



COUNTY OF BUCKS
Department of Emergency Communications
Policies and Procedures

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January 1, 2005
Revised October 1, 2008

General Public Safety

Requests for Recordings and
Printouts of Incident Histories

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a mechanism for providing system users and citizens with copies of recordings and printouts when requested.

DISCUSSION

For the purpose of this document, participating agencies will be considered police departments, fire companies, or emergency medical services units under contract with the County Communications Department, hereafter designated as the Department. Non-participating agencies or individuals will be considered anyone other than police departments, fire companies, or emergency medical services units under contract with the County Communications Department.

POLICY

All requests for recordings or copies of incident histories must be conducted in compliance with the following procedure.

All recordings and its contents are the property of the County of Bucks. The audio recording shall not be copied, reproduced, retransmitted, or modified in any form without the written consent of the Director of Bucks County Emergency Communications. This includes, but is not limited to, conversion to analog, the transfer or conversion of audio to other digital media storage applications, devices, or systems, including uploading the audio to the Internet. The material contained in recordings is to be considered confidential and may not be used except as outlined in the reason for request above. The receipt and use of the material on this recording may be subject to the PA Criminal History Information Act and misuse of the material may be subject to the penalties as set forth in the Act. The audio is not a "public record" as defined by the Right to Know Law." Under no circumstances will any requests from the media be honored.

PROCEDURE

Participating Agencies

The following are the requirements that must be fulfilled to permit participating agencies access to the records maintained by the Department:

- 1) Request for records-
 - a) Requests for records will be for a specific incident, to include time, date and location. Requests MUST be on an authorized Emergency Communications Department form tape /incident history with approved signature.



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- b) Requests for records will be accepted only from the Chief of the police, fire or EMS department or one designee. Authorized personnel will be limited to two per agency prior to requests
- c) Requests for recordings or printouts of incident histories are permitted only for the agency in charge of the incident from each emergency services entity.
- 2) Recordings-
 - a) All voice recordings are retained for one year.
 - b) All requests for recordings are logged at the Emergency Communications Center, and any releases without a written consent from the Emergency Communications Department will result in the immediate suspension of access to future recordings.
 - c) All copies of recording are for investigative or training purposes only.
 - d) All recordings will be made using the voice activation (time compression) method unless otherwise specified.
 - e) All master recordings will remain the property of the Department of Emergency Communication. Security of recorded copies supplied to participating agencies is the sole responsibility of that agency.
 - f) Copies of recordings/records will not be supplied in cases where complaints/accusations are made against the Department or its employees.
 - g) The Department will continue to use the recordings in course of conducting investigations resulting from official letters of complaint. The results of these investigations will be made known to the complainant agency. The fact that disciplinary action (if any) was taken may be disclosed, but the specific disciplinary action will not.
 - h) Any complainant agency may review the recordings described in 2e above, at the Communications Center weekdays 0800 – 1700 hours at a mutually agreeable time with the Department.
- 3) Exceptions-
 - a) The Department Director or designee will address exceptions to this policy on an individual and discretionary basis.

Non-Participating Agencies

The following requirements must be fulfilled to permit a non-participating agency or individual access to the records maintained by this Department:

- 1) Request for Records
 - a) Requests for records will be in writing for a specific incident, including time, date, and location. Requests MUST be in writing on the authorized Emergency Communications Department formtape /incident history r.



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- b) No record will be provided or disclosed, transcriptions allowed or playbacks permitted without a court order. The court order must be signed by a Commonwealth Court or Federal Court Judge for the release of records.
- c) Printouts - CAD (computer-aided-dispatch) incident records will be available based on the following fee schedule:
 - (1) Current records = \$50.00/incident
 - (2) Back dated records = \$50.00/incident
- 2) Recordings
 - a) All voice recordings will be retained for one year.
 - b) All recordings will physically remain in the Operations' area of this Department or other secure area under the control of the Department.
- 3) Recording playbacks
 - a) The following procedures and fees schedule will apply to all recording playbacks for non-participating agencies and individuals:
 - (1) A copy of the audio transmissions requested will be supplied.
 - (2) It is extremely important for the requesting party to supply this Department with exact details of what recorded information is needed. Failure to specify will result in delays based on the priorities of other requests. This Department does not provide written transcripts of audio files.
 - (3) The minimum fee is \$100.00. This fee includes set up and the first hour that the playback equipment is in use.
 - (4) An additional fee of \$100.00 will be imposed for every hour or fraction there after that the playback continues beyond and the initial period.
 - (5) All recordings will be made using the voice activation (time compression) method. The above fees are predicated in the recording playback and playback equipment being used in the Department.
 - (6) All checks are to be made payable to "Bucks County Commissioners". Please supply check or money order. Credit cards or cash will not be accepted.
 - (7) A receipt will be issued for all payments to the Communications Department.



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- 4) Court Testimony
 - a) An employee from the Communications Department will be available if subpoenaed to testify in a criminal matter. A fee of \$400.00 (plus expenses) is required if a county employee is to testify in a civil matter.
- 5) Exceptions
 - a) Exceptions to this policy will be addressed on an individual basis at the discretion of the Department Director or designee. The decision of the Department Director or designee will be final.