

CALLING FOR A NATIONALLY UNIFIED CALL-CODE SYSTEM

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Call takers and dispatchers in any size agency are in need of the standardization and implementation of a call-code system.

NO STANDARDIZED CALL-CODE system exists, and, similarly, there is no standardized ten-dash code system in use by police departments nationwide. For example, some departments call a “traffic accident w/ injuries” a Signal 21, others call it a Code 52 and still others call it a Delta 340. With ten-dash systems, the situation improves only slightly. While nearly all departments list 10-4 as “received OK” and 10-20 as “current location,” the rest of the ten-dash listings quickly become dissimilar from one agency to the next.

Such nonstandard call-code and ten-dash systems nationwide become increasingly problematic in our country for several critical reasons. First, with steady urban growth, there is more overlapping of law enforcement jurisdictions than ever before. More importantly, in a post-

September 11th world, consistent inter-agency communications and standards should be a mandatory goal to ensure the effective coordination of differing governmental resources during an emergency that requires a multiagency response. In this light, a nationally unified call-code system and a standardized ten-dash system are critical goals that are long overdue in the U.S.

Essentially, a police radio communications environment consists of a potentially large number of people who must speak only one at a time in an orderly manner and take directions from a central controller (the dispatcher) who coordinates all the demands for airtime. In developing a system that works within the aforementioned limitations, the underlying philosophy is to do the following:

- Provide a means of dispatching police service calls and routine maintenance

traffic in an efficient, scalable manner that can function well in high-volume and/or emergency situations.

- Provide a means to effectively compile, retrieve and summarize call data for further use in statistical analysis, incident analysis, manpower analysis, etc.

Within this philosophy, and in order of priority, the following functions are addressed in developing an appropriate system:

- Personal safety (both officers and citizens)
- Communication efficiency
- Data acquisition
- Radio dispatcher radio workload requirements
- Call taker workload requirements
- Officer radio workload requirements

ITR Police Radio Communications System

The ITR (Incident/Time/Response) System is a call-code system that was developed specifically to address the unique needs of law enforcement radio communications. As an adjunct, the old ten-dash system was standardized in a



nationally applicable format and renamed the *Code-X System* (e.g., Code 20 is used instead of the old 10-20 phraseology). This two-prong approach is based on the concept that police radio communications can be viewed in two broad categories:

1. Maintenance traffic
2. Dispatched police service calls

Maintenance Traffic

Maintenance traffic is the bulk of police radio communications. It involves those frequent and regular updating of units' statuses (arrived at scene, in service, in court, and so on), communication between units, and those other numerous routine messages that are part and parcel of police radio traffic.

The frequency of maintenance traffic demands a codified format for brevity and accuracy. The routine nature of maintenance traffic, however, allows that format to be simple in construction and application.

For decades, the nationally popular code format for maintenance traffic has been the ten-dash system, but as noted earlier, the particulars of that old system are not standardized from one agency to another.

TABLE 1: 1X X X—ASSAULT AND OTHER PERSON-RELATED CIRCUMSTANCES

10 X X	HOMICIDE	15 X X	DECEASED PERSON
11 X X	SUICIDE	16 X X	SICK / INJURED / UNCONSCIOUS
12 X X	RAPE	17 X X	SEXUAL (OTHER THAN RAPE)
13 X X	SHOOTING	18 X X	DISTURBED PERSON
14 X X	STABBING / CUTTING	19 X X	ASSAULT, OTHER

TABLE 2: 2X X X—ROBBERY

20 X X	ARMED ROBBERY, BUSINESS	25 X X	ROBBERY, BUSINESS
21 X X	ARMED ROBBERY, PERSON(S)	26 X X	ROBBERY, PERSON(S)
22 X X		27 X X	
23 X X	ARMED ROBBERY, BANK	28 X X	ROBBERY, BANK
24 X X		29 X X	ROBBERY, OTHER

TABLE 3: 3X X X—BURGLARY / ALARM ACTIVATION

30 X X	BURGLARY, BUSINESS	35 X X	ALARM, BUSINESS
31 X X	BURGLARY, RESIDENCE	36 X X	ALARM, RESIDENCE
32 X X	BURGLARY, PUBLIC BUILDING	37 X X	ALARM, PUBLIC BUILDING
33 X X		38 X X	ALARM, BANK
34 X X	BURGLARY, OTHER / UNKNOWN	39 X X	ALARM, OTHER / UNKNOWN

TABLE 4: 4X X X—THEFT

40 X X	THEFT, GENERAL	45 X X	
41 X X	THEFT, SHOPLIFTING	46 X X	
42 X X	THEFT, VEHICULAR	47 X X	
43 X X	THEFT, FROM VEHICLE	48 X X	
44 X X	THEFT, FORGED DOCUMENT	49 X X	THEFT, OTHER

