



# Alexandria Police Department

## Directive 10.29



# RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

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### 10.29.01 PURPOSE AND POLICY

The purpose of this directive is to establish procedures for the operation of the police communications system and the proper use of common language and radio signals during transmissions. The joint policy of this Department and the Department of Emergency and Customer Communications (DECC) is to provide prompt, courteous, and appropriate service to the public and to process calls from citizens and requests from employees as expeditiously as possible.

**10.29.02 DEFINITIONS**

**Alert Tone** - Audible tones used by dispatchers to alert units to forthcoming emergency transmissions.

**Call for Service** - A request made of the police to respond to a particular problem or condition that is a violation of law or a situation that affects the quality of life. [81.2.4]

**Channel** – A specific talkgroup. Alexandria City has an **11-channel** digital trunked radio system. Informally, channel means talkgroup or selector switch knob position.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Computer Assisted Dispatching (CAD) System** - The Department's automated system of tracking calls for service, officer status activity, and other information such as date and time of incident, type of incident, and incident disposition. [81.2.4]

**Department of Emergency and Customer Communications**– The primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for all 9-1-1 calls within the City and the primary processing point for receiving calls for service and dispatching calls to field units, including the coordination of all information and personnel related to the delivery of such service.

**Dispatched Assignment** - An order given by a dispatcher directing personnel to perform specific tasks or to handle a call for service.

**Emergency Button** - An orange circular button located on mobile and portable radios which when pressed gives the radio user priority use of the talkgroup and alerts the dispatcher to an emergency.

**Fail-Soft** - The condition the radio system enters when normal trunking operations cannot be maintained due to a malfunction within the system. Employees are alerted that the radio system is in fail-soft by a beep tone on the radio every 20 seconds and a flashing message on the radio LCD display. Normal two-way transmissions can take place, but the available number of operational talkgroups is reduced to three for Police,

and special features such as the emergency button are disabled. Transmissions should be minimized during fail-soft.

**Site Trunking** - The condition the radio system enters when normal system-wide trunking operations can be maintained, but due to certain minor malfunctions within the system dispatchers must use alternate methods to communicate with field units. Employees are alerted that the radio system is in site-trunking by a flashing message on the radio LCD display. Normal two-way transmissions take place and all talkgroups are available, but special features such as the emergency button, call alert, and private call are disabled.

**Special Assignment** - Assignments requiring the performance of specific tasks and requiring employees to check in and out of service (for example, nuisance, robbery or traffic details, escorts, and on-duty court) over the radio system.

**Talkgroup** – A unique programmed radio function allowing transmissions across a trunked radio system to be received and process by radios programmed with that same group. Often informally called a “channel.”

**ZoneWatch Radio Control Manager** - Allows dispatchers to make use of radio features such as: call alert, regrouping of radios, push to talk ID display, emergency ID display, inhibiting radios and talkgroup selector lock.

### **10.29.03 RULES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **A. Department of Emergency and Customer Communications Responsibilities:**

1. Receive and process calls for service appropriately, according to Department of Emergency and Customer Communications Standard Operating Procedures.
  2. Inform the caller (victim/witness) of the agency’s response, including direct law enforcement service and/or referral to other agencies. **[81.2.6.b.]**
  3. Select and dispatch police units.
- a. Prioritize calls for service according to DECC Standard Operating Procedures. Call priority is listed below, in order from most to least urgent.
- **Emergency (E/Priority 1)** - a life-threatening situation or when there exists a potential for personal injury to a citizen or officer. Events requiring an emergency response include but are not limited to the following examples: residential alarms occurring between 2100 and 0600 hours, or any of the following offenses when they are reported to be in progress or occurring within the previous fifteen minutes: homicide, rape, robbery, burglary, shots fired, violent domestic, or felonious assault. All Emergency calls should be dispatched as “Priority Response Authorized.”

