

COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURES

- PURPOSE**
- To establish guidelines and procedures for the use of agency radios, mobile data computers (MDC) and automatic vehicle locators (AVL) in a manner that reflects professionalism and enhances officer safety.
- GENERAL**
- All communications equipment, to include radios, mobile video system microphones, mobile data computers (MDC) and automatic vehicle locators (AVL), as well as personal electronic equipment that transmits a signal (e.g. cellular phones, pagers, etc.), shall be turned off within 100 feet of the location of any bomb threat or area of known or suspected explosives.
 - To ensure that the equipment installed in the vehicle has been turned off, the vehicle ignition shall be placed in the “off” position and the key shall be removed.
 - All electronic equipment shall be turned on when the danger no longer exists.
- RADIO PROCEDURES**
- Radio communications conducted by the Harford County Division of Emergency Operations (DEO) with members of the Harford County Sheriff’s Office (HCSO) and other public safety agencies within Harford County shall consist of a combination of the established ten-codes, miscellaneous codes and plain English.
 - Radio transmissions shall be clear, concise and for official business only.
 - Sheriff’s Office personnel shall be identified over the radio using the HCSO prefix identifier “Sam”, followed by the member’s assigned agency identification number (e.g. Sam 999).
 - Agency members communicating via radio to a dispatcher at the DEO shall use the term “Dispatch” (e.g. Sam 999 to Dispatch).
 - Only the **primary unit** assigned to a call for service shall relay the disposition of that particular call, utilizing established agency Disposition and Situation Found (SF) Codes. The Disposition Code shall be provided first, followed by the SF Code.
 - When providing an SF Code to Dispatch, deputies shall utilize the phonetic alphabet (e.g. For a traffic stop - “D-David I”).
 - It shall be the responsibility of a deputy or supervisor on the scene of an incident to notify Dispatch when no further assistance is needed, or the response of additional back-up units are not required.
 - Agency personnel shall be courteous at all times, however expressions of courtesy (e.g. “please” and “thank you”) and humor shall be avoided in the interest of brevity. The use of proper names shall be avoided whenever possible. Indecent and profane language, expression of temper or snide remarks are prohibited.
 - Alert tones are used to give notice that an urgent message is about to be broadcast (e.g. BOLO) and for all units to clear the radio talk group and prepare to copy information.
 - When a deputy is working in his/her regular assignment or in any other capacity including training events, in-service, court, etc., the deputy shall notify Dispatch via mobile or portable radio. Notification shall include the type of status (10-7 or 10-8), followed by the location (e.g. Training). For assignments involving covert activity or any other assignment that should not

be broadcast over the radio, the deputy may notify Dispatch via landline or by a secured encryption enabled talk group.

TALK GROUPS

- Agency members shall primarily utilize radio talk groups according to the precinct area, Southern (A1) and Northern (B1), to which they are assigned.
- Personnel assigned to the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) shall advise Dispatch of on-duty and off-duty status utilizing talk group B1. If a member of CID is assigned to an incident, he/she shall operate on the talk group where the incident occurred. This will provide all units involved with the incident the ability to track new developments and respond accordingly.
- Personnel assigned to the Special Investigations Division (SID)/Harford County Task Force shall primarily utilize talk group A8, however this talk group is not monitored by Dispatch.
- Talk group A7/B7 shall be designated as the primary talk group for Central Records, the Interagency Processing Center (IPC) and Harford County Detention Center Transportation Units. Although this is essentially one talk group, it can be accessed via both the A7 and B7 radio selector positions. This talk group shall also be utilized as the Service Talk Group (for multiple drivers license, registration, wanted/stolen checks, lengthy messages, etc.), calls for service requiring the sole use of a talk group for an extended time period and may be used for specialty details (warrant sweeps, sobriety checkpoints, etc.).
- All other units/divisions will generally operate on the talk group for the precinct area where they are assigned, or where they are responding to an incident.
- Personnel from the Aberdeen, Bel Air and Havre de Grace Police Departments, as well as the Maryland State Police shall utilize their designated talk group.
- Talk group A15/B15 shall be designated as the "Fire Main" talk group. Although this is essentially one talk group, it can be monitored via both the A15 and B15 radio selector positions. **Law enforcement personnel are authorized to monitor Fire/EMS communications, however at no time shall they communicate with Fire/EMS personnel utilizing these talk groups.** If the need arises for law enforcement and Fire/EMS personnel to directly communicate, a request shall be made to Dispatch, at which time all involved parties shall be directed by Dispatch to switch and operate on one of the FDPD talk groups (G1, G2, or G3).
- It shall be the responsibility of the deputy to inform Dispatch if he/she is switching to an alternate talk group and to advise when he/she has returned to his/her primary talk group.
- Agency members requesting to use a Special Events Talk Group shall coordinate with a Dispatch supervisor as far in advance as possible to ensure there are no conflicts with the use of the talk group and that adequate DEO personnel are available to monitor the dispatch function.