TABLE 5: 5X X X—PERSON / PROPERTY INVESTIGATION

50 X X	SUSPICIOUS PERSON	55 X X	INV. PREMISES / AREA
51 X X	PROWLER	56 X X	INV. OCCUPIED VEHICLE
52 X X	PERSON WITH WEAPON	57 X X	INV. UNOCCUPIED VEHICLE
53 X X	WANTED PERSON THERE	58 X X	DAMAGE TO PROPERTY
54 X X	MISSING PERSON	59 X X	FOUND / RECOVERED PROPERTY

TABLE 6: 6X X X—PUBLIC EMERGENCY / SERVICE

60 X X	FIRE	65 X X	
61 X X	EXPLOSION	66 X X	
62 X X	BOMB THREAT	67 X X	
63 X X	HAZMAT INCIDENT	68 X X	
64 X X	PUBLIC UTILITY MALFUNCTION	69 X X	OTHER PUBLIC EMERG / SERV

TABLE 7: 7X X X—TRAFFIC

70 X X	TRAFFIC ACCIDENT	75 X X	ASSIST MOTORIST
71 X X	TRAFFIC ACCIDENT W/ INJURIES	76 X X	VEHICLE ESCORT
72 X X	HIT AND RUN	77 X X	FUNERAL ESCORT
73 X X	DUI	78 X X	TRAFFIC CONTROL
74 X X	ABANDONED VEHICLE	79 X X	TRAFFIC, OTHER

TABLE 8: 8X X X—DISTURBANCE

80 X X	GENERAL	85 X X	UNRULY CROWD
81 X X	DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	86 X X	REFUSES TO LEAVE
82 X X	DRUNK	87 X X	PERSON SCREAMING
83 X X	FIGHT	88 X X	SHOTS FIRED / HEARD
84 X X	NOISE	89 X X	UNKNOWN, USE CAUTION

TABLE 9: 9X X X—OTHER INVESTIGATIONS

90 X X	ASSIST PERSON	95 X X	GANG-RELATED ACTIVITY
91 X X	HARASSING PHONE CALLS	96 X X	NARCOTICS ACTIVITY
92 X X	UNSECURED PREMISES	97 X X	OTHER VICE ACTIVITY
93 X X	ANIMAL COMPLAINT	98 X X	SPECIAL EVENT DETAIL
94 X X		99 X X	MISC. INVESTIGATION

Dispatched Police Service Calls

Dispatched police service calls, on the other hand, are the essence of police radio communications. While most dispatched police service calls are nonemergency in nature, urgent or emergency situations often arise. Thus, a special challenge exists in developing a call-code format. What is needed is a simple system for nonemergency dispatching that is immediately expandable and flexible for more urgent situations.

In nonemergency calls, a simple code describing the nature of the incident is usually sufficient. For more urgent calls; however, certain additional information

THE ITR SYSTEM IS DESIGNED TO SHOW INFORMATION ONLY AS NEEDED, THUS ALLOWING SIMPLICITY FOR NONEMERGENCY CALLS, YET PROVIDES ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PRECISELY WHEN THAT INFORMATION IS NEEDED.

becomes immediately crucial—the officer needs additional facts beyond just the nature of the call in order to respond appropriately, effectively and safely, including the answers to the following questions:

- What is the nature of the call? (incident status)

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- Is the incident in progress or has it just occurred, etc? (timeframe)
- Are sirens needed or a silent approach needed, etc. (response mode)

The ITR police radio communications system is designed to meet the above criteria in a logically patterned format. It is a highly flexible framework that instantly provides information only *as needed* and is a simple concept that is easy to adopt and apply in any size agency.

THE ITR SYSTEM IS DESIGNED SO THAT A ROUTINE, NON-EMERGENCY CALL IS DISPATCHED AS A ROUNDED WHOLE NUMBER, THUS PRESERVING SIMPLICITY.

The ITR Format

The ITR System uses a four-digit number that is capable of conveying three important factors (Incident status, Timeframe and Response mode) briefly and concisely. The four-digit code is formatted as follows: **xx x x**

The first two digits indicate the incident status (nature of the call), the third digit indicates the timeframe (when it occurred) and the fourth digit indicates the response mode (type of response needed). The incident status numbers range from 10 to 99, with similar incidents grouped in units of tens. A complete listing of the incident status numbers follows.