- Immediate (I/Priority 2) – an event less urgent than an emergency but nevertheless requiring an immediate response. Immediate response events include but are not limited to the following examples: domestic disturbance, prowler, peeping tom, or larceny in progress.
  - Prompt (P/Priority 3) – these events will be dispatched as soon as practical, after more urgent events. Prompt events include but are not limited to: burglary occurred earlier, drug complaint, shoplifter in custody, parking complaint affecting public safety or blocking a driveway.
  - Delay (D/Priority 4) - events of lowest priority, including but not limited to: noise complaint, larceny occurred earlier, destruction occurred earlier, assist citizen.
- b. Use alert tones when an emergency response is necessary, or when the dispatcher cannot raise a unit on the air, or at the discretion of a dispatcher, DECC supervisor or other supervisor.
  - c. Assign calls to specific units whenever possible; however, on emergency (E) or immediate (I) calls when no units are available, dispatchers will ask for any unit that can break to handle the call. If no units respond, the dispatcher will break units from their current status/assignment to handle the call.
  - d. Dispatch an available sworn supervisor to the scene of any call involving a police employee who is either the complainant or a suspect.
  - e. Alert officers responding to locations that pose a threat to their safety, by use of the CAD system's Caution File. Dispatchers will also use the display location of previous calls of the same nature to alert officers to any pertinent history of people or circumstances at an address.
  - f. The dispatching of units carries the full authority of an order unless countermanded by a supervisor.
  - g. Transmissions should be clear, calm and concise, and in accordance with FCC guidelines for public safety radio use.
4. Enter each officer's serial number, unit number, and vehicle number into CAD when units mark into service, only if the officer does not have a mobile computer, or the mobile computer system is not working.
  5. Record the status and location of officers. **[81.2.5.b.]**

6. Control the number of police units that check out of service on non-police activities (i.e., meals, vehicle service, etc.) so that there are sufficient units available to answer calls for service, unless countermanded by a supervisor.
7. Check on an officer's welfare within the designated time, depending on their status. After a second unsuccessful attempt to contact officers by radio, dispatchers will:
  - a. Alert the officer's portable and/or mobile radio.
  - b. Call the officer again using the alert tone.
  - c. Notify an on-duty supervisor that the officer's radio was alerted.
  - d. Broadcast on all talkgroups and on the mobile computers a lookout for the missing unit.
  - e. Assign units to check the last known location of the officer, or the area deemed most appropriate.
  - f. Continue attempts to contact the officer, using alternate methods (pager, cell phone, etc.) in concert with radio until contact is made or the matter is satisfactorily resolved.
8. The DECC Supervisor shall promptly enter caution information into CAD Records upon receipt of a properly completed APD-355 (Request Data Entry Into CAD Caution Files) whenever the CAD Manager is not available.
9. Notify the DECC Commander or supervisor of any violations of Department policy.
10. Maintain a working knowledge of the CAD System.

**B. Field Personnel Responsibilities:**

1. Mark in service for all duty or extra-duty details, using the mobile computer whenever possible. Mark out of service when the duty is ended, also using the mobile computer when possible. Units without access to mobile computers will use the police radio (see Directive 3.3, Mobile Computers).
2. Respond to all dispatched calls for service promptly, using the most direct route available and obeying all traffic laws. Units will not place themselves on calls or respond to call scenes not dispatched to them without the prior approval of the dispatcher or an on-duty police supervisor. See #5 below for sole exception.
3. Field officers below the rank of lieutenant, parking enforcement officers and tag enforcement officers will be available for assignment by mobile computer or radio.
4. When a field officer completes a call for service, the officer will advise clear from the call by selecting the appropriate incident disposition status (F6) from the Mobile Client drop down menu. If the officer needs to complete a written report

for the cleared incident, the officer will select "Report Writing" on the Mobile Client drop down "Busy" menu to indicate that he or she is completing the written report for the previous incident. Upon completion of the written report, the officer will change his or her status to available (F7) status. While in the Report Writing status, officers are available for dispatch to priority 1 calls.

