

Verdugo Fire Communications Center

Policy & Procedures Manual



Section Two

Communications Center

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I. COMMUNICATIONS CENTER – GENERAL POLICIES

- A. Only communications center personnel, Chief/Staff Officers, or other pre-approved personnel that have been granted a security access code are authorized in the center without prior approval. All other personnel, visitors, vendors, tours, must be approved prior by the Executive Director, Administrator, Supervisor, Administrative Shift Supervisor, or Shift Supervisor.
 - 1. All non-uniformed personnel, visitors, and service personnel must sign-in upon entry to the communications center and prior to entry to any of the equipment rooms.
 - 2. A sign-in log is maintained with/by the Shift Supervisor.
 - a. *Exception:* Authorized City personnel who are at the Center and are working in support of the Center's behalf in the course of their duties. E.g., - Radio Service personnel, I.S. personnel, Fire Management, Executive Staff.
 - 3. Service personnel are expected to remove any materials brought into the Center, ensuring that a state of cleanliness and safety is paramount, prior to their leaving. The Center shall be left in a state that is as it was prior to service, if not better.
 - a. Fire Communications Shift Supervisors shall be responsible for ensuring that compliance has been met prior to any service personnel having left the center.
- B. Individual or group tours must be approved in advance: [\(818\) 548-3312](tel:8185483312). This number is not to be given to the public; it is solely for Fire Department personnel use.
 - 1. Tours will be restricted to the Command Room unless it is occupied or other specific arrangements have been made.
 - a. Tours may be denied access based upon system activity and availability of Center personnel.
 - b. Tours will be granted access only for that period of time as necessary to satisfy the request.
 - c. Large tours may utilize one key person for purpose of signing the sign-in log.
- C. Access during high-level events, emergency events, periods of extreme activity shall be restricted to only those individuals performing specific support functions and whose duties require their presence in the Center.
 - 1. Tours and visitors shall not be granted access during these periods in order to facilitate the needs of the Center.
- D. The following shall apply to all persons/personnel accessing the Center:

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1. Voices shall be kept at a low level. Unnecessary noise or loud conversations will not be permitted at any time.
2. Conversations with staff while in receipt of a call or in process of verbally dispatching an incident is prohibited.
3. Walk through of dispatch work areas where Dispatchers are performing their duties is prohibited unless previously authorized.
4. Sitting with Center personnel at their workstations is prohibited unless previously authorized or directed by Center personnel.
5. Use of any telephone devices at/near any of the workstations is prohibited unless otherwise directed by Center personnel.
 - a. Cellular phones, especially those that send/receive data, can interfere with the myriad of radio and telephone connections; data bursts can be heard across phone lines and radio equipment.
6. Smoking is not permitted at any time in the Center or in the Fire Station or while in uniform.
7. Viewing of television or listening to commercial radio is permitted during shifts.
 - a. Television shall be restricted to news, weather, or other situational awareness channels only, during business hours.
 - b. Television/Commercial Radio channels audio levels may not interfere with the receipt of a phone call, regardless of type of call and/or dispatch of resources, nor distract Center personnel from performing the essential functions of their position.
 - c. Use of Television, VCR, DVD Player's, or any other multi-media input shall be restricted to PG-13 or lesser MPAA rating. Viewing of any media with an MPAA "R" or higher rating is expressly prohibited.
 - i. Should any type of media be presented within the Center which does not carry an MPAA rating and should that content be deemed offensive by any individual, it shall be reported immediately to the Shift Supervisor; the Shift Supervisor shall handle accordingly.
8. Temperature controls for all rooms within the Center are maintained by the City of Glendale – Facilities Services division.
 - a. Center personnel shall check critical equipment rooms two (2) times per shift to ensure that HVAC controls and systems are operating correctly.

