Communications

801.1   PURPOSE AND SCOPE
This policy establishes guidelines for the basic functions of Security Operations Center. It addresses the immediate information needs of the Department in the course of its normal daily activities and during emergencies.

801.2   POLICY
It is the policy of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission Police Department to provide 24-hour telephone service to the public for information and for routine or emergency assistance that complies with Md. Code PS § 1-304. The Department provides two-way radio capability for continuous communication between Security Operations Center and department members in the field.

801.3   SECURITY OPERATIONS CENTER SECURITY
The communications function is vital and central to all emergency service operations. The safety and security of Security Operations Center, its members and equipment must be a high priority. Special security procedures should be established in a separate operations manual for Security Operations Center.

Access to Security Operations Center shall be limited to Security Operations Center members, the Patrol Commander, command staff and department members with a specific business-related purpose.

801.4   RESPONSIBILITIES

801.4.1   SECURITY SYSTEMS MANAGER
The Director of WSSC Police & Homeland Security shall appoint and delegate certain responsibilities to a Security Systems Manager. The Security Systems Manager is directly responsible to the Director of WSSC Police & Homeland Security or the authorized designee. Security Officers/Dispatchers report to the Security systems Manager.

The responsibilities of the Security Systems Manager include, but are not limited to:

(a)   Overseeing the efficient and effective operation of Security Operations Center in coordination with other supervisors.

(b)   Scheduling and maintaining security officers/dispatcher time records.

(c)   Supervising, training and evaluating security officers/dispatchers.

(d)   Ensuring the radio and telephone recording system is operational.

   1.   Recordings shall be maintained in accordance with the established records retention schedule and as required by law.

(e)   Processing requests for copies of Security Operations Center information for release.

(f)   Maintaining Security Operations Center database systems.

(g) Maintaining and updating Security Operations Center procedures manual.

1. Procedures for specific types of crime reports may be necessary. For example, specific questions and instructions may be necessary when talking with a victim of a sexual assault to ensure that his/her health and safety needs are met, as well as steps that he/she may take to preserve evidence.

2. Ensuring security officers/dispatcher compliance with established policies and procedures.

(h) Handling internal and external inquiries regarding services provided and accepting personnel complaints in accordance with the Personnel Complaints Policy.

(i) Maintaining a current contact list of Commission personnel to be notified in the event of a utility service emergency.

801.4.2 ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES

At least once each year, the Security Systems Manager shall examine the cybersecurity of Security Operations Center to determine whether the security procedures satisfy the standards established by the Maryland Emergency Number Systems Board and shall submit to that board a report detailing the results (Md. Code PS § 1-309.1).

The Security Systems Manager should establish procedures for calls involving individuals suffering an active mental health crisis that address at a minimum (Md. Code PS § 1-304):

(a) Call triage protocols.

(b) Resources available for Security Operations Center.

(c) Procedures for making a dispatch decision.

(d) Training for applicable members.

(e) Any other procedures required by law.

801.4.3 SECURITY OFFICERS/DISPATCHERS

The responsibilities of the security officers/dispatcher include, but are not limited to:

(a) Receipt and handling of all incoming and transmitted communications, including:

1. Emergency 9-1-1 lines.

2. Business telephone lines.

3. Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)/Text Telephone (TTY) equipment.

4. Radio communications with department members in the field and support resources (i.e., fire department, emergency medical services (EMS), allied agency law enforcement units).

5. Other electronic sources of information (e.g., text messages, digital photographs, video).

(b) Documenting the field activities of department members and support resources (i.e., fire department, EMS, allied agency law enforcement units).

(c) Inquiry and entry of information through Security Operations Center, department and other law enforcement database systems (i.e., Maryland Electronic Telecommunications Enforcement Resource System (METERS), National Crime Information Center (NCIC), National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS), Division of Parole and Probation, etc.).

(d) Monitoring department video surveillance systems.

(e) Maintaining the current status of members in the field, including their locations, duty status and the nature of calls for service.

(f) Notifying the Patrol Commander of field supervisor of emergency activity, including, but not limited to:

1. Vehicle pursuits.

2. Foot pursuits

3. Assignment of emergency response.

(g) Missing or unaccounted personnel that fail to report on/off duty, fail to answer/respond to repeated radio calls and/or welfare status checks.

801.5 CALL HANDLING

This department provides members of the public with access to the 9-1-1 system for a single emergency telephone number.

When a call for services is received, the security officers/dispatcher will reasonably and quickly attempt to determine whether the call is an emergency or non-emergency, and shall quickly ascertain the call type, location and priority by asking four key questions:

- Where?

- What?

- When?

- Who?

If the security officers/dispatcher determines that the caller has a hearing and/or speech impairment or disability, he/she shall immediately initiate a connection with the individual via available TDD/TTY equipment or Telephone Relay Service (TRS), as mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

If the security officers/dispatcher determines that the caller is a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individual, the security officers/dispatcher should quickly determine whether sufficient information can be obtained to initiate an appropriate response. If language assistance is still needed, the language is known and a language-appropriate authorized interpreter is available in Security Operations Center, the security officers/dispatcher should immediately connect the LEP caller to the authorized interpreter.