OFF-DUTY

- Agency members utilizing an agency vehicle in an off-duty capacity shall notify Dispatch that he/she is **10-8 OD**. When the member has concluded use of the agency vehicle Dispatch shall be notified that he/she is **10-7 OD**. The member **will not** be required to notify Dispatch that he/she is 10-8 OD or 10-7 OD each time he/she arrives at or leaves a location.
- Dispatch shall be notified when any official action is taken by off-duty members.
- Agency members **shall not** utilize portable agency radios while traveling in their personal vehicles unless they become involved in an incident that requires that the member take official action.

TEN-CODES • Agency members shall utilize the following ten-codes:

10-0 CAUTION	10-23 ARRIVED AT SCENE	10-57 HIT & RUN ACCIDENT
10-1 UNABLE TO COPY	10-25 REPORT IN PERSON	10-61 PERSONNEL IN AREA
10-2 SIGNAL GOOD	10-27 DRIVERS LIC. INFO.	10-63 PREPARE TO COPY
10-3 STOP TRANSMITTING	10-28 VEHICLE REGIST. INFO.	10-68 DISPATCH INFORMATION
10-4 ACKNOWLEDGMENT	10-29 CHECK FOR WANTED	10-74 NEGATIVE
10-5 RELAY	10-31 CRIME IN PROGRESS	10-76 ENROUTE TO
10-6 BUSY UNLESS URGENT	10-32 MAN WITH A GUN	10-77 EST. TIME OF ARRIVAL
10-7 OUT OF SERVICE	10-33 EMERGENCY	10-80 PURSUIT IN PROGRESS
10-8 IN SERVICE	10-37 SUSPICIOUS VEH./PERSON	10-81 INTOXIMETER OPERATOR
10-9 REPEAT	10-41 BEGIN TOUR OF DUTY	10-83 SCHOOL CROSSING
10-10 FIGHT IN PROGRESS	10-42 END TOUR OF DUTY	10-86 OPERATOR ON DUTY
10-12 STAND BY (STOP)	10-43 INFORMATION	10-89 BOMB THREAT
10-16 DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE	10-44 PERMISSION TO	10-90 ALARM AT
10-17 MEET COMPLAINANT	10-46 ASSIST MOTORIST	10-92 PARKING VIOLATION
10-18 QUICKLY	10-50 ACCIDENT (F, PI, PD)	10-95 PRISONER IN CUSTODY
10-19 RETURN TO	10-51 TOW TRUCK REQUEST	10-96 MENTAL SUBJECT
10-20 LOCATION	10-52 AMBULANCE NEEDED	10-97 RADIO CHECK
10-21 CALL	10-55 INTOXICATED DRIVER	10-99 WANTED / STOLEN
10-22 DISREGARD	10-56 INTOX. PEDESTRIAN	

MISC. CODES • In addition to ten-codes, the following miscellaneous informational codes shall be utilized:

- SIGNAL 13: OFFICER NEEDS ASSISTANCE**
- CODE 50: INCIDENT INVOLVES POLICE PERSONNEL**
- CODE 67: PERMISSION TO TRANSMIT RESTRICTED INFORMATION**
- CODE 100: STATIONARY PATROL**
- CODE 222: ACTIVE SHOOTER**

PHONETIC ALPHABET • Agency members shall utilize the following phonetic alphabet when using letters, words, or names that may be easily misinterpreted over the radio:

A-Adam	J-John	S-Sam
B-Boy	K-King	T-Tom
C-Charles	L-Lincoln	U-Union
D-David	M-Mary	V-Victor
E-Edward	N-Nora	W-William
F-Frank	O-Ocean	X-X-ray
G-George	P-Paul	Y-Young
H-Henry	Q-Queen	Z-Zebra
I-Ida	R-Robert	

AGENCY PREFIX IDENTIFIERS • The 800 MHZ radio system makes it possible for allied agencies to directly speak to the HCSO and other allied agencies within Harford County. The following agency prefixes shall be utilized by all agencies in Harford County.

