



MIDDLETON POLICE DEPARTMENT

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POLICY
9.1.02

SUBJECT: **Radio Communications**

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Refer to: [DC Radio Protocol](#)

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Contents

PURPOSE.....	1
PROCEDURE.....	1
General Radio Protocols	2
Beginning & Ending Tour of Duty	3
Criteria for Assigning Personnel to Calls	3
Dispatching Calls for Service	4
Dispatching Two-Officer Calls.....	4
Vehicle/Person Contacts	4
Radio Marker	5
Alert Tones.....	5
Officer Emergency Alerts/Radio Alarms.....	6
Varda Alarms	6
Silent Dispatching	7
C.A.P.M.A.R.....	7
Ten Codes & Plain Language	7
Radio Number Identification System.....	9
Resources Available for Communications Personnel.....	9

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures and protocols for communications to and from the Communication Center.

PROCEDURE

The department shall provide for continuous communication between the Communications Center and officers on-duty. In addition, the department has the equipment necessary to access inter-jurisdictional, regional, and area law enforcement radio systems. A copy of all/any agreements with shared or multi-jurisdictional entities, regulations and standards are to be maintained by the Captain of Administrative Services.

All department and Communications Center verbal, written, radio and electronic communications shall be conducted in compliance with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules and regulations, as well as state, local, and department regulations.

All radio communication should be handled in accordance with established radio protocol and training. What is broadcast over the radio channel is a product of our work and is oftentimes the only exposure a person may have to the department – whether that person is here in Middleton or across the country via web streaming. All radio communications to and from field personnel shall be clear, concise, complete and professional.

General Radio Protocols

Dispatchers and officers are responsible for the organization, smooth flow, and efficiency of their communications. “Air time” is a valuable commodity that should not be wasted. To the extent possible, plan and organize thoughts before communicating them via radio.

Operations are more efficient and officer safety is enhanced when dispatchers, supervisors, and fellow officers know the status of officers, their locations, the nature of cases, and developments in their investigations. Not all police vehicles are MDC equipped and officers and supervisors are frequently not in proximity to their MDC’s. Therefore, unless a special emergency or tactical situation dictates otherwise, when officers or dispatchers initiate a “call” (including traffic stops & subject contacts), they must communicate pertinent information via radio, even if this information has been transmitted by CAD. For non-hazardous one-officer calls, officers may timestamp themselves via CAD or the radio for the “acknowledge”, “en route”, and “on-scene” timestamps. Other “timestamps” should be communicated via radio, even if this information has been transmitted by CAD. For hazardous, emergency or multiple officer calls, all timestamps should be done via radio, even if this information has been transmitted by CAD. When officers or dispatchers change an officer’s unit status, they must communicate pertinent information via radio, even if this information has been transmitted by CAD.

Individual officers and detectives assigned to multi-unit calls are responsible for reporting changes in their status. Officers may report that everyone is 10-8 only if they are fully aware of which officers are assigned to the call in CAD and have personal knowledge that they are all back in service.

When receiving a message, the dispatcher should **repeat a summary of only the key points** such as location, suspect/vehicle description (during active incidents), 10-95 time, etc. The dispatcher shall include the radio number of the unit calling during the acknowledgement of the radio traffic. This will confirm the dispatcher has heard the message correctly. Repeating also provides other officers with an opportunity to confirm the information aired and react accordingly.

A unit calling dispatch should wait for an acknowledgment before proceeding with radio traffic. Waiting for an acknowledgement helps eliminate missed radio traffic and ensures the dispatcher is prepared to act. It is understood that exigent circumstances may prevent a unit from waiting for an acknowledgement from dispatch before airing important radio traffic. In such cases the unit should consider declaring ‘Emergency Traffic’ before airing the information.

Lengthy radio broadcasts should be interrupted by an announcement of 'break' and a brief pause in order to give others with priority radio traffic an opportunity to communicate. After a brief pause, announce "continuing" and proceed with the transmission.

Beginning & Ending Tour of Duty

Dispatchers should move personnel to an on-duty status based on the duty schedule and information supplied by supervisors. Squad checks shall be completed prior to a shift whenever possible and the squad number and assignment shall be documented by the officer manually into the mobile CAD or by radio. Upon completion of the squad check, officers shall promptly notify the dispatcher, "10-8 from squad check, district (or assignment/other status)."

