# General Order

## Houston Police Department

| ISSUE DATE: | NO. |
|---|---|
| September 8, 2021 | 400-10 |

**REFERENCE:** Supersedes all prior conflicting Circulars and Directives, and General Order 400-10, dated June 2, 2015

**SUBJECT: UNIT AND RADIO NUMBERING**

## POLICY

The Emergency Communications Division has the responsibility for maintaining the roster of on-duty unit numbers for the department to facilitate accountability, employee safety, and the flow of information. The Office of Technology Services has the responsibility for maintaining the radio number assignments for the department.

This General Order applies to all employees.

## DEFINITIONS

***Radio Number.*** The number personally assigned to an employee as an identifier for radio communications.

***Unit Number.*** The on-duty radio call number for an employee utilizing a police radio. The unit number corresponds to a specific beat and/or assignment.

## 1 UNIT NUMBERING SYSTEM

The specific unit number assignments for the operations listed in this section shall be made by the concerned division commanders in accordance with the guidelines provided in this General Order.

The unit numbering system for all uniformed patrol divisions shall be a three- to four-part, alphanumeric code. The first part of the code is a number representing the district to which the unit is assigned. The second part is the letter representing the division or detail where the unit is assigned. The third part specifies the beat or designation number to which the unit is assigned, and in some cases the fourth part (letter suffix) is the shift to which the unit is assigned (see the below subsection "Use of Suffixes in Unit Numbers"). For example, a unit assigned to District 1, Central Division, Beat 20, shall have the code 1A20.

| Part 1 | Part 2 | Part 3 |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | A | 20 |

The second part of a unit number, which is a letter representing the division or detail to which the unit is assigned, shall be designated as shown in the following table.

| Letter | Call Name | Division or Detail |
|---|---|---|
| A | Adam | Central and Downtown |
| B | Boy | North and North Belt |
| C | Charles | Northeast and Kingwood |
| D | Dan | Southeast and Clear Lake |
| E | Edward | South Gessner and Southwest |
| F | Fox | Helicopters |
| F | Frank | Northwest and Midwest |
| G | George | Westside |
| H | Henry | Eastside and South Central |
| I | Ida | Bush Intercontinental Airport |
| J | John | Hobby Airport |
| K | King | Canine Detail |
| M | Mary | Mental Health Division |
| T | Tom | STEP |
| Y | Young | Special Operations |
| Z | Zebra | VCD and Traffic Enforcement |

The third part in a unit number is used to differentiate between units assigned to the same area at the same time. Odd numbers are used to indicate the late side of a specific shift (e.g., 2300-0700 hours) and even numbers are used to indicate the early side of a specific shift (e.g., 2200-0600 hours). The numbering is sequential, starting with the first unit in each beat and continuing to the tenth unit (e.g., all units in beat 1A20 would be designated by the sequence 1A20 through 1A29). Part three unit numbers from 01-09 are assigned to patrol supervisors (e.g., 1A01N).

Specialized unit numbers shall be made according to guidelines in the below subsection "Specialized Assignment Unit Numbers."

**Use Of Suffixes in Unit Numbers**

Suffixes in unit numbering serve to distinguish like unit numbers from each other by various shifts or other hours of operations. For example, 1A20D means the unit is assigned to the early side of Shift I (Days), whereas 1A23N is assigned to the late side of Shift III (Nights). Additional suffixes shall be utilized for swing shifts or power shifts, special overtime details, and additional beat units. Additional suffixes shall be assigned uniformly to all divisions once they are created for a particular purpose. Only the Emergency Communications Division (ECD) shall create and assign a suffix for use with a unit number.

**Specialized Assignment Unit Numbers**

For specialized units that have citywide or fixed-post assignments, the first part in the employee's unit number shall be a two-digit number representing the function or type of unit. The same as in patrol, the second part of the unit number shall be a letter representing the division or detail and the

third part of the unit number shall be a number assigned by the division or detail to differentiate units in similar assignments. The following tables are unit numbers for specialized units that have either citywide or fixed-post assignments.

**Specialized Units Assigned Citywide:**

| Type of Unit | Function/Unit Type | Division/Detail | Unit # |
|---|---|---|---|
| STEP | 30-71 | T | Assigned |
| Mental Health (CIRT) | 66 | M | Assigned |
| Crash | 70 | Z | Assigned |
| Truck Enforcement | 71 | Z | Assigned |
| Wagon (Patrol) | 72 | Div | Assigned |
| Canine | 73 | K | Assigned |
| Mobility Response | 75 | Z | Assigned |
| Mounted Patrol | 75 or 76 | Y | Assigned |
| Park/Bicycle (Patrol) | 77 | Div | Assigned |
| Print | 78 | Div | Assigned |
| SRG | 79 | Div | Assigned |
| Dignitary Protection | 89 | Y | Assigned |
| Gang/Tactical (Patrol)/CST | 90 or 91 | Div | Assigned |
| Community Service/Homeless Outreach | 92 | Div | Assigned |
| Traffic Crimes | 94 | Z | Assigned |
| Highway Interdiction Units | 95 | Z | Assigned |
| DWI Task Force | 96 | Z | Assigned |
| Radar Task Force | 97 | Z | Assigned |
| VCD Detectives | 98 | Z | Assigned |
| Solo Motorcycles | 99 | Z | Assigned |

**Specialized Units Assigned Fixed-Posts:**

| Type of Unit | Assignment | Division/Detail | Unit # |
|---|---|---|---|
| Desk | 80 | Div | Assigned |
| Administrative | 81 | Div | Assigned |
| Crime Analysis | 82 | Div | Assigned |
| Temporary Duty | 85 | Div | Assigned |
| Municipal Courts/City Hall Units | 86 | Div | Assigned |
| In-ServiceTraining | 87 | Div | Assigned |

## 2 ASSIGNMENT OF RADIO NUMBERS

Radio number assignments shall be given to all personnel who are assigned a portable radio or who may utilize a mobile or portable radio as deemed necessary by their division commander.

