

SANTA ANA POLICE DEPARTMENT

DAVID VALENTIN · CHIEF OF POLICE

TRAINING BULLETIN

"Education promotes professional and responsive law enforcement"

Telephone Courtesy

Purpose

This Training Bulletin provides a comprehensive guide for employee's conduct when using the telephone to contact the public.

Introduction

Most police-citizen contacts are made by the use of the telephone. Community members rely upon the telephone to obtain assistance; in addition to providing and receiving information from the police. Police officers depend upon this means of communication as a time saver and to help them perform their task more efficiently. With this in mind, police personnel must be friendly, interested, and courteous in their telephone conversations with all parties. Unlike a face-to-face conversation, callers only have the sound of voice to help them evaluate and form an opinion of the person at the other end of the line. Consequently voice intonations, words used and the manner in which one speaks oftentimes provides the only means for the caller to evaluate police services. Some basic courteous telephone techniques are listed below.

Procedures

A. Remember That You Are the Sole Contact of the Caller.

1. Answering the phone promptly is a proper start to giving the caller the service they deserve.
2. Speak distinctly. A well-modulated voice carries best over the telephone.
3. Sound alert and interested. Drab, bored, mechanical sounding voices appear expressionless, indifferent, impatient, and inattentive.

B. Answer Calls Promptly.

1. Try to answer the telephone within three (3) rings.
2. Answer by giving your title and name.
3. Put yourself in the place of the person who needs assistance; think how the caller may feel.

4. Give a professional, reassuring image of the Police Department.
5. Don't say anything you don't want others to hear.

C. Observe Telephone Courtesy.

1. Don't try to carry on two conversations at once.
2. Speak clearly, distinctly and loudly enough to be heard. If you mumble and have to repeat your questions, valuable time is wasted.
3. A calm, confident, and decisive but courteous voice will help to calm antagonistic callers.
4. Explain what you are doing to help.
5. If you must transfer the caller or put them on hold, find the correct party and explain what the caller wants. Do not leave the caller with the impression that "*nothing was done.*"
6. Try to end all telephone calls positively. Leave the caller satisfied that you have done your best to help solve their situation.
7. Always allow the caller to hang up first.

D. Take Charge of the Conversation.

1. Direct the conversation to obtain information.
2. Ask the necessary questions you need to obtain correct information.

E. Explain Any Periods of Waiting to the Caller.

1. If it's necessary to confirm information, explain to the caller why and how long it may take.
2. Try to avoid waiting periods of "*dead space*" to pile up. It annoys the caller.
3. Avoid waiting periods of more than 30 seconds.
4. Remember information the caller has already provided. **WRITE IT DOWN.** Don't make the caller "*start over*" each time you come back on the line.
5. Never give a response time or say, "*we'll be right out*" because we cannot predict what might be next.

F. Avoid Jargon or Slang.

1. Use precise English.
2. Do not use police codes. They can be confusing to the public. Avoid using law enforcement terminology (i.e. the difference between a burglary and a robbery) unless this explanation aids in the successful culmination of the call.

G. Show Interest In the Person's Call.

1. Use the caller's name when possible, i.e. Mr. Jones, Mrs. Jones, Ms. Jones etc.
2. Your interest will have a calming influence.
3. Don't display boredom or irritation.
4. If your tone and questions reflect a concern, the reporting party will more readily cooperate with you.
5. Listen to what the caller is saying and repeat it back if you are unsure **clarify**.
6. Listening skills are extremely important. Listen to the caller's responses so you do not have to ask for the same information twice.

H. Be Calm and Reassure the Caller Throughout the Call.

1. If the caller is making disparaging remarks about an ethnic group or race, ignore them. Never become argumentative or defensive.

I. Accept All Emergency Calls.

1. Even if the call is from the wrong area.
2. Take the information and forward it to proper jurisdiction. It is also advisable to have the caller contact the proper jurisdiction personally.
3. Never make the caller redial in an emergency.

J. Avoid Unprofessional Expressions.

1. Be businesslike at all times.
2. Never appear flirtatious.
3. Communicate properly and effectively with all callers, even those who are:
 - a. **Hostile:** Hostility is contagious. Treat hostility with courtesy. It is also contagious.
 - b. **Angry:** Realize that most callers who are angry have a genuine right to be angry. Be sympathetic.
 - c. **Intoxicated:** Don't assume that because a caller is intoxicated you have the right to be rude or discourteous.
 - d. **Mentally Unstable:** Don't forget that a mentally unstable person can be a victim of a crime. Never automatically categorize their complaints as being unfounded.
 - e. **Persons - with Limited English Capabilities:** Make a concerted effort to obtain as much information as possible. If you can at least get a call back number, there are several translation resources available to our department.
 - f. **Profanity:** Never place your personal and professional reputation in jeopardy by responding to any to any type of call with profanity, regardless of the provocation.

Conclusion

Each person should practice telephone courtesy during all telephone contacts. Remember the caller does not have the benefit of watching you, seeing your gestures and changing facial or physical expressions. In view of the common usage of the telephone, it is essential that each person make an extra effort to be friendly, interested, and courteous in our telephone conversations and treat the caller as you would like to be treated.

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