Each individual officer and detective is responsible for reporting his/her own duty status to the Communications Center. Officers and detectives should notify the Communications Center when they are poised to end their tour of duty and are at or in the building. This communication can be done by message, phone, radio (10-42), or in person. When such a communication is received, the officer or detective may be placed in an off-duty status at the end of their scheduled shift. Dispatchers should avoid clearing the CAD of units without confirmation that the unit is off-duty. If the status of an officer or detective is unknown, and the dispatcher is unable to reach them, the Shift Commander should be promptly notified.

Criteria for Assigning Personnel to Calls

Criteria for the number of officers to be dispatched for each Call Nature has been established and entered into the CAD as a preset response plan. When a call nature is entered into a call for service, the CAD will recommend the number of units and which units to assign to the call. Some call natures generally pose a low risk to officers and the public and will have a preset one officer response, but the risk could be elevated in a specific instance or could change as new information is received. Preset response plans aside, based on the information available at the time, dispatchers should assign the number and types of units necessary to safely and effectively manage the call, or as directed by a supervisor. For example, an officer initiated traffic stop is typically a one officer call. However, if alcohol, drugs, or warrants are indicated, a backup unit is standard procedure.

Incidents of a serious nature often arise that require the presence of a supervisor who possesses the authority necessary to deal with the problem. The Shift Commander shall be dispatched, respond to, and take command of major incidents. Major incidents include the following situations:

- Major crimes (murder, robbery, sexual assault, aggravated assault, major burglary or theft, etc.).
- Fatal accidents or suspicious deaths.
- Catastrophic occurrences (large fire, explosion, etc.) or other unanticipated events requiring the commitment of additional resources.
- Serious incidents involving department employees.
- Injury to any employee which requires medical attention.
- Serious damage to department property.

Dispatching Calls for Service

Routine calls for service should be assigned to a patrol officer by giving basic information in the following format:

- Full address/Location (including **common place name**)
- Incident type
- Brief description of situation.
 - Description should include information such as: weapons, officer safety tag on location, suspect description, vehicle information, direction of travel, injuries, history of calls at the location, etc.

(dispatcher) "5510"
(unit) "5510, (current location)"
(dispatcher) "5510, 2050 Allen Blv for a lockout"
(unit) "5510 10-04"

Dispatching Two-Officer Calls

Dispatcher) "5510"
(unit) "5510, (current location)"
(dispatcher) "5523"
(unit) "5523, (current location)"
(dispatcher) "5510, 5523 northbound Park St. south of University Ave
for an injury accident"
(unit) "5510 1004"
(unit) "5523 1004"

Vehicle/Person Contacts

Vehicle and person contacts have a potential for elevated risk and can change rapidly. Therefore, it is crucial that patrol officers call out all contacts over the air. The following information should be provided:

- Unit number
- Specific location of the contact
- License plate information, or, if no license plate displayed
- Reason for the contact, number of occupants/persons being contacted, vehicle/contact description, if appropriate

If all necessary information is not provided by the officer, the dispatcher should request it; and, if time allows, run the license plate as appropriate.

(unit) 5510 Traffic
(dispatcher) 5510
(unit) 5510, University and Park, 345JPT
(dispatcher): 5510, University and Park

In a traffic/subject stop or call situation, the officer may request via radio that dispatch run additional queries, or after returning to their MDC, the officer will notify dispatch via radio that they are 10-2 with data and run the query him/herself. Queries should not be run via MDC whenever it is unsafe, impractical, or inefficient to do so. (For example, if the officer is too busy, there are too many subjects, or the officer cannot divert attention from the situation or subject, the queries should be run by radio. If, for example, under the circumstances present, the officer would be comfortable writing a citation or ticket on-scene, the officer may choose to run queries through the MDC.)

Radio Marker

A radio marker is an automatic intermittent tone, activated by a dispatcher, which is transmitted on a radio channel. The radio marker serves notice that the air is closed to non-emergency radio traffic. Any time a dispatch channel is restricted to emergency radio traffic, the channel marker will be activated for the duration of the event and non-emergency traffic should not be transmitted.

If a patrol officer requests emergency radio traffic, for any reason, the dispatcher will activate the channel marker on the channel and announce "Emergency Traffic."

The dispatcher can also initiate emergency radio traffic at his/her discretion if there is any indication of an immediate officer safety issue, or other emergency situation. The channel marker can be removed when the officer(s) on scene advise routine traffic (which can be prompted by dispatch).

When the radio marker is activated, officers should not use the channel for unrelated or non-emergency traffic, including car to car traffic. If non-emergency communications can't wait, please consider changing to Dane County or another non-marker channel. For prolonged situations, consider moving either the emergency or routine operations to a different channel.