Radio number assignments are permanent for lieutenants and above for the duration of the employee's rank. Radio number assignments to officers, sergeants, and civilian personnel are temporary and are assigned from a block of numbers dedicated to their respective divisions. If an officer, sergeant, or civilian transfers to a new division, they shall be issued a new radio number from the block of numbers associated with the new division.

The Office of Technology Services shall assign a series of radio numbers to each division. The assignment list (a series of 3- or 4-digit numbers) is particular to each division. The Office of Technology Services maintains a master list of radio number assignments made at the division level. The division radio coordinator shall provide to the Office of Technology Services an updated list of radio number assignments made at the division level whenever there is a change in assignments, or shall update the radio number field in the Police Personnel System (PPS) associated with the employee.

For example, ECD is assigned radio number series 8500 - 8649 for use by employees in that division. Assignments are made to the employees for the duration of that assignment (e.g., Sergeant Smith: 8510, Officer Jones: 8525). If Officer Jones transfers to the Homicide Division, ECD may reassign 8525 to a new, incoming employee in the division and the Homicide Division shall assign a radio number to Officer Jones from their assigned series of numbers.

## 3 USE OF DEPARTMENT RADIOS

The operation and use of department radios is restricted to department employees for official police business only. Unnecessary or improper communication is prohibited.

## 4 MAINTAINING COMMUNICATIONS

On-duty officers shall maintain radio contact with dispatch personnel at all times while in the call for service loop or while conducting field investigations. There are times when officers performing these duties are away from the radios in their vehicles or circumstances make it impractical to keep an assigned portable radio turned on (e.g., court attendance, participating in a school or civic function, in-service training). When such circumstances arise, officers shall contact their immediate supervisors and their dispatchers before turning their radios off. Upon becoming available, officers shall notify the dispatcher immediately.

Field sergeants shall monitor the police radio at all times and respond to scenes when appropriate or when requested to do so by a field unit. A field sergeant shall make the scene of all significant or newsworthy events. At no time during their shift shall field sergeants be out of radio contact with the police dispatcher except during such impractical circumstances as outlined above or unless:

a. Ordered to turn off the radio by a lieutenant or higher-ranking officer. If this occurs, the dispatcher shall be notified the radio shall be off and on whose authority.

b. A tactical situation occurs that requires the sergeant to turn off the radio. When possible, the sergeant shall notify the dispatcher of the situation in which radio contact is not possible.

Upon becoming available, the sergeant shall notify the dispatcher immediately.

When communicating, employees shall maintain the volume of their radios at a sufficient audible level so dispatched transmissions can be heard. Officers assigned take-home vehicles shall refer to General Order 400-07, **Vehicle Use and Assignment** regarding maintaining communications.

## 5 RADIO COVERAGE

Personnel should become familiar with the channel arrangement of their radios and the appropriate channel to use. In the event a channel becomes non-operational, ECD, after confirmation with the Office of Technology Services and the Houston Emergency Center, shall direct units to an alternate channel. If a channel designated for citywide use becomes non-operational, personnel should switch to the patrol dispatch channel assigned to that designated service area.

## 6 USE OF PORTABLE RADIOS DURING EXTRA EMPLOYMENT

An officer working an approved extra employment may utilize his department issued portable police radio; however, radio usage shall not disrupt normal dispatch operations. Specifically, officers shall refrain from utilizing radio communications to request incident numbers, call-back information, telephone numbers, or cab services. Officers shall contact their assigned patrol stations to obtain incident numbers, warrant verifications, and license plate or person inquiries. In the event an officer is not assigned to a patrol station, the officer shall contact ECD's Watch Command for assistance. Off-duty officers using their assigned portable radios at approved extra employment shall utilize radio numbers assigned to them from their division's series of radio numbers.

Unless the division commander approves otherwise, an employee shall not be allowed to check out a portable radio from the designated division spare units for use during extra employment, but shall utilize the portable radio the employee was permanently issued. However, should an employee's assigned portable radio malfunction, the employee shall be allowed to swap out portable radios from the division spares maintaining the proper chain of custody for the equipment in the Police Roll Call Equipment (PRE) system.

## 7 EXTERNAL USE OF RADIO FREQUENCIES

All requests for the use of a department radio or radio frequency by a person or entity outside the department shall be submitted in writing to the Office of the Chief of Police with an accompanying Houston Police Department Radio Talk Group Access Request form supplied by the Office of Technology Services.

**Troy Finner**
**Chief of Police**