

## TAKOMA PARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - GENERAL ORDERS



<b>TITLE:</b> Effective Communications	<b>Number:</b> 305	
<b>Effective Date:</b> March 26, 2019	<b>Review Date:</b>	
New      X Amends      Rescinds	General Order 305, dated September 20, 2016	
Authority: Antonio DeVaul, Chief of Police		Total Pages 4

**01. Preface:** Effective communications is defined simply as getting the message across by whatever means possible. Oftentimes, however, it is the means or the lack thereof that presents obstacles to effective communications. The TPPD provides a variety of means, or *media*, for its employees to communicate effectively with each other and the general public.

**02. Purpose:** To establish policy and procedures that promotes effective communication internally between departmental personnel and externally with the public, other city staff, and outside agencies.

**03. Policy:** It is departmental policy to provide optimal media for informational exchanges, i.e., *effective communication*, both internally and externally.

**04 Internal Communication Procedures:** Media which can and should enhance internal exchanges of information include:

**A. Command Staff Meetings**

1. Held on an as-needed basis and called by the Chief of Police or designee.
2. Chaired by the Chief of Police or designee.
3. Agenda determined by Chief of Police or designee.
4. Both divisions are represented by Commander or their designee to ensure participatory coordination, cooperation and communication.

**B. ComStat**

1. Held on a regularly scheduled basis called by the Chief of Police or designee.
2. Chaired by the Chief of Police or designee.
3. Agenda is centered on crime trends, presented by the Crime Analyst and solutions determined by group.
4. Both divisions are represented by Commander or their designee along with Team/Unit supervisors

**C. Supervisory Staff Meetings**

1. Held on an as-needed basis and called by the Chief of Police or designee.
2. Chaired by the Chief of Police or designee.
3. Agenda determined by Chief of Police or designee.
4. All non-sworn supervisors and sworn officers of the rank of sergeant and above, or a designee, are required to attend.

5. A round table discussion is held at the end of each meeting to ensure participatory coordination, cooperation and communication.

**D. Patrol Supervisor Meetings**

1. Held on an as-needed basis and called by the Operations Commander or designee.
2. Chaired by the Operations Commander or designee.
3. Agenda determined by the Operations Commander or designee.
4. Attended by the Traffic and Automated Enforcement Sergeant and patrol sergeants (or squad corporal in the absence of a patrol sergeant).
5. A round table discussion is generally held to ensure participatory coordination, cooperation and communication.

**E. Roll Calls**

1. Conducted by the Watch Supervisor during each patrol shift (usually at the beginning thereof).
2. Attended by shift team members and periodically joined by CID investigator(s).
3. Review previous shift(s) Calls for Service; review assignments/details (radar, lidar, bike patrol, foot patrol, house checks, business checks, day laborers, other enforcement issues; check Roll Call Board, MCPD Web Board, e-mails; conduct training and inspections; review new/amended General Orders and Special Orders.

**F. CID Unit Meetings**

1. Conducted weekly by Support Services Commander or designee to review and plan criminal case investigations.
2. Participants include CID Detectives, Victim/Case Support Coordinator, Crime Analyst, and (as needed) Property & Evidence Custodian.

**G. Telecommunications Media** - All employees have assigned telephone number/extension. All sworn personnel corporal and above, and certain civilian employees, have department-issued cell phones with e-mail and text messaging applications, or “apps.” All sworn personnel and certain civilian employees are issued a hand held radio. The department has continuous two-way communication capability between the communications dispatch center and officers on duty via mobile radio 800 MHz radio system, portable/handheld radio transceivers, and either land-line or cellular telephones. Crossing Guards have voice communication via handheld radio with each other and the dispatch center.

**H. Electronic Media** - All employees have computer access to Google e-mail system. All patrol, CID and TEU vehicles and certain other department vehicles are equipped with Mobile Data Computers that provide access to the e-mail system and a capability for transmitting “silent” text messages from dispatch to car, car to dispatch, and car to car(s).

**I. Intercom voice** - communication system that allows communications dispatch to communicate with the public in the lobby, personnel in the temporary detention facility, and other parts of the police station.

**J. Communicator** - A monthly newsletter published by the Executive Assistant to the Chief/Public Information Officer that keeps personnel informed about what is going on in the department and provides a medium for the Chief to communicate executive direction.

**K. Crime Reports** - The Department's Crime Analyst produces a Bi-Weekly Crime Report, covering the previous weeks of criminal activity in the city. The Crime Analyst also produces Crime Pattern Bulletins that identify patterns of criminal activity of particular concern and Flyers that address specific serious crimes and elicit help in identifying subjects or suspects. The Crime Analyst's products are disseminated via e-mail to PD Roll Call and Police Staff.

**05 External Communication Procedures:** Media, which can and should enhance external exchanges of information include:

**A. Chief's Advisory Board:**

1. Chaired by the Chief of Police and meets on the third Wednesday of each month in the City building.
2. Comprised of 12 members appointed by the Chief and who are residents of the City.
3. The Board is briefed on all activities of the Police Department and brings issues and concerns to the Chief's attention.
4. Board members receive updated advisories and alerts on crimes and are invited to department events.

**B. E-mail Disseminations by the Executive Assistant to the Chief/Public Information Officer:**

1. **Press/News Release:** Any information that is given to the news media, e.g., PRESS RELEASE - Crime Down First Six Months or PRESS RELEASE - Suspect in Armed Robbery Arrested. (All press releases go to news media, citizens, community association list serves, City Manager, Deputy City Manager, Mayor, City Council, City Department Managers, Police Blotter, PD Roll Call and Police Staff.)
2. **Community Information:** This informs the community of upcoming events, e.g., COMMUNITY INFORMATION - Takoma Park Street Festival to be Held. Weather dangers go out in this format also. (All community information releases go to citizens, community association list serves, City Manager, Deputy City Manager, Mayor, City Council, City Department Managers, Police Blotter, PD Roll Call and Police Staff.)
3. **Community Advisory:** This advises the community on criminal activities in and around Takoma Park, e.g., COMMUNITY ADVISORY - Attempted Armed Robbery of a Citizen. These will address threats that have occurred earlier and for which the community is not in any imminent danger. (All community advisories go to citizens, community association list serves, City Manager, Deputy City Manager, Mayor, City Council, City Department Managers, Police Blotter, PD Roll Call and Police Staff.)
4. **Community Alert:** This alerts the community to a crime and to be on the lookout for suspects being sought by police, e.g., COMMUNITY ALERT - Police on Lookout for Armed Suspects at Large. This format will address immediate threats to the public, including weather-related emergencies. (All community alerts go to citizens, community association list serves, City Manager, Deputy City Manager, Mayor, City Council, City Department Managers, Police Blotter, PD Roll Call and Police Staff.)
5. **Weekly Crime Report:** A sanitized summary of the Crime Analyst's Weekly Crime Report is disseminated in a Community Information e-mail to the previously indicated recipients.

Note: When advisories or alerts are given, they may also provide information on whether any weapons were used or implied, if known, during the commission of the crime. In addition, all of the foregoing e-mail disseminations are posted on Social Media sites Facebook and Twitter.

#### C. Other Electronic Media:

1. In addition to internal dissemination, the previously described products of the Crime Analyst are sent via e-mail to the following:

a. Daily Crime Report - City Manager

b. Weekly Crime Report - City Manager, MPD 4<sup>th</sup> District Commander and Crime Analyst, MPD 5<sup>th</sup> District Crime Analyst, MCPD 3<sup>rd</sup> District/Silver Spring Crime Analyst, Metro Transit PD Crime Analyst, and Hyattsville City PD Crime Analyst.

c. Crime Pattern Bulletins - depending on degree of collaboration required may be shared with MCPD 3<sup>rd</sup> District/Silver Spring Crime Analyst, MPD 4<sup>th</sup> District Crime Analyst, MPD 5<sup>th</sup> District Crime Analyst, and/or Metro Transit PD Crime Analyst.

d. Flyers - Montgomery County Web Board, PG County Fusion Center, MCAC Fusion Center and WRTAC Fusion Center.

#### D. Telecommunications Media;

1. The department's Communications Dispatch Center is a licensed radio station through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). It is a 24/7 operation, with a supervisor and six dispatchers, and has the capability to transmit over twenty-one (21) different radio frequencies. There are approximately ten (10) telephone lines that come into dispatch, including 301-270 1100 (to report a crime in progress within the City limits and/or to request non-emergency calls for service) and 301-891-7102 (for other informational/voice mail calls).

2. Tip411 Anonymous Text Program: The department initiated tip411, an internet based tool that enables the public to text message an anonymous tip to the police and authorized departmental personnel to respond back by text message to the tipster, thereby creating a two-way anonymous "chat." Anyone with a cell phone can now send an anonymous tip to the TPPD by typing in the number 847411 and typing the word **TPPD**TIP before the message. A tip also can be sent using the TPPD's Facebook page via a link "submit a tip" in the left hand column. The tip line is intended to be used for non-emergency tips and is not an alternative to calling 911. Dispatchers are the departmental personnel authorized to access, review, respond to and manage all inbound messages. Once a tip is sent to the email site, they will follow the instructions provided by the Dispatch Supervisor to access the account and forward any information to the Watch Commander. The Watch Commander will instruct the dispatcher whether it needs to be handled immediately or forwarded to the Criminal Investigations Section or other department for follow-up. This cancels Special Order 2009-006, 411 TIPS.

3. The department's main fax machine, 301-270-1230, enables personnel to transmit and receive copies of documents externally.

**06. Responsibilities.** Notwithstanding the myriad of communication media provided by the department, effective communication is an individual responsibility also. All department personnel will use the communication media properly and efficiently.