5. Police officers, parking enforcement officers and tag enforcement officers, except command and staff positions, will check in and out of service when on-duty within the city, except with the express permission of the Chief of Police; or when doing so would prevent the successful accomplishment of police objectives.  
**[81.2.5,a]**
6. Field officers will remain in their assigned sector unless otherwise directed by a police supervisor or a dispatcher. If they are nearby an emergency call, they may move (NOT Priority Response) toward the area, but not onto the scene, and must remain available, should additional officers be needed at the scene. In an extraordinary circumstance, specifically and only an officer in trouble call, now defined "Signal-1," officers may respond Priority Response from their assigned areas without obtaining prior approval from the dispatcher. Once information is broadcast that the scene is stable, officers not on the scene shall immediately cease Priority Response and return to their prior duties. (10.11A.05.E.)
7. Once any officer on the scene of a call becomes aware that a police employee is the complainant or a suspect, he/she will notify DECC and request a police supervisor be dispatched to the call.
8. Use their assigned unit number and receive clearance from the dispatcher prior to transmitting any message other than a unit number with a short message such as "traffic," "checking person," or other priority. Transmissions must utilize the Common Language Protocol and should be clear, calm and concise. **[81.2.5,c]**
9. Attempt three times for acknowledgement from the dispatcher before switching to an alternate talkgroup and attempting to establish contact. If contact is still not established, officers will assume the radio is not working and will notify DECC by telephone or other appropriate means.
10. Care for and maintain their assigned radios, chargers and batteries, or any such equipment in their possession, as well as arrange to have such equipment repaired when needed.
11. Obtain a pool radio from the Patrol Administrative Officer or on-duty supervisor when necessary.
  - a. Employees will legibly sign their name, serial number and the date and time on the Sign-Out Card that corresponds to the radio. Sign-Out Cards for radios not signed out will be kept in the "In File" and Sign-Out Cards for radios signed out will be kept in the "Out File."

- b. Employees will personally turn pool radios in to an Administrative Officer or on-duty supervisor at the end of each tour of duty unless an on-duty patrol commander authorizes that a radio be kept for a specific police purpose, in which case a notation to that effect will be made on the sign-out card.
- c. Employees will notify the dispatcher of any pool radio number they have for that shift when they mark in service for that shift.

12. Complete form APD-355 when information is received for a specific address that could affect officer safety and promptly forward the completed form to an available police supervisor for approval.

**C. Field Supervisor Responsibilities:**

- 1. Ensure that employees under their command use the communications system properly and that all dispatched calls are handled promptly and appropriately.
- 2. Notify the DECC supervisor of circumstances that may affect the normal dispatching of police units.
- 3. Ensure that special assignments are made known to DECC at the beginning of a shift, or as soon as practical, thereby allowing dispatchers to consider these assignments when dispatching calls for service.
- 4. Appropriately coordinate the police response to emergency or significant calls for service.

■ [REDACTED]

- 6. Promptly forward completed APD-355, CAD Caution Entry, forms to the on-duty DECC supervisor for entry into CAD Records.
- 7. Ensure that the printout (of information from the APD-355 forms) received from the CAD Manager is reviewed by the initiating officer. A determination will be made for keeping/deleting the comments in the database; and promptly returned to the CAD Manager.

**D. Commander Responsibilities:**

1. All commanders: will notify the on-duty DECC supervisor of circumstances that may affect the normal dispatching of police units and arrange for additional dispatchers when a pre-planned operation will generate significantly increased radio traffic or require a dedicated talkgroup to be monitored.
2. Patrol Sector Captains: must have a written plan of action to ensure that calls for service will continue to be handled in the event of a **full radio system failure**.
  - a. The written plan of action will be reviewed and revised in January of each year.
  - b. The approved plan of action will be sent to the POB Commander, with a copy to the DECC Deputy Director.
3. On-duty patrol commanders: When notified of a missing pool radio, make every reasonable effort to locate a missing radio or correct the discrepancy.
4. City Radio Manager:
  - a. Ensure accountability, maintenance and inventory of the "Reserve Radios." They are considered an extra reserve of radios that can be used if necessary i.e., mutual aid incident. (Refer to Mutual Aid directive)
  - b. Develops and programs radio talkgroups for all City agencies, and coordinates with neighboring jurisdictions for the use of their compatible radio talkgroups.
  - c. Ensure that all new Police employees who will be using the radio system are trained in the operation of the radios and use of the various talkgroups.