- i. This action shall be documented. A log is maintained by/with the Shift Supervisor.
 - b. Temperature extremes shall be reported immediately to Facilities Services staff for resolution.
 9. Lighting levels shall be maintained in accordance with established levels set by the Fire Communications Supervisory personnel.
 - a. At a minimum, lighting levels shall be maintained to a degree whereby all furniture, chairs, or any other potential hazards are easily visible to all Verdugo personnel, maintenance staff, or visitors during all shifts.
 10. Food may only be consumed at work surfaces such as desks or tables or dispatch workstations in the Communications Center.
 - a. The Kitchen, Liaison and Command rooms may be utilized for this purpose.
 - b. Food may not be consumed while walking over carpeted areas.
 - c. It is each person's responsibility to ensure that no food particles remain at, near, or under the work area or workstation.
 - d. Partially eaten food must be disposed of properly in the appropriate container.
 - i. Several recycling containers are available in the Kitchen and are labeled for their appropriate purpose.
 11. Beverages and liquids of any type are not allowed on the main floor of the Dispatch Center, in the Computer room, or in the Radio room.
 - a. These areas are responsive to any type of liquid spills as computer sub-flooring in these areas contain liquid detection devices, which if activated, will shut down the power to the Communications Center in an effort to protect sensitive equipment.
 - b. *Exception:* Containers which feature screw type lids and a sealable opening to limit or prevent spillage are permissible in these areas.
 12. It shall be the general responsibility of each individual in the Center regardless of rank or position to ensure that all areas are free of any safety hazard or issue and to ensure that all areas /rooms are neat and clean at all times.
 - a. Storage of personal materials, supplies, laptops, etc., is not permissible in any other location on the Dispatch Floor other than that individuals current work area.
 - i. Use of other workstation areas, vacant or not, is not permissible.

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- b. Locker space, file drawer space, bathroom locker space, kitchen locker space is provided for full-time personnel for their belongings and those items shall remain in those appropriate areas when not being utilized.

II. GENERAL TELEPHONE POLICIES

- A. Generally, personal and/or residential telephone numbers of any individual maintained by the Center shall not be released.
 1. Numbers may be released upon request to that of a Chief Officer.
 2. Numbers may be released to those personnel associated with a particular notification list and/or team.
- B. Fire Station phone numbers shall not be released to the public.
 1. Doing so creates a potentially hazardous situation should the public retain that number and then in the future attempt to utilize it for an emergency situation.
 2. Field personnel shall furnish prior, to those individuals having a need to contact them at their station with those numbers as/is appropriate. Verdugo personnel shall not give out a fire station number nor connect/patch individuals to a fire station.
 - a. If the caller identifies an emergent situation with no other method or knowledge of contact, it may be appropriate under those circumstances to take the caller's information and then relay to the appropriate fire station personnel the nature of the call and callback/contact information.
 3. Fire Station phone numbers for authorized Fire Department personnel can be found in CAD under INFO STA/[3-Letter Firescope Mnemonic]. E.g., INFO STA/PAS
 - a. Fire Station private phone number lines may be given to those persons known by Verdugo Personnel as having authorization for need of such a number.
 - b. Fire Station business phone number lines may be given to other agencies or their fire personnel needing business contact with that station.
- C. Non-emergency calls shall not be transferred to other agencies or departments.
 1. Verdugo's 9-1-1 phone system technology only allows for those calls that are emergent in nature to be transferred to other fire departments or supporting agencies.
 2. Persons in this event can be furnished the appropriate number to call if it is available, or may be advised as the situation warrants, to utilize the phone directory or 4-1-1, or can be furnished that agency's General Information number.

- D. Dispatchers shall not make calls for field personnel, nor transfer callers, when it is clear that the individual making the request has the ability to do so themselves.
 - 1. *Exception:* See Section Seven (7) Notifications
- E. Personal calls of any kind are not permissible on emergency lines.
- F. Only callers having a specific need for such information and having authorization for such information shall be given details relating to an incident. Under no circumstances shall details to an incident be given without prior authorization from Supervisory personnel.
 - 1. Caller's identifying that they have a bona fide interest or that they may be a party to an incident may be given only the confirmation that a response was made on a particular date/time and location.
 - a. All other requests for information shall be considered a Public Records Requests and fall under those guidelines found in Section 1 of this manual.
 - 2. Agency Public Information Officer's (PIO) may be given such information in order to perform the essential nature of their position.
 - 3. Battalion Chief's rank or higher may be given such information in order to perform the essential nature of their position and/or to assist with the management of their agency and/or the incident situation.
 - 4. Press Agencies may be given the incident location and type of incident only. Should there be any additional requests by the Media for supplemental information they shall be referred to that agency's PIO officer with their contact number.
 - a. News media requests shall be considered low priority.
 - i. All other calls shall be answered and processed prior to release of any type of information to the media.
 - 5. Police department requests, unless for exigent circumstances, may be given basic incident information needed to perform the essential nature of their duties.
 - a. Requests for basic information shall have all medical history or identifying patient medical information redacted to ensure compliance with HIPPA regulations.
 - b. Should the request fall under exigent circumstances, then all information may be released regardless of detail.
 - 6. Requests for information or dispositions to an incident shall not be released to private ambulance companies or medical alert/alarm/monitoring companies.
 - a. Private ambulance companies contracted with an Area C agency are permissible.

