



## Telephone Protocol

### .01 Policy

It is the policy of the Bladensburg Police Department to use cellular telephones in the course of police operations to enhance departmental communication. Cellular telephones may be used by employees when the use of radio communication, mobile data computer, or hard line telephone usage is inappropriate, unavailable, or inadequate to meet communication needs and when the cellular telephone is used in accordance with this policy.

This policy applies to both civilian and sworn personnel.

### .02 Terms

**Disruptive:** Any time that cellular telephone operations would be considered disruptive, such as in meetings, training sessions, court, or public places in which their use would reasonably be deemed annoying and intrusive.

**Distraction:** Any time the use of a cellular telephone would unnecessarily or unreasonably divert the attention of an employee from official duties and/or cause a potentially hazardous situation.

### .03 Governing Legislation and Reference

Governing Legislation:

Maryland Code, Transportation Article, §21-1124.2, *et seq.*

Forms: N/A

### .04 Procedure

#### A. Departmental Telephones

Employees answering Departmental telephones shall do so promptly and courteously. They will identify their location or assignment and name, such as "Bladensburg Police, Officer Brown." Employees shall attempt to assist callers to the best of their ability. A caller's refusal to identify himself will not preclude an attempt to assist the individual or inhibit police response.

### Personal Calls

Generally, personal telephone calls should not be made from Departmental telephones. Incoming personal phone calls should be brief.

Under no circumstances will Departmental telephones be used for conducting commercial business transactions.

Prisoners, witnesses, victims, and suspects may use Departmental telephones for local calls at the custody officer's discretion.

### Long Distance Calls

Long distance telephone charges must be reversed if a Departmental telephone is used to reach an employee or their residence for other than official business.

Official long distance calls can be made and charged to the Department's long distance carrier account.

E-mail should be considered as an alternative.

Employees needing to place an official call from a non-Town telephone should contact Communications and have the call made from a Town telephone.

When necessary to make a personal long distance call, Departmental telephones may be used, provided that the call is charged against the employee's personal long distance account.

Employees traveling out of town who must make business-related long distance phone calls should contact the Fiscal Affairs obtain long distance account information.

#### B. Cellular Telephones

*This policy applies to both department owned and personally owned cellular telephones that are carried by employees and that may be used by the employee during their tour of duty.*

Cellular telephones are to be used as a secondary form of communication and are not a substitute for radio communication. Approved cellular telephone usage includes, but is not limited to, the following types of communication:

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- Conveyance of sensitive and/or restricted information; however, like both the radio and MDC, there is no reasonable expectation to privacy while using a cellular telephone;
- Communication beyond normal radio range; or,
- Incidents in which direct communication with an employee or the public is critical.

Cellular telephones shall not be used if they may be disruptive to others or cause a distraction to the employee. Use of cellular telephones, either in voice or data transmission, while on duty shall be restricted to essential communications. Engagement in multiple or extended conversations unrelated to official business or similar use that interferes with the performance of duty is prohibited.

Employees driving Town owned vehicles are required to comply with all State and local laws regarding the use of mobile communications devices while driving.

Employees shall not operate Town owned vehicles while using cellular telephones unless operational necessity exists and other means of communication are not available or suitable. If a mobile communications device must be used by an employee while driving a Town vehicle, a hands-free device shall be used.

Only in the case of an emergency is the use of a hand-held mobile communications device without a hands-free device permitted.

Personal cellular telephone records may be subject to subpoena if used in the performance of official business.

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HISTORY: Adopted July 1, 2013

This General Order supersedes all other orders and memoranda in conflict therewith.

Authority:



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Chief of Police