

SCRANTON POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY

Effective Date:
March 9, 2020

Policy Number:
07-008

Policy Subject:
Radio and Mobile Communications

Expiration Date:
Until Amended or Rescinded

No. Pages:
8

PLEAC Standard(s):
3.3.1, 3.3.3, 3.3.4

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to familiarize department personnel with established procedures governing radio transmissions and communications.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Scranton Police Department that all radio transmissions and communications shall be conducted in a professional manner at all times. Radio procedures shall be in compliance with FCC regulations.

This policy rescinds Policy 09-007 24 Hour Two-Way Radio.

III. DEFINITIONS

Computer Aided Dispatch – Also known as CAD; a method of dispatching public safety personnel with the assistance of a computer.

Dispatcher – The person controlling, coordinating, and monitoring police units from the Lackawanna County Communications Center.

In-Service – The officer is available to accept assignments.

Mobile Data Terminal – Also known as MDT; a computer, laptop, tablet, or similar computerized device used within a vehicle and connected to one or more law enforcement systems.

Out-of-Service – The officer is **not** available to accept assignments but is in radio contact with the dispatcher.

Out of Radio Contact – The officer is **not** available for assignments and is not in radio contact.

Radio Repeater – A combination of a radio receiver and a radio transmitter that receives a signal and retransmits it, so that two-way radio signals can cover longer distances.

IV. RADIO CAPABILITIES

- A. Lackawanna County Emergency Communications Center (Comm Center) provides all police, fire, and EMS radio communications for the Scranton Police Department. Comm Center is a regional and multi-jurisdictional 911 system, which is staffed by certified dispatchers that have been trained and certified by both the APCO (The Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials) and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

- B. 24 hour two-way communication
 - 1. Comm Center is staffed full time, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.
 - 2. All on-duty officers and all vehicles utilized for emergency response will be equipped with two-way radios capable of providing continuous 24 hour communications between the Scranton Police Department and Comm Center.
 - 3. Supervisor vehicles are additionally equipped with two-way radios that are set to the 3 County Police Zones.
 - 4. In addition to the officers and vehicles, the Scranton Police Department will provide a base radio at Police Headquarters for officers and supervisors to monitor communications in the field.

- C. Recording Capabilities
 - 1. Retention of recordings
 - a. Pennsylvania state law mandates audio recordings be maintained for a minimum of 30 days.
 - b. Comm Center, based on call volume and capacity, typically maintains records beyond the 30 day minimum.
 - 2. Method of secure storage
 - a. Comm Center is equipped with a server based system to securely store recordings.
 - b. Comm Center employs a system of restricted access to further secure recordings.
 - 3. Reviewing recordings
 - a. Real-time
 - 1) Comm Center has the ability to provide immediate playback of recordings for the dispatchers and police officers.
 - 2) With supervisor approval, Comm Center can allow police personnel to contact a dispatcher by phone and review recorded audio to better understand and respond to an emergency situation.
 - 3) The immediate playback of audio does not impact or restrict the continuous real-time recording of telephone and radio communications that are processed through Comm Center.
 - b. Request of a copy of a recording
 - 1) Officers can request a physical copy of audio recordings of both radio and telephone communications. Officers must complete the

Comm Center Request for Information Form, have the form signed by a supervisor, and then fax the form to Comm. Center.

- 2) If the recording is to be used as evidence, the original copy must be processed in accordance with Policy 08-019 Evidence Control and/or Policy 07-012 Digital Media Evidence depending on the format of the original recording.
- 3) The officer may keep a copy of the recording for his/her case file.

D. Comm Center is equipped with redundant power systems to ensure the continued operation of emergency communication equipment in the event of a primary power source failure. The system is maintained and inspected in accordance with their policies.

E. Frequencies

1. The City of Scranton maintains several radio frequencies in the Ultra-High Frequency (UHF) band for the use of the Scranton Police Department. The radio frequencies are designated as channels for ease of use and identification.
2. Security of communications
 - a. PD 1 and PD 2 frequencies are published in public forums. These frequencies are routinely monitored by third parties.
 - b. Repeater based communications can be intercepted by third parties via scanners as well as software applications. Line-of-sight frequencies provide an added measure of security by limiting the geographical range of reception of a radio signal, though the communication may still be intercepted by third-parties.
 - c. Some radios have an encryption capability to prevent radio interception of communications by a third party when the interception may compromise the tactical objectives and safety of police officers.
3. Officers should be familiar with the use and features of each channel.
 - a. PD 1 – The primary frequency of the Scranton Police Department.
 - 1) Also referred to as Channel 1.
 - 2) Monitored and recorded by Comm Center.
 - 3) Radio repeater based system.
 - b. PD 2 – The secondary frequency most commonly used by the Scranton Police Department.
 - 1) Also referred to as Channel 2.
 - 2) Monitored and recorded by Comm Center.
 - 3) Radio repeater based system.
 - c. PD 1 and PD 2 T/A (talk around) – Line-of-sight frequency of PD 1 and PD 2 (respectively).
 - 1) Bypasses the repeater system to allow radio communications on these channels when out-of-range of the repeater due to distance and/or obstruction (inside a building).
 - 2) Is not monitored or recorded by Comm Center.