If no authorized interpreter is available or the security officers/dispatcher is unable to identify the caller's language, the security officers/dispatcher will contact the contracted telephonic

Communications

interpretation service and establish a three party call connecting the security officers/dispatcher, the LEP individual and the interpreter.

Security Officers/Dispatchers should be courteous, patient and respectful when dealing with the public.

801.5.1   EMERGENCY CALLS
A call is considered an emergency when there is an immediate or potential threat to life or serious property damage, and the timely arrival of public safety assistance is of the utmost importance. A person reporting an emergency should not be placed on hold until the security officers/dispatcher has obtained all necessary information to ensure the safety of the responding department members and affected individuals.

Emergency calls should be dispatched immediately. The Patrol Commander shall be notified of pending emergency calls for service when department members are unavailable for dispatch.

801.5.2   NON-EMERGENCY CALLS
A call is considered a non-emergency call when there is no immediate or potential threat to life or property. A person reporting a non-emergency may be placed on hold, if necessary, to allow the security officers/dispatcher to handle a higher priority or emergency call.

The reporting person should be advised if there will be a delay in the security officers/dispatcher returning to the telephone line or when there will be a delay in the response for service.

801.6   RADIO COMMUNICATIONS
The police radio system is for official use only, to be used by security officers/dispatchers to communicate with department members in the field. All transmissions shall be professional and made in a calm, businesslike manner, using proper language and correct procedures. Such transmissions shall include, but not be limited to:

   (a)   Members acknowledging the security officers/dispatcher with their radio identification call signs and current location.

   (b)   Security Officers/Dispatchers acknowledging and responding promptly to all radio transmissions.

   (c)   Members keeping the security officers/dispatcher advised of their status and location.

   (d)   Member and security officers/dispatcher acknowledgements shall be concise and without further comment unless additional information is needed.

The Security Systems Manager shall be notified of radio procedure violations or other causes for complaint. All complaints and violations will be investigated and reported to the complainant's supervisor and processed through the chain of command.

Communications

801.6.1 FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION COMPLIANCE

Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission Police Department radio operations shall be conducted in accordance with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) procedures and requirements.

801.6.2 RADIO IDENTIFICATION

Radio call signs are assigned to department members based on factors such as duty assignment, uniformed patrol assignment and/or member identification number. Security Officers/Dispatchers shall identify themselves on the radio with the appropriate station name or number, and identify the department member by his/her call sign. Members should use their call signs when initiating communication with the security officers/dispatcher. The use of the call sign allows for a brief pause so that the security officers/dispatcher can acknowledge the appropriate department member. Members initiating communication with other law enforcement or support agencies shall use their entire radio call sign, which includes the department station name or number.

801.7 DOCUMENTATION

It shall be the responsibility of Security Operations Center to document all relevant information on calls for service or self-initiated activity. Security Officers/Dispatchers shall attempt to elicit, document and relay as much information as possible to enhance the safety of the member and assist in anticipating conditions that may be encountered at the scene. Desirable information would include, at a minimum, the following:

- Incident control number

- Date and time of request

- Name and address of the reporting person, if possible

- Type of incident reported

- Involvement of weapons, drugs and/or alcohol

- Location of incident reported

- Identification of members assigned as primary and backup

- Time of dispatch

- Time of the responding member's arrival

- Time of member's return to service

- Disposition or status of reported incident

801.8 CONFIDENTIALITY

Information that becomes available through Security Operations Center may be confidential or sensitive in nature. All Security Operations Center members shall treat information that becomes known to them as confidential and release that information in accordance with the Protected Information Policy.

Communications

Automated data, such as Motor Vehicle Administration records, warrants, criminal history information, records of internal police files, or medical information shall only be made available to authorized law enforcement personnel. Prior to transmitting confidential information via the radio, an admonishment shall be made that confidential information is about to be broadcast.

801.9   TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

All security officers/dispatchers shall successfully complete training within six months of employment using a curriculum approved by the state Emergency Number Systems Board which includes training on Public Safety Answering Point orientation, communication skills, electronic systems, policies and procedures, call processing, documentation, stress management, administrative duties and disaster and major incidents (COMAR 12.11.03.10).

Any security officers/dispatcher receiving and dispatching Emergency Medical Service (EMS) or Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) duties shall also have (COMAR 30.02.02.03):

(a)   Accumulated 2,000 hours of public safety call-taking or call-allocating experience.

(b)   Successfully completed an EMD program and exam approved by the state EMS Board.

(c)   Obtained a license by achieving a passing score on an EMD written licensure exam administered by the Maryland Institute for EMS Systems (MIEMSS).

(d)   Current CPR certification.

Communications - 350