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- b. Private ambulance companies utilized as an additional support resource within an incident are permissible.
 - c. Medical alarm companies shall not be given dispositions in order to comply with HIPPA regulations.
 - 7. Dispatchers shall not make any statements nor place anything into writing for anyone nor sign any statement without prior Supervisory approval.
- G. Situations where notification is made by Center personnel from a pre-arranged list or pre-established call-out order, whereby the person notified from that list states that they desire to be called back only if no one else can respond – is not acceptable:
 - 1. In these types of situations, Center personnel will document in CAD that they made the appropriate notification to the person on the list.
 - 2. It shall be the responsibility of the person called to then make any other arrangements for alternate personnel to respond and to further notify Center personnel of any changes for documentations purposes.
- H. Incoming calls shall be placed on “HOLD” anytime a conversation with the party on the call is not in progress.
- I. Non-emergency and business calls shall be answered and processed only when all other priority 9-1-1 and 7-Digit Emergency lines and Ring-Down lines have been answered and processed first.
 - 1. In-progress Non-emergency and business calls regardless of status or situation shall be placed on “HOLD” in order to answer and process emergency lines. This process is known as Triage – the process of prioritizing phone lines and types of calls.
- J. Incoming Ring-Down and Business lines shall always be answered: “Verdugo Fire, [followed by the dispatcher’s first name]”
- K. All Emergency Lines shall be answered: “Fire Department & Paramedics”
- L. Personal calls received or made by Center personnel while working in the position of Radio Dispatcher is not permissible.
 - 1. Radio Dispatchers shall physically remove themselves from their position only upon having identified to appropriate personnel they are away from their position and those individuals have acknowledged the transfer of responsibilities.
 - a. Personnel, regardless of position of Call-Taker or Radio Dispatcher, making or receiving personal calls shall limit the number and length of those calls so as to not impact in any way the efficient operation of the Center and/or other personnel in the line of their duties.

2. Texting and/or use of cellular phones or answering of phones while working in the position of Radio Dispatcher is not permissible.

III. EMERGENCY CALLS POLICY

- A. It is the policy of the Verdugo Fire Communications Center and system users to never decline a request for service by the Public for the Fire Department or for Paramedics.
 1. All requests shall be considered bona fide until a determination has been made to the contrary.
 - a. There may be instances where calls have reached the Center and it is determined that it is not the correct agency to handle the call. Those calls should first be transferred where/when possible and/or referred to the most appropriate number.
 - i. Dispatchers shall remain exceptionally aware and sensitive to all information being relayed by the informant.
 - ii. It is imperative that “Key” words/phrases are listened for, which might indicate a need for further questioning and/or an actual dispatch of system resources.
 2. It shall be policy to dispatch system resources should there be any doubt, unless it has been thoroughly established that no emergency exists.
 3. Any call for service which does not result in a dispatch shall be entered into the CAD system as an ADV – Non-Dispatched Advised Call, along with any details to the conversation which would indicate a reason for a non-dispatch situation.
- B. It is the responsibility of the Call-Taker to ensure that all of the following questions are asked on each and every call where there is a request for an emergency response:
 1. What is the location or address?
 2. What is the closest cross-street?
 3. If any doubt, or the call comes in on a 7-Digit Emergency Line: What City?
 4. What is the phone number? (Location and informant if necessary)
 5. What is the nature of the emergency?

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IV. ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS IN THE CENTER

A. Laptops are permissible in the Center.

1. A Wireless Access Point (WAP) has been provided for convenience and is password protected.
2. Laptops shall be used in accordance with current City of Glendale Electronic Communications policies.
3. Use or operation of Laptops is not permissible while working in the position of Radio Dispatcher, regardless of length of assignment or position.
4. Laptops shall not be utilized for viewing of movies or whereby dynamic interaction is required – i.e., Auction websites, online multi-player games, etc.
 - a. *Exception:* ROSS – Resource Ordering System & Status
 - b. *Exception:* CHP – California Highway Patrol CAD
 - c. *Exception:* Training DVD's; only upon permission of Supervisory personnel.
5. Laptop use shall not be a distraction nor impede in any measure, the level of service in the Center.