1-02/060.00 Use of the Court Security Alarm System (Ai-Phone)

The Court Security Alarm System (Ai-Phone) is an emergency alert system which provides quick, effective two-way communication from the Sheriff's Office to courtrooms, detention areas, and building tenant offices. The system is made up of a speaker, microphone, and master console. In a typical courtroom, there are three concealed pushbuttons which can activate the system. The buttons are typically located at the judge's bench, bailiff's desk, and court clerk's desk.

When a pushbutton is depressed, an alarm sounds at the master console that is monitored by Sheriff's personnel in the Sheriff's Office. The master console shall be staffed by Sheriff's personnel at all times. A light and/or tone will indicate the affected area (lockup, courtroom, etc.). Upon activation, the Sheriff's personnel monitoring the master console will activate the microphone for the affected area and listen. If the nature of the emergency is quickly established, the appropriate number of personnel shall be dispatched to the affected area and while en route, be advised of the type of emergency. If the nature of the activation cannot be determined, personnel shall be dispatched and advised that it is unknown why the emergency system was activated. In addition, personnel monitoring the console shall attempt to contact the affected area by radio or telephone in order to determine the nature of the activation. Any additional information obtained will then be communicated by radio to the responding Deputies.

Verbal communication between the area affected and Sheriff's personnel working as monitors should not occur via the console. In the case of an accidental activation, immediately using the system to communicate with the court could disrupt ongoing court proceedings.

In the case of an actual emergency, using the console to communicate to the courtroom could alert the person, or persons causing the emergency, that they are being monitored. Giving such a notice could jeopardize the safety of the court staff and/or responding Deputies. Additionally, the console person communicating to the courtroom over the system could prevent and override possible incoming emergent communication from the courtroom to the console. Until the cause for the emergency activation can be determined, the console employee shall use the concealed courtroom microphone to listen in on courtroom activity in an attempt to obtain additional information for responding Deputies.

Personnel who have access to the system should be trained regarding the location of the emergency buttons and the procedures that follow after their activation. After the light or tone comes on, the person should be prepared to speak in plain English into the speaker/microphone indicating the reason for the emergency activation. Example: "There is a fight in Department 3." The person activating the system should also try and provide as much information as possible, indicating who and how many are involved, and if there are any weapons. The person activating the system may have to surreptitiously indicate the nature of the emergency, so as not to jeopardize the safety of anyone involved. Example: "Put down that gun," or, "You don't need that knife in here."

The intent of the Court Security Alarm System is to alert Sheriff's Department personnel of any emergency occurring within or near the courthouse. The master console shall be staffed by Sheriff's personnel at all times. Sheriff's personnel monitoring the console shall immediately dispatch sufficient personnel to such emergencies and shall provide additional information, if available, as Deputies respond. Monitors should listen and not attempt to make verbal contact with the concerned court via the console. The safety of everyone involved will be greatly enhanced if the aforementioned guidelines are strictly adhered to.