- A - Aberdeen Police Department
- B - Bel Air Police Department

F - Fire Service
H - Havre de Grace Police Department
S - Harford County Sheriff's Office
Barrack Designator - Maryland State Police
* EOC will be referred to as Dispatch

10-3 (STOP TRANSMITTING) PROCEDURE

- Criteria- An incident that is determined by the dispatcher or any HCSO personnel to be an emergency, a pursuit, or a situation where officer safety is at risk or human life is in peril. The incident requires the sole use of the talk group by the unit(s) involved.
- A 10-3 order will require that the Harford County Division of Emergency Operations control all radio traffic. All HCSO personnel not involved with the incident requiring a 10-3 on their primary talk group should switch and operate off the other primary talk group (A1 or B1). A 10-3 order shall remain in effect until canceled by the dispatcher, at which time normal radio traffic may resume. When the 10-3 is lifted, all units should switch back and operate on their primary talk group.
- When a 10-3 is placed on a talk group, a slight tone will be heard every ten (10) seconds indicating the 10-3 is in effect. When a member has been away from the radio for a period of time, he/she should wait at least ten (10) seconds before transmitting to ensure a 10-3 is not in effect.
- During situations where there is a 10-3 on both Northern and Southern Talk groups, all remaining units not involved with either incident will switch to the Records Talk Group (A7/B7) and proceed with normal operations.
- Incidents of long duration or that consume a large amount of airtime may be moved to a tactical talk group at the discretion of the duty officer, supervisor, and/or the police dispatch supervisor. Dispatch has the discretion to advise a short time limit (from immediate to five minutes) from the time of the request to make personnel adjustments in the police pod and ensure that there are sufficient radio operators available to handle the traffic. The dispatch supervisor has the discretion to collapse talk groups to manage the situation.

VEHICLE PURSUITS

- When a deputy initiates a motor vehicle pursuit, the dispatcher shall ensure that the following steps are taken:
 1. Acknowledge that a motor vehicle pursuit is occurring and repeat the location of the pursuit.
 2. Create an incident in the CAD system noting location, direction of travel, vehicle and/or suspect information and speed.
 3. Assign appropriate back up unit(s).
 4. Place 10-3 on the talk group on which the pursuit is occurring.
 5. Notify the Watch Commander/Duty Officer of the pursuit.
 6. Notify all other law enforcement agencies within the county as required and keep them informed of the pursuit status.
 7. If the pursuit makes entry into other Maryland counties or across state boundaries, the dispatcher shall immediately notify the effected law enforcement agency and keep that agency informed of the pursuit status.
 8. Document all pertinent radio traffic exchanged during the pursuit.
 9. Repeat all pertinent information as it applies to include location changes.
 10. Make all notifications as requested by the deputy(s) or Watch Commander/Duty Officer.

11. Keep the Watch Commander/Duty Officer informed of the progress of the pursuit at all times.
- In the event a pursuit involves multiple allied agencies the following protocol shall be followed:
 1. Once a pursuit is initiated, all involved units shall be directed by Dispatch to switch and operate on the originating agency's talk group. This shall continue until the pursuit concludes.
 2. If the pursuit is initiated from one of the municipalities and then leaves their jurisdiction, that agency shall notify Dispatch and/or MSP, who shall then monitor the pursuit.
 3. In the event the initiating agency drops out of the pursuit and the HCSO continues the pursuit, the initiating agency shall be directed by Dispatch to switch to an alternate talk group for normal dispatch functions and dispatch responsibility will be assumed by the dispatcher assigned to the Records Talk group (A7/B7).
 - The second police vehicle in the pursuit, regardless of the agency, shall be responsible for radio communications.

MAJOR INCIDENTS & BOLO's

- Major incidents will be simulcast on the Northern & Southern talk groups upon initial dispatch, or on the primary talk group effected by the incident.
- Dispatchers on the remaining talk groups shall advise units as quickly possible.
- All lookouts relating to major incidents and crimes in progress that could possibly encompass both Northern and Southern precincts shall be simulcast.
- Certain broadcasts (BOLO's) will be eligible for a countywide broadcast to include the talk groups of the Maryland State Police, Aberdeen, Bel Air, and Havre de Grace Police Departments. For serious incidents the call will be broadcast first to the appropriate unit, then a countywide broadcast. The countywide broadcast will be preceded by an alert tone. Calls eligible are in-progress felonies, and serious injury hit and run accidents. Descriptions of persons involved in felonies are also eligible for countywide broadcast.
- If the lookout relates only to one precinct and does not need to be broadcast on all talk groups, the BOLO will only be broadcast over the appropriate talk group.

EMERGENCY CALL

- The Emergency Call feature allows the radio user the ability to send a silent emergency alarm to Dispatch by depressing the designated emergency button on the radio. Dispatch is alerted both audibly and visually. Once the emergency feature is activated the system grants that radio System Priority Assignment.
- Use of the Emergency Call feature shall be restricted to potentially life threatening situations.
- When an emergency alarm is received from a unit that is on-duty, Dispatch shall attempt to contact the unit as follows:
“Dispatch to Sam 999, check your display and advise”
 This allows Dispatch to acknowledge the alarm without alerting person(s) in close proximity of the deputy.
- If the deputy acknowledges, he/she will be asked to advise of the situation. Backup units shall be dispatched if needed.

- If the deputy indicates that the alarm was accidental, Dispatch shall reset the Emergency Call feature on the radio.
- If the unit does not respond, a second and third attempt will be made by Dispatch. If after the third attempt the unit still does not respond, a “Signal 13” will be broadcasted to the unit’s last known location and/or the location of his/her vehicle by utilizing the Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL).
- If an emergency alarm is received from a unit known to be operating on a Command controlled incident, Dispatch shall notify Command that an emergency alarm is being received from that radio ID.
- If an emergency alarm is received from a CID or an off-duty unit and the unit does not respond after the third attempt by Dispatch, a duty officer shall be contacted to attempt to determine the whereabouts of the deputy to whom the radio is assigned.
- If an emergency alarm is received from an SID/ Task Force unit, the alarm will only appear on the Zone Manager and will not appear on the Dispatch console. If the unit is involved in an open SID/Task Force incident, the Dispatch shift manager shall notify the incident supervisor that an emergency alarm is being received from that radio ID. If the unit is not involved in an open incident, the SID/Task Force supervisor shall be notified of the alarm.

RADIO INHIBIT

- Radio Inhibit allows Dispatch to disable a radio if the radio is lost or stolen, has an open microphone, or if the radio is operating in a disruptive mode that is affecting system usage.
- The decision to inhibit a radio shall be made by a Duty Officer from the agency responsible for the radio. The Duty Officer shall notify the DEO immediately.
- In the case of an open microphone Dispatch may redirect the radio to a spare talk group and have the responsible agency monitor the talk group until the decision is made to inhibit the radio.
- Once the decision has been made to inhibit the radio, the radio will be disabled and must be taken to the DEO to be reprogrammed.

FAILSOFT

- Allows communications to continue during failure of the central controller or due to other radio system failures.
- The user will hear an intermittent beeping sound and will notice a flashing “Fail Soft” display on the radio.
- While in the Failsoft mode trunking features will not operate. Trunking features include:
 - a. Call Alert
 - b. Scan
 - c. Emergency Call
 - d. Announcement Group
 - e. Patching
 - f. Multiselect
- Radio traffic shall be limited to priority messages while in the Failsoft mode.

SITE TRUNKING

- Site Trunking allows two-way communications to continue without interruption to field units in the unlikely event that the Master Console Site (DEO Transmitter Room) becomes disabled or disconnected from the Prime Site (Hickory Shelter).
- Trunking functionality continues to operate during Site Trunking.
- The user will notice a flashing “Site Trunking” display on the radio.
- While in the Site Trunking mode the following features are disabled/not available:
 - a. Patching
 - b. Multiselect
 - c. Emergency Call

DYNAMIC REGROUPING

- Dynamic Regrouping allows Dispatch to remotely change the talk group assignment of any radio without any action required on the part of the radio user.
- Members of normally separate agencies (e.g. Fire and Police) can be temporarily combined on a talk group to deal with special situations without disturbing other members of their agency who are not involved, allowing normal dispatch functions to continue uninterrupted.
- When a talk group not previously programmed into the radio memory is needed, Dispatch will be notified that a Dynamic Regroup is necessary. After identifying all radios and the target talk group, the radio will be switched to “RGRP” by the Zone Manager.
- It is possible for the user to switch to other programmed talk groups without losing the Dynamic Group.
- When the Dynamic Group is no longer necessary, Dispatch shall be notified to cancel it.
- If a user is unable to switch to a designated talk group he/she can request to be Dynamically Regrouped by Dispatch.
- If a user is unable to locate another specific unit, Dispatch can Dynamically Regroup both units to a specific talk group.
- On a multi-agency incident it is possible for Dispatch to regroup a user to a talk group of another agency (e.g. during a hostage situation, regroup a medic to a police talk group).
- No radio shall be regrouped to another agency’s talk group without proper authority.