**E. Patrol Command/Administrative Officer Responsibilities:**

1. Maintain the security of pool radios and ensure they are properly signed in and out.
2. Administrative Officers must complete a pool radio inventory prior to the end of their shift and give it to the relieving administrative officer or an on-duty supervisor for verification.
3. Forward the completed pool radio inventory to the City Radio Manager.
4. Ensure the pool radio cabinet is secured at all times.
5. Immediately report any missing or unaccounted for radios to the on-duty watch commander and DECC supervisor.



**10.29.04 PROCEDURES**

- A. Access to DECC is restricted to section employees, City Radio Manager and staff, police commanders, and persons approved by the DECC Deputy Director.  
**[81.3.1]**
- B. Transmitted radio messages will be direct, concise, and professional and conform to department and Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations. Lengthy, non-emergency conversations will not be conducted over the city radio system. Employees will try to time their transmissions so that they do not cover other employees talking on the radio. **[81.1.2]**
- C. All transmissions will comply with Common Language Protocol, see 10.29.09.
- D. Employees will not call or refer to other employees by their first names over the radio.
- E. **Unit numbers**
1. Employees who are on-duty and working their regular assignment should use their assigned unit numbers.
  2. **Employees with unit radio numbers 1 – 99 will use the word “unit” in front of their assigned number when transmitting.**
  3. Employees working extra duties for the city (voluntarily performed outside of regularly scheduled hours in exchange for additional compensation to be received in the city paycheck) will use the letters “A” (followed by the four numbers of the employee’s serial number. For example, an officer with serial number 1509 would mark into service as unit number “A1509.” (See Directive 4.17, Secondary Employment, for more information.)
  4. Employees working extra-duty employment for non-city compensation (secondary employment wherein the use of law enforcement powers is anticipated) will use the X-number assigned to the detail. Officers are responsible for knowing the correct extra-duty detail unit number prior to marking in service. (See Directive 4.17, Secondary Employment, for more information.)
  5. Employees without an assigned radio number will use the letter “A” (following #3 above) in front of their serial numbers when transmitting.
- F. Mobile computers will be used when available. Employees with unit numbers 1 – 99 will place the letter “U” in front of their assigned number when marking in over the mobile computer. The exception is the watch commander, who will log in as “10” without the “U” to ensure their status and availability is easily seen alongside the operating patrol units.

- G. Unidentified, non-essential, obscene, or profane communications, microphone clicking, and violations of the FCC rules are strictly prohibited. This applies to all telephone lines in DECC, all radio talkgroups, radio private calls, and computer transmissions. Employees have no expectation of privacy in telephone, radio, or data transmissions. Employees will be held strictly accountable for improper use of Department communications media.
- H. The radio emergency button should be used only when voice contact is impractical or cannot be used to alert the dispatcher of an "officer in trouble" situation.
- I. Radio users shall be familiar with Common Language Protocols as listed in Appendices **B**, **C**, and **D**, and use them appropriately.
- J. Employees should use the following standard dispositions when clearing their calls.
1. Non-DECC employees will use:
    - a. Report – Clearing call with a report, an official police report (APD-7 series) or FR-300 must be filed.
    - b. No Report – Clearing call with no report. Officers should note briefly that the call was advised, assisted, completed, GOA, false alarm due to any outside problem, etc., in the comments field on their MDBs.
    - c. Cited – Non-criminal VUS, parking citation, or noise violation.
    - d. Supplement - Any supplement report (APD-7 series or supplemental FR-300).
    - e. False Alarm - Clearing a false alarm call for the purpose of assessing fines.
  2. DECC use only: TRU, Duplicate, Test, Cancelled.
- K. Use of Radio Talkgroups:
1. Any special need for the exclusive temporary use of radio talkgroups will be coordinated between the on-duty DECC supervisor and the supervisor of the unit needing such arrangements. Specialized units having dedicated talkgroups assigned to them do not need to coordinate the use of those talkgroups, but should notify the dispatcher if they normally operate on the primary dispatch talkgroup.
  2. Units will transmit only on their assigned talkgroup and will switch to another talkgroup only after receiving approval from the dispatcher (exception: units may switch to another agency's zone and talkgroup when needed, and after informing the dispatcher). **[81.3.4]**
  3. **Units will not operate on other radio systems (or "zones") unless they have been trained on the appropriate use of those zones. This includes the National Public Safety channels or the Direct/RINS channels. (See 10.29.06)**



