

Columbus Police Division Directive	EFFECTIVE	NUMBER
	Aug. 01, 1987	10.16
	REVISED	TOTAL PAGES
	Dec. 30, 2021	3
Telephone Usage and Release of Personal Information		



I. Introduction

A telephone call may be the only contact an individual will have with the Division of Police. *Therefore*, it is important for Division personnel to project a professional image while engaged in a telephone conversation.

II. Definitions

A. Mobile Communication Device (MCD)

Any portable electronic device used for oral or written human communication and capable of transmitting or receiving text-messages or accessing the internet.

III. Policy Statements

- A. Personnel shall answer the telephone promptly, identify themselves by rank (*if sworn*) and name, offer assistance, and obtain information by speaking distinctly and in a helpful, professional manner. Communications and Records Unit personnel shall follow the telephone provisions set forth in their respective SOP manuals.
- B. Personnel answering calls shall attempt to assist the caller and shall not transfer calls unnecessarily. When it is necessary to place a caller on hold, the caller shall be advised of the reason and shall not be left on hold for an extended period of time.
- C. Division telephones may be monitored and/or recorded, and text messages **and** emails sent via a Division-issued MCD may be subject to Public Records law and Division review.
- D. Outgoing voicemail messages shall be professional and shall identify the Division component and/or the employee to which it is assigned. When appropriate, the message should include a number to call when immediate assistance is needed.
- E. Long-distance calls on Division telephones shall be restricted to official police business and justification may be required. All calls placed on Division-issued MCDs are billed at the rate established on the cellular plan at the time of activation, so these devices should be used when possible to make non-confidential calls to locations outside the local calling area, but within the United States.

- F. Division personnel shall notify the Division of Support Services, via email at cellphonerequests@columbus.gov or telephone at (614) 645-4937, prior to traveling if using a Division-issued MCD for business purposes while outside the continental United States so that an international usage plan can be temporarily added.
- G. Personnel with Division-issued MCDs shall have them turned on and operating while on duty, unless tactical or other operations dictate otherwise, and shall check the voice mail/messaging system regularly.
- H. Personnel shall use Division-owned MCDs only for business purposes unless exigent or emergency circumstances exist that require personnel to use them for personal reasons.
- I. Unless otherwise prohibited, personnel may carry a personally owned MCD while on duty.
- J. Personnel carrying a personally owned MCD shall mute the incoming call indicator, set the device to vibrate, or power the device off when circumstances dictate. The use of a telephone or MCD shall not interfere with the performance of the assigned duties or cause personnel to be inattentive to duty.
- K. Personnel will not be reimbursed for any expenses incurred while using a personally owned MCD to conduct Division business. The use of a personally owned MCD device while conducting Division business may subject the device and all its contents to collection as evidence.
- L. Personnel should limit conversations on any MCD while driving a City-owned motor vehicle.
- M. Personnel shall not read, send, or reply to email or text messages, or access any applications from any MCD while driving a City-owned motor vehicle, unless the use of the MCD is necessary in the course of their official duties while operating an emergency or public safety vehicle as outlined in current law(s) and/or ordinance(s).
- N. Personnel shall not use the telephone function on the police radio to discuss confidential information or to relay telephone numbers that are restricted to "law enforcement use only" distribution.
- O. Calls requesting employment verification shall be referred to **Human Resources**.
- P. Home addresses and telephone numbers of Division personnel are confidential and shall be released only to Division personnel for official business. Prosecutors and city attorneys requesting this information for preparation of court cases shall be referred to the Court Liaison Section or the Legal Advisor's Office.
- Q. Computer-generated printouts containing home addresses and telephone numbers of Division personnel shall be kept in a secure place, shall not be duplicated, and shall be rendered unreadable upon expiration.

IV. Procedures

A. Releasing Personnel Information Over the Phone

1. Verify the caller's identity and employment with the Division by asking for his or her telephone number, PNumber, or other identifying information.
2. Utilize the appropriate Division database to obtain home telephone numbers and/or addresses for authorized callers.
3. Advise callers not authorized by Division policy that the employee's information will not be released.
4. Refer inquiries to which you cannot respond and requests from persons other than Division personnel to the **Headquarters Operations** Unit.
5. Transfer the call to the on-duty **Headquarters Operations Unit** Sergeant for final disposition when the caller's status cannot be verified.

B. Incoming Telephone Calls for Personnel

1. Verify the requested employee's assignment through the Division's computerized personnel database system as necessary.
2. Connect the caller to the employee's assigned bureau.
3. Connect the caller to the **Headquarters Operations** Unit when the employee's assignment cannot be determined or the employee's bureau is closed.
4. Offer to take a message and forward it to the employee without delay.