- d. Detective – Line-of-sight frequency primarily used for specific communications of a more sensitive nature.
 - 1) Is not repeater based.
 - 2) Communications may still be intercepted by third-parties.
 - 3) Is not monitored or recorded by Comm Center.
- e. PD Ops – A repeater based secondary frequency.
 - 1) Designed to provide increased communication capabilities in Scranton by:
 - a) Providing an additional frequency during special circumstances.
 - b) Providing a localized repeater to increase signal strength when encountering obstacles in the downtown area.
 - 2) Is not monitored or recorded by Comm Center.
- f. Mobile Ops – A mobile repeater based secondary frequency.
 - 1) Designed to provide increased communication capabilities in Scranton by:
 - a) Providing an additional frequency during special circumstances.
 - b) Providing a mobile repeater to increase signal strength for a specific incident that may or may not be out of the range of other repeater systems.
 - 2) Is not monitored or recorded by Comm Center.
 - 3) Is not an active frequency until the repeater in the Command Car vehicle is turned on.

V. PROCEDURES

- A. A numerical action code (also known as an assignment, incident, or reference number) shall be used to indicate the assignment for the report and any other action taken to resolve the complaint.
- B. Plain language dispatching
 Dispatched assignments will be issued in plain language. The dispatcher will tell the assigned patrol unit **and** the supervisor to call the dispatch center when assigning an incident which will not be put over the radio frequency for officer safety purposes.
- C. Radio Procedures
 - 1. All radio transmissions shall be conducted in such a manner as to reflect a professional image and make sufficient use of air time.
 - 2. Patrol personnel shall maintain radio contact with the dispatcher at all times while in service unless he/she otherwise specifies to the dispatcher and a supervisor. Officers shall notify the dispatcher when they are out of service or out of radio contact.
 - 3. Officers are responsible for all calls until completion of their tour of duty or until relieved by the on-coming watch. Officers shall not cancel or

“pass on” an assignment at shift change without supervisor approval. The dispatcher will then be notified by the supervisor to reassign the call to the next watch or to another vehicle.

4. Upon receipt of a call for service, the dispatcher shall assign the call(s) by priority in accordance with the shift supervisor(s).
 - a. **Priority One Calls** are any calls that require **immediate police response**. Patrol units will be dispatched to respond to these calls based on the geographical closeness of the units.
 - b. **Priority Two Calls** are any calls that **do not routinely** require immediate police response.
 - c. In the event of a backlog of calls for service, or if the dispatcher is unable to dispatch a priority two call in twenty minutes, the shift supervisor will be notified. The shift supervisor will render a decision on redeployment of personnel.
5. Dispatchers will frequently echo pertinent information transmitted by an officer to assist with the clear reception of the officer’s message.
6. Any officer can request radio priority be given to an emergency situation as necessary. The officer shall request a “Code Red” and the request will be repeated by the dispatcher according to Comm Center protocols. All officers not involved in that incident shall resume radio communications on the designated secondary frequency. Supervisors should monitor both frequencies as needed, when possible. The “Code Red” shall be lifted when the radio priority is no longer needed so that regular radio operations may resume.

D. Patrol Units

1. All assignments by the Comm Center-dispatcher shall be considered an official assignment.
 - a. Other than for the purposes of clarification needed to interpret a message, officers shall not contact Comm Center dispatchers or personnel regarding discrepancies regarding an assignment.
 - b. Questions, complaints, or disputes regarding dispatch circumstances, procedures, calls, call response, etc. shall be made to the officer’s supervisor.
2. Upon receiving a call for service from the dispatcher, each unit shall:
 - a. Acknowledge the call.
 - b. Notify the dispatcher upon the arrival at the call.
 - c. Cancel any back-up units if the situation does not require their presence.
 - d. Request an assignment number if necessary.
 - e. Promptly notify the dispatcher when returning to service.
3. All officers shall acknowledge their calls and respond to the calls without undue delay.
4. All official operations shall be conducted over the police radio. Supervisors shall monitor radio transmission in order to track and

supervise call volume, critical incidents and officer response as well as officer accountability for time spent on a call and/or report.