[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

The National Public Safety Planning Advisory Committee (NPSPAC) brought forth the concept of common, nationwide radio frequencies for public safety use. These frequencies are to be used for emergency transmissions by units in areas where they do not have connection to their “home” system, for pre-planned multi-jurisdiction events, and mutual-aid incidents. Not every jurisdiction has these frequencies in operation yet, but most public safety agencies in the Washington, DC, region monitor them. These are fixed frequencies (true “channels”) and are not trunked in any systems.

<u>NPSPAC Channel</u>	<u>Function</u>
8CAL90	- National “calling” channel, used to contact the area jurisdiction
8TAC91	- National tactical channel, incidents operate as needed
8TAC92	- National tactical channel, incidents operate as needed
8TAC93	- National tactical channel, incidents operate as needed
8TAC94	- National tactical channel, incidents operate as needed

**10.29.07 RADIO ENCRYPTION**

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

**Only** radios that have the properly programmed chipset for encryption will be able to hear the encrypted transmissions. Radios do not have to be set to encrypted mode to **hear** encrypted transmissions. The setting applies only to whether the radio **transmits** in encrypted mode. Employees must be aware of the difference and its tactical significance.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**B. PROPER USES:**

Encryption can be useful in certain Criminal Investigation and Vice Narcotics investigations, operations, and raids. It can also be used in sensitive street investigations and when an incident involves sensitive privacy issues, or when transmissions might compromise employee security if made over open air. Supervisors and commanders are given great latitude in deciding when it might be appropriate.

A sergeant or above must authorize the use of encryption at any incident or scene. The authorizing supervisor must notify the dispatcher prior to the start of encrypted radio operations. Any time encryption is used, the authorizing supervisor will ensure that the on-duty watch commander is made aware of its use.

Supervisors should consider the use of an encrypted channel [REDACTED] before having officers switch their individual radios to encrypted mode. This will reduce the chance of errors. An appropriate use of encryption would be when a crime trend, such as Burglaries or Larcenies From Auto, is identified and dispatch is imminent. Intelligence shows that suspects in some crimes of these types frequently use cell phone applications that enable them to monitor unencrypted radio transmissions.

When the use of encryption is no longer needed, the requesting supervisor will advise all those who are in encrypted status, the dispatcher, and the watch commander. The requesting supervisor will ensure that all encrypted units have returned to normal transmission status.

**Use of the encryption technology by any individuals by any means or for any reason other than specified above is strictly prohibited.**

**C. INSPECTION:**

[REDACTED]

Patrol Commanders will develop a system to do roll call checks of radio encryption capability twice a year. Patrol has been provided with an unencrypted radio for conducting such tests. It is clearly marked and must be stored with the pool radios. Any Patrol radio discovered to not function properly in encrypted mode will be removed from service and turned in to the Radio Manager, following the instructions in 10.29.05.A.

**By Authority Of:**

**Michael L. Brown  
Chief of Police**



Patrol Division 3

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

Traffic Safety Section

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

Parking Enforcement Unit

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

K9 Unit

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

**PATROL UNIT DESIGNATORS**

Patrol beats are numbered by shift, sector, and beat (in that order). Additional units can be assigned to concentrate on specific beats. For example, should directed enforcement be needed on beat 14 in the evening hours, units would be designated 314, 314A, and 314B.