MOBILE DATA COMPUTERS (MDC)

- Users of Mobile Data Computers (MDC) are subject to all guidelines and procedures as set forth in the Harford County Sheriff’s Office Computer Usage Policy (MAN4000).
- At the beginning of each tour of duty the user shall lock the MDC into the docking station and log on.
- At the conclusion of each tour of duty the user shall erase all unnecessary messages prior to logging off, then remove and secure the MDC in a safe indoors location. The user shall log off of the system prior to turning off power to the MDC.
- Any physical damage to the MDC shall be immediately reported to the member’s supervisor and a Supervisor’s Incident Report shall be completed. The MDC and a copy of the report shall then be forwarded to the MDC Coordinator for repair.

- Prior to the vehicle being left at a service facility (First Vehicle Services, body shop, etc.) the MDC shall be removed and secured.
- Members utilizing pool vehicles are required to complete the Pool Vehicle Sign-Out Log (SO-106).
- In the event an assigned agency vehicle is being utilized by a member other than the regularly assigned operator, the MDC shall be left with the vehicle. The borrowing member shall use only the MDC assigned to the vehicle while operating the vehicle and shall sign on in the same manner as they would if using his/her own assigned MDC.
- Members who have been assigned a new or replacement vehicle shall forward an e-mail message as soon as practical to the MDC Coordinator containing the following information:
 1. Member's name
 2. ID#
 3. Old Vehicle #
 4. New Vehicle #
 5. MDC Serial #
 6. MDC Asset #
- Failure or malfunction of the MDC shall be reported by the user to Dispatch the user's supervisor and the MDC coordinator immediately.
- All messages transmitted over the MDC shall be for official purposes only and are to be professional in nature and content at all times.
- Messaging shall be kept to a minimum, must be related to public safety and should not contain matters of a personal nature or personal opinion.
- Records of all MDC messages are maintained and shall be reviewed monthly by the Northern Precinct Division Commander for compliance. MDC messages are official records and are subject to subpoena and/or requests made under the Maryland Public Information Act.
- MDC's provide dispatch, complaint and message information regarding calls for service. When necessary, voice dispatch may accompany the call for service.
- Calls for service shall be dispatched utilizing the following guidelines:
 - Priority 1 Calls– Full Dispatch.
 - Priority 2 & 3 Calls – Abbreviated Dispatch (call type, unit, address and hazards if applicable).
- Calls for service shall be acknowledged by utilizing the following keys:
 1. **Enroute** - to acknowledge dispatch of call.
 2. **Arrived** - upon arrival at scene.
 3. **Close** - For Primary Unit to clear ALL calls.
(NOTE: "**Status Change**", then "**Clear**" for all other units clearing the call)
- Vehicle Status shall be maintained by using the **Status Change** function key, followed by the **Change Code** drop down menu.
- Deputy initiated calls (in-progress, just occurred or of a violent nature), to include traffic stops or warrant service attempts, shall be transmitted via voice communication to Dispatch.
- All other Deputy initiated calls (e.g. patrol checks, summons service, etc.) shall be transmitted via both the MDC and voice communications. (Example: "Sam 999 Dispatch, I have placed myself on a summons service at 500 Meadowood Drive").

**AUTOMATIC
VEHICLE
LOCATOR
(AVL)**

- The Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) system shall be utilized in the interest of furthering the safety of agency members and the efficient deployment of personnel during unusual occurrences and routine day to day operations.
- The AVL feature identifies vehicles in proximity to emergency calls for service, allowing the closest unit to be dispatched and assume control of an incident until arrival of the unit assigned to the call.
- The AVL is active when the vehicle ignition is in the “on” position.
- Dispatch shall verify that the AVL is operational within the first 15 minutes of the vehicle being placed in service (10-41).
- Any attempt to tamper with or disable the AVL is prohibited.
- Members who are operating an agency vehicle while off-duty shall respond if requested by Dispatch. NOTE: Off-duty members are not obligated to engage in any official activity if the action jeopardizes civilian passengers. Members shall notify Dispatch immediately so another unit can be dispatched (refer to Agency Vehicles Policy-MAN0600).
- The AVL shall not be used for routine monitoring of personnel by supervisors or dispatchers. Supervisors must be able to justify the request and obtain prior approval from the Shift or Division Commander.
- The AVL may be used to locate an agency vehicle if there is credible evidence that the vehicle operator may be in danger or distress.
- All requests for vehicle location information shall be forwarded to the Dispatch Shift Manager. An “Administrative Event” shall be created in the CAD to track each request.

ANTENNAS

- The long data antenna shall be removed from the vehicle prior to entering a commercial car wash. This antenna is located on the driver’s side rear quarter panel.
- Use care when remounting the data antenna to avoid cross-threading.
- The short voice antenna and the AVL antenna (Hockey Puck) are not to be tampered with or removed.