simple language to convey messages; avoid humor, slang, and profanity
- Confirm receipt of information by acknowledging it promptly
- Limit each transmission to approximately twenty (20) seconds or less
 - This allows other units on the frequency to make an emergency broadcast

REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

When requesting assistance, provide specific information as to what type of assistance is needed.

- Cover unit – Advise if you need them code 2 or code 3

- Medics – Advise the nature of the medical and code you need them to respond
 - Any request for code 3 will result in the dispatch of an ambulance and a fire engine
 - ***Priority symptoms (e.g. breathing problems, chest pain, head injury) automatically receive a code 3 response***
- Tow trucks – Advise the type
 - On Call – The company is selected from the rotation list through a CAD command. A 180 is required.
 - Owner's Request – The company is selected from the rotation list through a CAD command as a courtesy. The owner is responsible for payment.
 - AAA – A courtesy call on behalf of the driver.
 - Department Vehicles – During normal business hours contact Fleet. After business hours Smitty's Towing is the contracted towing service.
- Animal Control – Be as specific as possible. The ACO needs to know what they are responding to.

OFFICER SAFETY

- Location Updates – Dispatchers and officers are both responsible for maintaining accurate unit status. GPS on vehicles can become stale and will not provide a correct location. Assistance is sent to the officer's last known location.
- Emergency Alert Tone – The purpose is to clear the radio and alert units of an emergency broadcast to follow. Used for priority calls and when officers are needed to clear for a priority call. Priority calls include the preservation of life, a felony crime in progress, or a real and present danger exists in a field situation.
- Wanted Subjects, ATLS, and Warrant Service – Be aware that members of the public have scanners and actively listen to our radio frequency. The information you put out over the radio could compromise the mission or put officers at risk.

RADIO DISCIPLINE

- Use the appropriate radio channels for different types of communication. Primary, administrative, or tactical.
- Prioritize your communications based on the urgency of the situation, allowing critical messages to take precedence.
- Active listening enables situational awareness, eliminates the need for information to be repeated, reduces miscommunication and confusion.
- Simple requests or notifications should be made over the radio in lieu of calling in provided it does not interfere with critical incidents.
- Following a structured format to convey information ensures clarity, efficiency, and completeness of the message. "WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY"
- Think before you key the mic.
- **Do not use "same traffic."** It is not clear and easily misinterpreted if a transmission was covered.
- **Think before you key the mic.**