

# RESPONDER & CALLER SAFETY

DISPATCHER  
EDITION



SAFETY IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY... DO YOUR PART

# RESPONDER & CALLER SAFETY

**The telecommunicator plays a vital role in keeping responders and the public safe.**

Often referred to as first-first responders, the telecommunicator is often the first set of eyes and ears at every scene. It is incumbent upon responders to rely on their training and strictly adhere to policies to keep themselves safe. However, this does not negate the role or responsibility the dispatcher plays in responder safety.

It is important to disseminate pertinent information in a timely manner and keep abreast of unit statuses in real time. Situational awareness is a key factor in keeping responders and callers safe.



# RESPONDER & CALLER SAFETY

The job of a dispatcher differs from that of a call taker. The dispatcher is primarily responsible for disseminating information to, and interacting with field responders (police officers, fire fighters, EMT/paramedics, etc.). Depending on the agency, these roles are assigned independently or performed simultaneously by the same person.



This presentation will explain steps the telecommunicator can take when assigned the role of a dispatcher to enhance responder and caller safety.

# RESPONDER & CALLER SAFETY

All relevant and pertinent information must be relayed in a timely manner. Pertinent information includes, but is not limited to, weapons, suspect information, priority updates that suggest an incident may be escalating, hazardous conditions, road closures, drug activities, etc.

Dispatchers must repaint the picture that was painted by the call taker. Refrain from giving an interpretation of, or an edited version of the CAD narrative that omits relevant information. Simply tell what you were told, as seemingly minute details could greatly affect responder and caller safety.

**THE WHOLE STORY**

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## The presence (use, mention or availability) of weapons

Any information pertaining to weapons that is documented in the narrative of a call for service must be relayed to responders in a timely manner. Failure to disseminate documented information about weapons is negligent and grossly irresponsible. This action could seriously jeopardize responder and caller safety. **A vehicle can be used as a weapon.**



Responding blindly to a call for service could cause serious harm or death to responders and bystanders alike.

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**Familiarize yourself with and adhere to all policies relating to time and status checks.**

Performing regular status or time checks can greatly enhance responder safety. A verbal response from a responder is mandatory when performing status or time checks. A passive click of the microphone from either party (dispatcher or responder) does not constitute a formal acknowledgement. Unit statuses must be updated as soon as they are acknowledged by the dispatcher.



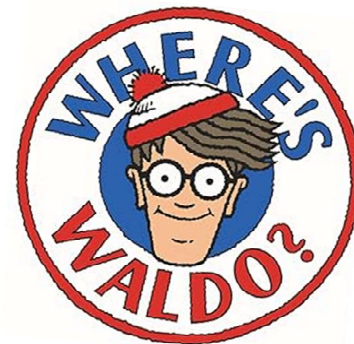
**Always alert units of working incidents (minutes into active fire, trauma alerts, etc.)**

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## Maintain accurate (real time) unit status

Knowing and maintaining the current location of each responder as well as their status is a primary responsibility of the dispatcher. The status of each responder must be updated as soon as the status is acknowledged by the dispatcher.

Where is 1A12 and what is he doing?  
Is Engine 6 staging or at the incident location?



Always brief relief personnel of all unit statuses and locations as well as any calls of a serious nature from the prior shift. **PASS THE INFORMATION ON.**

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## Mandatory dual (law and fire/medical) response

Fire fighters and medical personnel are not always armed (depending on jurisdiction) and may require law enforcement response to enhance their safety. It is imperative that the dispatcher pays close attention to the CAD narrative to ensure a law enforcement response when needed for a fire or medical call. Consider the following:

You are dispatching rescue personnel to a medical call for chest pains when you notice per the CAD narrative that the caller was hit in the chest with a metal pipe by her estranged husband. Though the call was created for a medical complaint, there is a domestic violence component that requires a law enforcement response for responders and caller safety. Attention to detail is key, pay attention.



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## Assign backup/Cover car/Blocking unit

It may be necessary to assign more than one unit to a call for service. This may be discretionary based on the CAD narrative or policy driven based on classification (nature of the call) or location. It is crucial that the right number of resources are dispatched in a timely manner.



Did you add canine, aviation or hazmat to the run card?

Did you assign the extra engine as a blocking unit for the accident on the highway?

Did you send back-up to the traffic stop or the accident where the drivers are arguing?

Sometimes the dispatcher is the only buffer between a responder and complacency. There is no such thing as routine.

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## Be On the Look Out (BOLD)/Attempt To Locate (ATL)

It is crucial to notify surrounding jurisdictions of any vehicle or suspect information that is or may become mobile that poses a threat to responders and the public. This information must be checked for accuracy and broadcasted in a timely manner.

Did you notify FHP that the vehicle entered the highway?

Did you broadcast in its entirety the vehicle description to include the driver possibly carrying a firearm?



A thorough BOLD/ATL could mean the difference between a single unit approaching for a traffic stop or waiting for backup.

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## **Minimize distractions/Pay attention**

Periodically the telecommunicator may experience downtime (low call volume and radio traffic) during shift. During these times, the telecommunicator may engage in reading, games, scrolling on a personal device, small talk with coworkers or other work appropriate (agency allowed) activities.

It is imperative that during these periods of low traffic that the dispatcher remains alert and attentive to their primary assignment of monitoring assigned channels. Minimize distractions; responder safety is paramount.



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## Emergency activation/ Mayday

Officer down and Mayday transmissions are unfortunate realities of the dispatch environment. It is absolutely critical that the dispatcher is aware of all policies and procedures that pertain to emergency activations.

The dispatcher must be aware of the following:

- What is an emergency activation?
- What are the sounds (audible tones) and sights (CAD change for affected personnel)
- What to do when an alert is activated (notifications, additional units, etc.)



**A prompt, careful and steady response in these intense moments is vital to responder safety.**

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## Premises/Address information

All applicable preprogrammed officer safety CAD notes must be relayed to responders at initial dispatch or as soon as possible (ASAP). This information serves to notify responders of potential hazards, wanted individuals, weapons and other sensitive information.



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## Malfunctioning Equipment



It is imperative that equipment (head/handset, foot pedal, etc.) are kept in working order. Any malfunctioning, broken equipment or exposed wiring must be reported as soon as noticed. Faulty equipment jeopardizes responder safety.

## Awake and Alert

To enhance officer safety the dispatcher must be awake and alert. Sleeping on active duty while assigned to monitor an emergency channel/radio is prohibited.



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## Training and Training Manuals

Ongoing training accompanied by well written and updated training manuals are key components of responder and caller safety. Training must include practical real-life scenarios, done in conjunction with field units (responders) whenever possible and must reinforce policies.



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The dispatcher must adhere to policy when assigning responders to all calls for service. Not following outlined policies expose the dispatcher to liability and jeopardize responder and caller safety. What does the policy say about:

- Critical/Tactical incidents
- Special assignments
- Assigning backup
- Traffic stops (after hours)
- Status and time checks
- Emergency/mayday activations
- Premises information/address notes
- PAR
- Call assignment/Run cards
- Hazmat incidents
- BOLO/ATL
- Mutual aid/Mutual responses
- Proper use of alert tones
- .....etc.



# RESPONDER & CALLER SAFETY

THERE'S NO  
SUCH THING AS  
ROUTINE



**SAFETY IS  
EVERYBODY'S  
JOB**



**THANK YOU**



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