5. It shall be the responsibility of the supervisors to ensure that all the proper procedures are followed by officers with regards to the dispatched calls.
- E. Patrol Assists: An officer that wishes to provide assistance to another unit shall radio his/her intentions to Comm Center and indicate:
1. That he/she is responding as a back-up unit and the intended location.
 2. Notify the dispatcher upon arrival at the call.
 3. Notify the dispatcher when returning to service.
- F. Self-Initiated Activities: When an officer engages in a self-initiated activity that officer shall notify the dispatcher of the unit number, nature and location of the activity (e.g. follow-up investigation, walk-up complaint, disabled vehicle, traffic stop, neighborhood meeting, etc.).
- G. Status Checks:
1. Dispatchers may, according to Comm Center policy, conduct status checks on units when it is believed the activity or complaint may be dangerous or become violent in nature.
 2. When a patrol unit is on a traffic stop the dispatcher shall check their status, according to their policy, and determine if everything is o.k.
 3. Status checks that get no response shall mandate a back-up unit be immediately dispatched and a supervisor be notified.
 4. Patrol officers shall monitor the radio at all times. A patrol supervisor will be notified by the dispatcher if a unit fails to acknowledge a radio call from the dispatcher in a reasonable amount of time.
 5. Patrol supervisors shall monitor the City radio at all times. Additionally, supervisors shall also ensure that the County radios in the patrol supervisor vehicles are turned “on” and are able to be monitored in the event that mutual assistance is needed per MOU agreements.

VI. MOBILE COMPUTER AIDED DISPATCH (CAD)

- A. Mobile CAD capabilities
1. Mobile CAD provides a direct link to the Lackawanna County Emergency Communications Center (Comm Center). Call information that is received and/or logged by Comm Center dispatchers and call takers is accessible, within security restrictions granted to Scranton Police Officers, via the MDT Mobile CAD Client. Mobile CAD provides the following:
 - a. Immediate availability of information such as the status of driver’s license, vehicle registrations, as well as local and NCIC wanted/stolen information.
 - b. Dispatches from Comm Center
 - c. Two-way communication with Comm Center
 - d. Car to car communications

- e. Reduction in radio traffic
2. Dispatches from Comm Center Mobile CAD allows officers to:
 - a. View call status and details for current and past calls.
 - b. Receive dispatches and related information, self-dispatch to incidents, and create incidents for self-initiated contacts.
 - c. Update information and change status for received or assigned dispatches.
 3. Mapping

Mobile CAD is GPS linked to a detailed map of Lackawanna County. The map allows officers to:

 - a. View and route to the locations of calls for service.
 - b. View the locations of special hazards or conditions (i.e. road closures, etc.) that have been entered into the system by Comm Center staff.
 - c. View the location of other police vehicles equipped with Mobile CAD.
 4. Messaging
 - a. Car-to-car messaging is encouraged to reduce radio traffic.
 - b. Use of the messaging feature for Mobile CAD shall be of a law enforcement nature.
 - c. Messages are subject to monitoring and may be retrievable although deleted from the individual MDT.
 - d. All messages are recorded at Comm Center and considered discoverable.
- B. Mobile CAD operation
1. An officer's first priority is the safe operation of the police vehicle. Any use of the MDT and/or Mobile CAD must not interfere with the safe operation of the vehicle.
 2. Officers shall open the Mobile CAD Client on their MDT and sign in at the beginning of their shift. It is the responsibility of the officer to remain logged into the Mobile CAD for the duration of his/her shift.
 - a. Officers will enter their "Unit Number" through a defined list to reflect their area car identifier or micro number in cases of extra duty assignments.
 - b. Officers will enter their individually assigned MPOETC number in the ID#1 field. For two-officer patrols in the same vehicle the second officer will enter his/her MPOETC number into the ID#2 field.
 3. Officers shall monitor the MDT for messages and dispatched calls. Officers shall respond appropriately via the MDT as soon as safely possible.
 - a. Officers will receive dispatch information on their MDT and then acknowledge receipt by performing the "enroute" function.

- b. Officers are responsible for performing status changes, ending calls, and/or adding information to CAD narratives as necessary. In the event an officer is unable to access the Mobile CAD Client, he/she should advise the Communications Center to update their status, etc.
4. At the conclusion of an officer's shift, he/she must change his/her status to "off duty" before closing the Mobile CAD client.

By Order Of:

Chief Carl R. Graziano
Superintendent of Police
Scranton Police Department