Getting Started with #ChicagoScanner

Authors: Dani H, Chicago-One News; Eric Tendian, CrimeIsDown.com
Editor: Eric Tendian, CrimeIsDown.com
With help from: RadioReference, CARMA Chicago, various Chicago journalists, other scanner reporters

Introduction

Welcome to the Chicago scanner community! We've prepared this guide to prepare you for participation in the world of publically reporting Chicago's public safety news in ways that allow for truthful, responsible news reporting, while protecting the city's emergency responders and dispatchers, protecting the victims and informants, and ensuring that reporting *breaking* news is done in a manner that does not cause public panic.

Each city public safety and emergency response agency has their own communications system and their own methods & protocols for sharing information with each other. It's all done in real-time, on a priority and immediate need basis. Learning these systems & protocols, understanding them, and understanding the professional language used is necessary to report accurately.

Primarily, each department can generally be broken down into operations and administration. The responders in the field are operations, they *do* all the work. Administration (chain of command) gives the orders and oversees all the work. While this is an over-simplification to some degree, it is an introductory understanding of how vertical (top - down) organisations tend to work.

We will update this guide on an as-needed basis, and will have yearly updates for bulk addition / changes of information.

Contents

Chapter 1: Buying and Programming a Scanner

Buying

So you want to listen to CPD or CFD dispatches? You'll need a scanner to do this. But not just any scanner - we recommend getting a scanner with P25 digital decoding, as well as trunking capability, if you want to ensure you can hear all the different conversations. At the least, the scanner should be able to show the channel name, not just the frequency number. CPD uses conventional analog channels around 460MHz, while CFD uses conventional digital channels around 477MHz. CPD also has a trunked system (Motorola) for special units.

If you need help choosing a scanner, check out RadioReference's guide.

Programming

Once you have a scanner, you'll need to program it. We recommend using the RadioReference database for Cook County and adding in frequencies for the following (see below). The Homepatrol scanners from Uniden have a RadioReference database built-in, making programming extremely easy.

- **Chicago Police Department** - Zones 1-13, Citywide 1-8
- **Chicago Fire Department** - Fire Main+Englewood, EMS Main+Englewood, Citywide Fire, EMS Command, Fireground
- **Chicago Transit Authority** - All CTA lines, bus supervisors North+South
- **Aviation** - Helicopter UNICOM, Fixed-Wing UNICOM
- **Chicago Media** - As you see fit from this list.
- **CPD Trunked** - If you're up for the challenge, add in the Chicago Public Safety and Services trunked system as well.
- **STARCOM21** - ISP District Chicago, Metra PD, IEMA talkgroups, various other talkgroups depending on your municipality

Chicago-area Frequency Databases/Lists

Note that some of these may be outdated. RadioReference is generally the most accurate source. The organization that created these references still exists, however, they no longer update these files / references. CARMA has been kind enough to keep them online as a reference and as a set of historical docs to show how these systems once worked as technology and department practices change and advance.

- Illinois Frequency Lists
- CARMA Profiles
- City of Chicago Communications Guide
- CPD Radio and Unit ID Numbers (CPD has ensured that these identifiers cannot be subject to FOIA requests by moving them to an internal department intranet)
- Cook County, Illinois (IL) Scanner Frequencies and Radio Frequency Reference
- Chicago Public Safety and Services Trunking System, Chicago, Illinois - Scanner Frequencies
- CPD Radio ID list 03A

Scanner Manuals/Guides

Here are some additional resources to help get you acquainted with your scanner.

- [Easier to Read BCD396XT Digital Scanner Manual](#)
- [How a SmartZone system works](#)
- [RadioReference Manual List](#)

Chapter 2: Chicago Police Department Lingo

Department Organization

The Chicago Police Department has the following organizational structure:
http://home.chicagopolice.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/OrganizationalOverview.pdf

- **Office of the Superintendent**
  - Refer to this directive:
    http://directives.chicagopolice.org/directives/data/a7a57be2-1291da66-88512-91e5-ccaba9fe9937c542.html
  - For information on the Office of the First Deputy Superintendent:
    http://directives.chicagopolice.org/directives/data/a7a57be2-1291da66-88512-91e5-fcc6be8617d83e35.html
- **Bureau of Patrol**
  - Three areas, with multiple districts:
    - Area North: 011, 014, 015, 016, 017, 019, 020, 024, 025
    - Area Central: Districts 001, 002, 003, 008, 009, 010, 012, 018
    - Area South: Districts 004, 005, 006, 007, 022
  - For more information about the organization of the Bureau of Patrol, refer to this directive:
    http://directives.chicagopolice.org/directives/data/a7a57be2-1291da66-88512-91e6-521a90347177e975.html
- **Bureau of Detectives**
  - Refer to this directive:
    http://directives.chicagopolice.org/directives/data/a7a57b73-14a1c64f-eee14-a1c6-7df2a00e5fc7d43d.html
- **Bureau of Organized Crime**
  - Refer to this directive:
    http://directives.chicagopolice.org/directives/data/a7a57b73-14a1c64f-eee14-a1c6-83093e222447a9bb.html
- **Bureau of Support Services**
  - Refer to this directive:
    http://directives.chicagopolice.org/directives/data/a7a57b73-14a1c64f-eee14-a1c6-885f7faad13e4def.html
- **Bureau of Internal Affairs**
  - The Bureau of Internal Affairs investigates all allegations of misconduct against Department members not conducted by the Independent Police Review Authority.
  - For more information on its role in misconduct allegations, refer to this directive:
    http://directives.chicagopolice.org/directives/data/a7a57be2-12ce5918-9f612-ce69-05188cb6d4da6c72.html

Bureau of Patrol

The CPD Bureau of Patrol, like the CPD Detective Areas, are organized by "areas". There are three areas - North, South, and Central. Breaking the Department down into areas allows for better coordination, placement, and tracking of Department resources. This also allows each area to do two things:

1. Track and act independently on their own area crime patterns and community crime issues.

2. Allocate resources and determine when a crime pattern / crime issue has crossed borders, necessitating coordination of resources to continue the investigation of each pattern / issue.

Area North = Belmont/Western. This building used to house the 019th District, which is now located at Addison St near Halsted St.
The Deputy Chief for Area North is Al Nagode, formerly the Area North Executive Officer

Area Central = 51st/Wentworth, in the 002nd District Station.

The Deputy Chief for Area Central is Kevin Ryan, former Executive Officer of Area Central

Area South = 700 E 111th, in the 005th District Station.

The Deputy Chief for Area South is Larry Watson

Each of the three areas has resources - Saturation Teams, Gang Teams, Detectives, etc. that can be deployed across the area. Each area encompasses a list of districts where the area resources are focused on targeting the highest priority problems first. Just as there is a priority system assigned to 911 calls, each area and each district within the borders of an area also have a priority system.

Area South: Districts 004, 005, 006, 007, 022 - Detective Commander Rodney Blisset

Area Central: Districts 001, 002, 003, 008, 009, 010, 012, 018 - Detective Commander Brendan Deenihan

Area North: 011, 014, 015, 016, 017, 019, 020, 024, 025 - Detective Commander Kevin Duffin

The Chief for the Bureau of Patrol is Fred L. Waller

The Deputy Chief of Patrol is George Deveraux

The Chief of Detectives is Melissa Staples

See the Complete Chicago Police Department Citywide Organizational Chart here (PDF)

District Command Organization Structure

Districts Commander -----> Executive Officer (Captain) oversees a crew of mid-level police supervisors / managers at the rank of Lieutenant. There can be between 4 to 6 LT's. Most LT's wear a uniform, and one tactical lieutenant in plainclothes. Lieutenants are over Sergeants, who are the direct supervisors of police officers.

The entire Chicago Police Department operates in shifts called "watches": There are three watches. First watch (nights, roughly 8:30p-5a for the shift Commanders) / 10:30PM to 7AM or so for Officers and Sgts., second

watch 7AM to 3:30PM (days) for officers and Sgts and third watch 3:30PM to 11PM or so for officers and Sgts.(afternoons).

Deciphering Radio Traffic by Watch

As demonstrated above in the District Command Organization Structure, the Chicago Police Department is a vertical organization. This means CPD is a top-heavy department wherein orders flow from the top to the rank and file. Experienced journalists / reporters and veteran officers / detectives, and other CPD personnel know when they hear a Deputy Chief or Captain bark an order into the radio, what the exact sequence of events will be. This is EXTREMELY useful for journalists / reporters functioning on the street. You need to know where to be and where not to be.

Let's use the 11th District as an example:

The District Commander, or "DC", is responsible for the entire district at all times. His radio call sign is 1100. He will identify on the radio as "Eleven-hundred." District Captains answer to the DC, holding rank over everyone in their district. He or she will identify over the radio as 1100X. "Eleven-hundred x-ray."

District Lieutenants will either be 1190 or 1199, depending on if they are on the street or performing work at their district. 1199 would be the "Watch Commander". This term is no longer used, but gives a good, quick explanation of their responsibilities. 1190 would be the street or field Lieutenant. The Field Lts use the callsign 1190 or 1199 on the air. 1199 has authority over the watch. 1190 has standing orders to defer to 1199 where a decision needs to be made. 1190 has authority over street operations, 1199 has authority over the lockup, the station, station security, arrests, activity, sets some policy for the watch, and so on. 1190 is usually the ranking officer on a shooting scene at night (Incident Commander)..

Lieutenants hold authority over Sergeants. Sergeants supervise a number of police officers in the Patrol Bureau, Sgts have responsibility for one sector of the district and are responsible for the officers assigned to that sector. 1110 is responsible for the "ten sector" comprising beats 1111, 1112, 1113, 1114, 1115. 1120 is responsible for the 20 sector comprising beats 1121, 1122, 1123, 1124, 1125. Each district has at least three sectors though the number of beats vary by district.

1125 is, when not responding to radio calls, assigned to stay prioritized to the geographic area of beat 1125. Beat integrity is not a hard and fast rule, though. In theory, a job that comes out on beat 1125, and as often happens, is by policy to first be assigned to beat 1125.

Some beats within a district don't fall into the simple sector-beat numbering scheme. 1163 is a tactical sergeant. 1160 is a tactical lieutenant. 1163a, 1163b, are all tact units.. The section C in the carma link above (the PDF) does a good job of explaining district level personnel.

Letters on beats are often assigned a letter in the phonetic alphabet, especially district tactical, area detectives, and citywide tactical units known as specialized units: Adam, Boy, Charlie, David, Edward, Frank, George, Henry, Ida, Lincoln, etc.

First watch cars have the letter R assigned to their beat. They are identified as 1125R or "eleven-two-five - robert." The tac cars would be 1163-adam, 1163-boy, etc. Tactical units don't work assigned watches. They scatter their start and end times to target specific crime concerns.

For more information about the organization of the Bureau of Patrol, refer to this directive:
http://directives.chicagopolice.org/directives/data/a7a57be2-1291da66-88512-91e6-521a90347177e975.html

District Tactical, Citywide, and Detective Area Operations

Every district has what are known on the air as "60" units. These are tactical units who wear street clothes and are broken into teams such as robbery / burglary / theft, vice, gangs / guns / drugs, etc. As stated above, these units do not have a set operating schedule, and vary their activity according to the district's greatest needs, and they target the DOC (Deployment Operations Center) or "hotspots", of which any given district can have more than one at any given time.

The district CAPS Office is part of the tactical team, targeting special community concerns. CAPS receives information by conducting beat meetings, court advocacy (trained volunteer civilians that advocate for the needs and rights of crime victims and the rights of the community by working with the victim, the state, and the department), engaging community youth in the Police Explorer program, senior citizens by way of an assigned senior citizen officer, targeting nuisance abatement issues such as abandoned buildings, working with Chicago Public Schools by way of an assigned "school officer" (usually the district 05 or 07 car), and everything CAPS finds out is shared with district tact, who also shares crime pattern information with area detectives and citywide units.

Detectives work assigned, set watches, but also work overtime on complicated and high-profile cases. Detectives work specialized missions in which their hours vary. Detective assignments within each Detective Area go according to team: DGA (Detective General Crimes Assignment), HGS (Homicide, Gangs, Sex Crimes) which was the old "VCU - Violent Crimes Unit". RBT (Robbery, Burglary, Theft) which at one time was the old "Property Crimes Unit", the area Gun Team, Area Missing Persons, Area Bomb & Arson (also a citywide unit), etc.

Detectives respond to crime scenes, interview involved parties which include witnesses and suspects / other CPD personnel, gather evidence via the Evidence Technicians and their own visual inspection of scenes followed-up by documentation, and they carry - out interviews / interrogations at their assigned Detective Areas. In the CPD, felony charges MUST be approved by the Cook County States Atty - Felony Review Unit. This process involves Detectives who have a victim and an offender. The offender is held at the Detective Division, the Detectives then notify the felony review unit who responds to the Detective Area, and examines the case for appropriateness of court proceedings. The Felony Review Unit will determine if any charges at all are filed, and the seriousness of the charges. They make the final call, not CPD.

Citywide units operate from 35th & Michigan, Homan Square, Districts, and undocumented confidential operations sites maintained by CPD and / or U.S. Federal Agencies as part of a joint Taskforce. Schedules for Citywide units, no matter their specialty, usually vary. Though there are set watches, the core investigation team works whatever hours are needed of them to conduct and complete their investigations. Larger investigations are coordinated with Area Detectives, Districts, Taskforce units, etc.

Vocabulary

Callsigns

Common or notable callsigns heard apart from the standard beat cars:

- Car 3 - Superintendent
- Car 4 - First Deputy Superintendent
- Car 5 - Chief of Patrol
- