



## CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT

# PAX 501

Matt L. Rodriguez, *Superintendent of Police*



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### DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE

The Chicago Police Department will soon be initiating an Alternate Policing Strategy in several prototype districts across the city. This new philosophy of policing will enable our department to improve its community communications, and help improve the one-on-one relationship between the beat officer and citizens on the beat. Among several of the elements which will be critical to the success of this new philosophy is the planned expansion of "differential response." One component of differential response is the "Alternate Response" or "Call-Back" program of the Communications Operations Section. This program, which began in 1983, and which provides for certain calls for service to be handled telephonically, has progressively expanded to help ease the drain of valuable patrol resources being routinely assigned to personal response, in the majority of citizens' calls for service.

For years, the department has provided personal response to far too many non-emergency calls for service. In 1991, for example, 3,762,213 calls for service were placed to the 911 Emergency Number. The Chicago Police Department dispatched field units to 2,427,380 of these calls for a 64.52% personal response rate.

During 1991, 162,771 of these calls to the 911 Emergency Response number were handled by the Alternate Response Program. This performance represents a potential 105,800 patrol hours conserved.

In 1992, the Alternate Response Unit handled 195,403 calls that formerly would have been dispatched. This level of performance represents 127,011 hours potentially available to Patrol conserved through the Alternate Response Program. Significantly, although calls to 911 increased in 1992, fewer calls were dispatched resulting in a reduction in the personal response rate to 57.36%. This reduction can be directly related to the expansion of the Alternate Response Program.

One of the recommendations of the recently completed Booz-Allen & Hamilton Report was that the Chicago Police Department further expand its differential response to citizens' requests for service.

When the program becomes optimally operational, police officers will continue to be dispatched to requests for assistance of an emergency nature, felony-in-progress calls, incidents in which human life is threatened, where there is an imminent threat of the destruction or loss of property, etc. However, in those incidents in which requests for service are deemed to be of a non-emergency nature, and which do not require the immediate response of the police, the call should be handled in one of the following ways:

1. Telephonically through the Alternate Response Program;
2. Through delayed response or through an on-scene investigation made by appointment;
3. By directing the caller to proceed to the local district station or nearest police facility to make a report; or
4. By reporting the incident by mail.

Utilization of differential response will provide field units with more time for crime prevention and other proactive police activities in line with the Community Policing Strategy.

Research and current experience has revealed that citizen perception regarding the efforts of the police will not be negatively impacted if reasonable explanations are provided regarding possible delays in police response. These explanations and estimates of delays should be provided at the time of the call.

It is important that all officers recognize that to achieve our objectives regarding the expansion of differential response will require a great deal of patience and public education. Since 1960, well over three decades ago, the Chicago Police have encouraged and promoted our citizens to call us when they are in need of almost any service. This was a reasonable 1960 policy initiated at a time when circumstances demanded it, ie., communication technology was radically changing in the form of a new communications system and personal radios for officers, etc. Moreover, and particularly because we have contributed to these public expectations, it is necessary for us to recognize that what took three decades to establish will not be changed in a matter of months. If we don't promote differential response properly, the lack of public support will certainly seriously delay it.

A parallel element in our plan is that the Chicago Police Department has been involved in establishing a new public safety communications system and facility. Our efforts in this area date back to 1987, when we established a Public Safety Communication Study group to study the feasibility of a new system. It has since progressed to a level where there is a Citywide Project Team working towards opening this facility in December of 1994. Some of its innovations, as one might assume, include many that are devised for efficient response, officer safety, and security, etc. The management information developed by this system will contribute greatly to effective differential response. Additionally, this information will enhance the partnership between the police and the community by creating partners who are more informed and thus able to make better decisions.

The expansion of the Differential Response Program will also result in both, increased opportunities and responsibilities, for beat officers and supervisors. More importantly, however, it will provide beat officers with the opportunity to utilize creativity, imagination and resourcefulness to focus on crime prevention and problem solution at the community level. We are entering an exciting and challenging period in the history of American law enforcement. I am confident that the performance of the Chicago Police Department using this alternate policing strategy, will enable us to attain a most prominent position with other innovative police agencies of the free world.

  
Matt L. Rodriguez  
Superintendent of Police