Examples of when the radio marker should be used include:

Fights with Officer on Scene;

Sounds of Struggle from Officer Radio;

Foot Pursuit; Vehicle Pursuit;

One at Gun Point;

Forcing Entry

Resisting Subject;

Officer Failing to Respond while on a call;

High Risk Traffic Stop; Stolen Auto/Stolen Plate;

One at Taser Point/Taser Deployment; and

Alert Tones

Priority calls require that all police personnel monitoring or capable of monitoring radio traffic be made aware of the activity as quickly and effectively as possible. The warning tones are used to alert officers of an emergency and to free the air to have the dispatcher announce the call. There are three different types of tones; a single steady tone, a fast beeping tone and a warble.

A. Alert Tone One (steady tone):

The steady alert tone should be used prior to airing important information including but not limited to:

1. Officers in need of assistance.
2. Information regarding foot/vehicle pursuit information.
3. As a default when dispatch is unable to locate an officer on the radio.
4. Tornado Warnings.
5. AED/Echo call information.

B. Alert Tone TWO (faster intermitted tone).

C. Alert Tone THREE (warble tone):

This warble alert tone should be used prior to dispatching the following calls:

1. Armed Robberies (not strong armed), whether a weapon was displayed or threatened.
2. Previously dispatched in-progress incidents now involving weapons.
3. Any alarm at a business that would be manually activated (panic, ambush, etc.).
4. Any manually activated alarm at residence where safety alert information could indicate the potential for a problem (stalker, threats, etc.).
5. Any life-threatening in-progress call where a weapon is/was involved or threatened. A weapon means anything that could be used to injure another and could include a gun, knife, baseball bat, broken bottle, etc.
6. Shots fired calls when substantiated by additional information including multiple reports of the same, people screaming, vehicles speeding away, etc.

Officer Emergency Alerts/Radio Alarms

When an officer depresses the orange emergency button on the officer's portable radio, an audible emergency alert will sound in the Communications Center and the officer's radio number and the word "EMERGENCY" will display on the radio console. (Portable radios do not have GPS, but squads do, and the officer's last know location may be also be identified by the call the officer is assigned to or the last non-call activity or unit status.) If the officer emitting the alarm does not immediately notify the Communication Center that it was an error, the dispatcher will attempt contact with the officer to check his or her status. If the dispatcher is unable to make contact with the officer, the alarm should be toned and aired as follows:

(dispatcher) "Attention Middleton units, 5549's radio alarm has been activated. 5549 was last at a traffic stop on Maywood at Allen."

The emergency button is to be used when an officer has an urgent need for assistance and voice communication is not possible, practical, or prudent.

Varda Alarms

A Varda alarm is a portable alarm that, when activated either by the victim or the suspect, transmits a message announcing the name assigned to the alarm. The message is broadcast instantly over a radio channel and should be enough information for both the dispatchers and officers to know the location and nature of the alarm. The following is an example of the type of message that will be broadcast over the radio:

“MI 100” (Some may include the word ‘emergency’)

An activation of a Varda alarm normally indicates there is a crime in progress and should be assigned to the appropriate officers immediately. Officers should acknowledge the alarm on the radio as they begin their response. Varda alarm address information should **NEVER** be aired by the dispatcher or the responding officers, resulting in a ‘silent dispatch’ of sorts. The dispatcher should assign at least two patrol units to investigate the alarm.

If an officer is not familiar with the alarm, details will not be given over the radio. In such cases the MDC or a telephone should be utilized. If a dispatcher is not familiar with the alarm, and nothing appears in CAD, the dispatcher should immediately contact the Shift Commander to obtain the information.

Silent Dispatching

Silent dispatching of calls for service will not normally occur. However, the dispatcher should be aware of officer safety information and scanner information associated with an address and consider silent dispatches when appropriate.

The following are examples where silent dispatching could be appropriate:

<i>Juvenile Alcohol Party;</i>	<i>Scanner Info associated w/residence or suspect;</i>
<i>Bomb Threats;</i>	<i>Alarm malfunction/work at business or residence;</i>
<i>Drug Information; and</i>	<i>After hours work at a business.</i>

The dispatcher should avoid delivering access, alarm code information, and key holder names (if available) over the radio unless exigent circumstances exist and there is no other practical way to deliver the information in a timely manner. Access and alarm information may be included in the call remarks or comments areas of the CAD and will normally be accessible by patrol officers via MDC.

C.A.P.M.A.R.

CAPMAR (Capitol Area Police Mutual Aid Response) is a pre-planned, automatic mutual aid response system for law enforcement events (MABAS for police). It is designed to provide extra law enforcement personnel and equipment at the scene of law enforcement emergency throughout Dane County. CAPMAR responses will only be requested when a law enforcement emergency has caused an agency to exceed its capabilities and resources.

S.M.A.R.T. (Standard Mutual Aid Response Teams) is a pre-planned, automatic mutual aid response system for law enforcement events similar to the CAPMAR system. The SMART system has been established to service law enforcement agencies throughout Sauk County. Due to our geographic location, the Middleton Police Department is a primary response agency within the SMART system for the Sauk City Police Department.

Ten Codes & Plain Language

For intra-department and intra-city radio communications, officers and dispatchers should use personal/radio numbers, and ten signal codes or plain speech communication. For interagency radio communication, officers and dispatchers should use personal/radio numbers with a “Middleton” prefix, and ten signal codes or plain speech communication.

The use of plain language to describe an incident is an acceptable alternative to the use of ten codes, and preferred in high risk situations. If ten codes are used, the following is a list of acceptable codes and their associated plain language definitions:

Ten Codes	
Code	Plain Language
10-1	Poor Radio Signal/Unable to Copy
10-2	Signal Good/Good Status
10-4	Acknowledge/OK/Good/Copy
10-6	Busy Unless Urgent
10-7	Out of Service
10-8	In Service
10-9	Repeat
10-10	Fight
10-16	Domestic Problem
10-17	Complainant
10-18	Respond Quickly (not emergency)
10-20	Location
10-21	Call by phone
10-22	Disregard
10-23	On scene
10-27	Request Driver’s License Information
10-28	Request Vehicle Registration Information
10-29	Check for Wanted Status
10-32	Person with Gun
10-33	Emergency
10-41	Begin Tour of Duty
10-42	End Tour of Duty
10-43	Information
10-46	Disabled Motorist
10-50	Vehicle Crash
10-55	Intoxicated Driver
10-56	Intoxicated Person
10-59	Conveyance/Escort
10-60	In the Area (of the assignment)
10-61	In Contact with (complainant, suspect, witness, etc.)
10-80	Chase in Progress
10-89	Bomb Threat
10-95	Subject in Custody
10-96	Mental Subject
10-99	Wanted Person/Stolen Vehicle

Alphabetical Word Code

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	

Radio Number Identification System

The department utilizes a four digit number assigned to specific employees as their radio identification number. The first two numbers represent the Dane County Law Enforcement Agency designator, the Middleton prefix is 55. The second two numbers represent a specific employee and are organized by rank, classification, and seniority. Each employee's personal/radio number shall be used for all radio communications and will correlate with the employee's badge number. Personal/radio numbers are not permanent. The need to update all Personal/Radio Number assignments will be assessed in December of each year and if necessary take effect on or about January 1st (to preserve annual data associated with radio numbers). A specific employee's radio number may be changed whenever required by promotion or reclassification.

55(00)	Middleton PD Base Station
5501 - 19	Administration
5520 - 49	Field Services
5550 - 59	Special
5560 - 69	Civilian Personnel
5570 - 84	Communications Center Personnel
5585 - 89	Municipal Staff
5590 - 99	Office Personnel

Resources Available for Communications Personnel

Communications Center Personnel shall have immediate access to the following Department resources:

1. Current Officer in Charge, including name and contact information.
2. Current Duty Roster of all Personnel.
3. Contact information for both on and off duty agency personnel.
4. Maps and other information covering the agency's service area.
5. Officer Status Indicators.
6. Written procedures and contact information for securing support services from outside the agency.
7. Tactical Dispatching Plans.

Communications Center Recordings (Radio, 911, Phone Lines)

All radio communications occurring on designated police radio frequencies are recorded in the Communications Center. In addition, all telephone communications occurring within the Communications Center, including 911 calls and all incoming and outgoing calls on non-emergency phone lines, are recorded and retained. Other non-emergency phones within the police facility may be recorded for official and/or investigative purposes.

1. Radio and phone recordings from within the Communications Center will be retained for a minimum of 120 days according to the department's retention schedule for electronic media and evidence.
2. Recordings are securely stored and password protected.
3. All requests to review recordings will be in accordance with the department policy regarding public records.
4. In addition to Communication Center archival recordings, all radio and phone communications are recorded and available for immediate playback within the Communications Center by using the following procedure:
 - a. Dispatchers shall open and log into the recording program on the dispatch position's secondary computer at the beginning of their shift.
 - b. If recordings are needed for a case, they can be obtained by contacting the Communications Center Supervisor or Court Officer.