	<b><u>Sector 1</u></b>	<b><u>Sector 2</u></b>	<b><u>Sector 3</u></b>	<b><u>Additional</u></b>
<b>Midnight Patrol Beats</b>	111 – 115	121 – 125	131 – 136	A, B, C
<b>Daylight Patrol Beats</b>	211 – 215	221 – 225	231 – 236	A, B, C
<b>Evening Patrol Beats</b>	311 – 315	321 – 325	331 – 336	A, B, C
<b>Community Oriented Policing (COPS)</b>	411 – 419	421 – 429	431 – 439	N/A
<b>Reserved Use To Be determined</b>	150 - 199	250 - 299	350 - 399	

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS DIVISION DESIGNATORS**

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

School Resource Unit

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]





INFORMATION SERVICES SECTION DESIGNATORS

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

SHERIFF'S OFFICE DESIGNATORS

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

**APPENDIX B  
COMMON LANGUAGE PROTOCOLS**

On April 11, 2007, the Northern Virginia Police Chiefs and Sheriffs voted unanimously to adopt the following Regional Common Language Protocol with an implementation date of July 1, 2007. The protocols are endorsed by the chief executives of every Northern Virginia agency, the NVCJTA, and the academies in Fairfax and Prince William Counties.

**DEFINITION:**

**Common Language** is the use of common terminology between all agencies in a given region, and specifically when involved in any incident. It is **not** “plain talk.” Common Language Protocols include the use of specific terms or wording with clear meanings, four standard signals, and two additional signals. All other transmissions consist of professional, abbreviated plain English. In use across the entire Northern Virginia region and spreading throughout the commonwealth, Common Language Protocols will allow different jurisdictions and agencies to communicate more effectively and with less confusion than was ever previously possible.

**APPENDIX C  
COMMON LANGUAGE SIGNALS AND TERMS**

*\*These are the only recognized "coded" transmissions in Common Language Protocol.*


<b><u>Common Language Term</u></b>	<b><u>Definition or Meaning</u></b>
<b>Available or Clear</b>	Responder is now available or completed with prior status/call
<b>Copy or Direct</b>	Acknowledgement, understood
<b>Enroute</b>	Responder is heading toward call/location
<b>On Scene</b>	Responder has arrived at call/location
<b>In-Service</b>	Responder is starting their shift
<b>Out of Service</b>	Responder is ending their shift
<b>License Check (state)</b>	Check for license status
<b>Person Check</b>	Check for wanted status
<b>Registration Check</b>	Check vehicle for registration and wanted status
<b>Traffic Stop</b>	Responder is pulling a vehicle over
<b>Priority Response</b>	Emergency vehicle operations (lights/siren) authorized for response
<b>Routine Response</b>	Emergency vehicle operations not authorized for response
<b>On-View</b>	Responder is initiating the report of an incident

**APPENDIX D  
NATO/INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET**

<b>A Alpha</b>	<b>H Hotel</b>	<b>O Oscar</b>	<b>V Victor</b>
<b>B Bravo</b>	<b>I India</b>	<b>P Papa</b>	<b>W Whiskey</b>
<b>C Charlie</b>	<b>J Juliet</b>	<b>Q Quebec</b>	<b>X X-ray</b>
<b>D Delta</b>	<b>K Kilo</b>	<b>R Romeo</b>	<b>Y Yankee</b>
<b>E Echo</b>	<b>L Lima</b>	<b>S Sierra</b>	<b>Z Zulu</b>
<b>F Foxtrot</b>	<b>M Mike</b>	<b>T Tango</b>	
<b>G Golf</b>	<b>N November</b>	<b>U Uniform</b>	

Although Common Language includes the use of the NATO/International standard phonetic alphabet, it is recognized that the former alphabet (APCO) will be in use for some time.