



Peoria Police Department Policy and Procedure Manual

Policy 8.07 Telephone Answering Procedures



I. POLICY

It is the policy of this Department to respond to and handle all incoming telephone calls to the Department in a prompt, courteous, and professional manner utilizing a standardized procedure for doing such.

II. PROCEDURE

A. General Guidelines

1. **Courtesy:** All employees who routinely answer incoming telephone calls should make every effort to handle the call in a professional, efficient, and courteous manner, without having to put the caller on hold for an extended period of time.
2. **Phone Lists:** All employees who routinely answer incoming telephone calls should have, close at hand, a list of Police Department extensions and commonly called telephone numbers. If for some reason the employee who answers a telephone call cannot adequately assist the caller, every effort should be made to determine who the right person would be to handle the call.
3. **Transfers:** If it is determined that the call should be handled by another person or unit, the employee should offer to transfer the caller to that extension, after explaining to the caller exactly who they are being transferred to.
 - a. Before transferring the call, the caller should be advised of the direct telephone number to that unit, (if applicable) for future reference or in case there is a problem in transferring the call.
 - b. When possible, the employee transferring the call should stay on the line and advise the next person, briefly, of the nature of the call.
4. **Messages:** If the employee to whom the caller should speak is not available at the time of the call, the employee should offer to take a message or ask the caller if he/she would like voice mail. The employee taking the message should make every effort to see that the message is delivered to the appropriate person.
5. **Information Provided:** All employees who routinely answer telephone calls should make sure that any information they are providing is correct. For example, instructions for obtaining property impounded for safekeeping, who to contact about residential alarms, etc. This type of information should be confirmed before advising a caller on how to proceed.
6. **Direct lines:** All units and personnel should attempt to provide citizens with a direct line telephone number whenever appropriate to limit the amount of unnecessary transfers and reduce transferred calls.
7. **Reporting:** The Professional Standards Unit will monitor employee compliance with this Policy and Procedure and make periodic reports to the Chief of Police.

B. Specific Call Handling Procedure

1. **External Telephone Calls**
 - a. All telephone calls which originate from outside of the Police Department will be answered "Peoria Police Department," followed by the specific unit name, then the name of the person answering the call. For example, "Peoria Police Department, Records, this is Sue how may I help you?"
 - b. The title used to identify each unit should be the same as that indicated on the Peoria Police Department Organizational Chart. All employees of that specific unit should use the same title when answering the telephone.

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- 2. Internal Telephone Calls: All telephone calls that are transferred from another City department extension, or any call originating from or transferred from a Police Department extension, will be answered with the name of the unit, then the name of the person answering. For example, "Professional Standards, Sergeant Smith speaking."
- C. Voicemail Greetings: The image conveyed through a Department voicemail greeting leaves a lasting impression on the caller. Employees shall ensure that their voicemail greetings are recorded in accordance with the City of Peoria Telephone Etiquette procedures. Sample greetings to be used are provided below:
 - 1. Standard Greeting: "This is (employee title and name) of the Peoria Police Department's (Bureau/Section or Unit). I'm unable to take your call right now, but if you leave your name, telephone number and a brief message, I'll get back to you as soon as possible".
 - 2. Alternate Greeting (extended absence): "This is a Vacation Alert" or "this is an Out of Office alert" (employee title and name) of the Peoria Police Department's (Bureau/Section or Unit). I will be out of the office Monday, March 8th through Friday, March 12th. Please leave a detailed message and I will return your call when I return to the office on Monday, March 15th."

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