The timeframe digit ranges from 0 to 3 as follows:

- xx 0 x** previously occurred, unknown when occurred, irrelevant, in-applicable
- xx 1 x** just occurred
- xx 2 x** in progress, occurring now
- xx 3 x** about to occur, may occur

The response mode digit also ranges from 0 to 3 as follows:

- xx x 0** routine response
- xx x 1** expedite response
- xx x 2** expedite silently
- xx x 3** full emergency response

Examples of the ITR System

The following call codes, using the ITR System, are typical dispatched patrol calls that any agency may use on a regular

TABLE 10: CODE-X DESIGNATION LIST

CODE		CODE	
0	ASSIST UNIT, NONEMERGENCY	50	STANDBY, EMERGENCY TRAFFIC ONLY
1	ASSIST UNIT, EXPEDITE	51	RESUME NORMAL TRAFFIC
2	ASSIST UNIT, EXPEDITE SILENTLY		
3	ASSIST UNIT, FULL EMERGENCY RESPONSE		
4	NO FURTHER ASSISTANCE NEEDED		
5	EMERGENCY IS TERMINATED	55	IMPROPER RADIO TRAFFIC
6	ON SPECIAL DETAIL		
7	ARRIVED AT SCENE		
8	IN SERVICE, AVAILABLE		
9	REPEAT TRANSMISSION		
10	BUSY, AVAILABLE FOR CALL		
11	GAS / VEHICLE MAINTENANCE	61	SWITCH TO CHANNEL 1 (IF APPLICABLE)
12	PERSONAL (EAT, ETC.)	62	SWITCH TO CHANNEL 2 (IF APPLICABLE)
13	IN COURT	63	SWITCH TO CHANNEL 3 (IF APPLICABLE)
14	REPORT WRITING	64	SWITCH TO CHANNEL 4 (IF APPLICABLE)
15	ON FOLLOW-UP	65	SWITCH TO CHANNEL 5 (IF APPLICABLE)
16	TRAFFIC VIOLATOR	66	SWITCH TO CHANNEL 6 (IF APPLICABLE)
17	END OF SHIFT	67	SWITCH TO CHANNEL 7 (IF APPLICABLE)
18	RESPOND QUICKLY	68	SWITCH TO CHANNEL 8 (IF APPLICABLE)
19	WHAT IS YOUR STATUS?	69	SWITCH TO CHANNEL 9 (IF APPLICABLE)
20	WHAT IS YOUR LOCATION	70	OUTSTANDING FELONY WARRANT
21	PHONE _____	71	OUTSTANDING MISDEMEANOR WARRANT
22	DISREGARD LAST TRANSMISSION	72	OUTSTANDING CITY /MUNICIPAL WARRANT
23	COME / EN ROUTE TO HQ		
24	COME / EN ROUTE TO _____		
25	RETURN TO PREVIOUS LOCATION	75	ARE YOU SECURE FOR CONFIDENTIAL INFO...?
26	MEET OFFICER		
27	NO FURTHER ASSISTANCE NEEDED		
28	CHECK VEHICLE TAG/REGISTRATION		
29	CHECK IF STOLEN		
30	CHECK PERSON / WARRANTS		
31	CHECK IF NO SUCH ADDRESS / LOCATION	81	RADIO TEST
32	SUSPECT IN CUSTODY	82	RECEIVING WELL
33	TO JAIL WITH SUSPECT / PRISONER	83	RECEIVING POORLY
34	TRANSPORT PERSON		
35	TRANSPORT PROPERTY	85	LOCAL NETWORK DOWN
36	CORRECT TIME	86	STATE NETWORK DOWN
		87	NCIC DOWN
40	CONTACT / SEND OWNER	90	IN VEHICLE PURSUIT
42	CONTACT / SEND SUPERVISOR	91	IN FOOT PURSUIT
43	CONTACT / SEND WRECKER		
44	CONTACT / SEND EMS/AMBULANCE		
45	CONTACT / SEND FIRE DEPT.		
		99	USE CAUTION
		100	OFFICER DOWN

basis:

- 3000** Business burglary occurred sometime the night before, normal response
- 5400** Missing person complaint, normal response
- 2011** Business robbery just occurred, expedite response
- 7113** Accident w/injuries just occurred, full emergency response
- 3122** Residential burglary in progress, expedite silently
- 8331** Fight about to occur, expedite response

Note that the first two digits indicate the nature of the call (incident status), the third digit indicates when it happened (timeframe) and the fourth digit indicates the type of response needed (response mode). Also note that the ITR System is designed so that a routine, nonemergency call is dispatched as a rounded whole number, thus preserving simplicity.

However, when nonroutine or emergency situations arise, the timeframe and response mode numbers above zero are used precisely when police officers need this information for an appropriate, effective and safe response. Thus, the design flexibility and expandability of the ITR System is realized in an efficient and effective manner.

Summary

The ITR System is designed to show information only *as needed*, thus allowing simplicity for nonemergency calls, yet provides additional information precisely when that information is needed. The call codes are arranged in nine separate unit groupings that reflect pattern and logic consistency both within each grouping and between groupings—making the codes easier to memorize and understand.

The ITR System properly confines itself to dispatched police service calls. Maintenance traffic is handled by the Code-X listing, which is essentially a refinement and standardization of the old ten-dash system. It instantly provides information *only as needed* for anything from the most routine call to the most urgent emergency in a quick, flexible and accurate manner. The ITR System and the complementary Code-X listing together represent a complete system for call taking, dispatching and data maintenance needs. **Tables 1 through 10 (pages 27-29)** detail the incident status numbers (xx x x) used in the ITR System. **ENO**

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