

## 40/02 Telephone Courtesy and Demeanor

Establishing and maintaining good public relations shall be a primary concern of all Department members handling telephone calls. Proper telephone demeanor is a **must**.

Telephone courtesy consists not so much in what a person says, but how he/she says it. It is possible to be merely civil without being courteous. Courtesy, as it applies to law enforcement, is the essence of, and the key to, good public relations. It is an integral and vital tool in obtaining, for the law enforcement profession, the acceptance and respect of the public which are so essential.

With the majority of people, their telephone call to the Sheriff's Department may be their first official contact with the law. The tone of voice they hear can make or break a public relations program.

Telephone contacts warrant special consideration since the person calling, cannot see you, your smile, or facial expression.

There are five basic qualities to a good telephone voice. They are:

1. Alertness - You should give the impression you are wide awake, and interested in the person calling.
2. Pleasantness - Build a pleasant Departmental image with a pleasant voice.
3. Naturalness - Use simple, straightforward language. Avoid repetition of mechanical word or phrases; particularly, avoid slang terms.
4. Distinctness - Speak clearly and distinctly. Talk directly into the transmitter.
5. Expressiveness - A well-modulated voice is carried best over the telephone. Use a normal tone

of voice and talk at a moderate rate. Vary the tone of your voice - it will add meaning to what you say.

With the foregoing in mind, the following procedures will be adhered to:

1. Answer the telephone as promptly as possible
2. Use the caller's name
3. Treat every call as an important one
4. Be tactful when it is necessary to refuse a request
5. Apologize for errors or delays
6. Take time to be helpful
7. Say "please", "thank you", and "you're welcome"
8. When finished, hand up gently

If you must put a person on "hold", explain the reason, then get back to him as soon as possible. If you answer the call and the caller asks for a specific detail or someone by name, state, "Just a moment, I'll ring." or "I'll page." If you are unable to contact the person/detail requested, get back to the caller as soon as possible and offer to take a message. Don't automatically advise people they will have to call back, as they may be returning a call at our request.

Personnel not assigned to the office area, but in the office area, shall assist in answering the telephones when the office personnel are busy with other calls and related Department business. This is to ensure that there are no undue delays in answering calls.

Personnel being paged regarding an incoming telephone call shall make every effort to answer the call as promptly as possible.

If you answer every call as if you were on the other end, you will no doubt satisfy the Department regulations regarding telephone courtesy and at the same time win friends for the Sheriff's Department.

Courtesy and responsiveness are an absolute “must” when dealing with our clientele over the telephone. Conveying the right amount of sincerity goes a long way toward boosting our image.

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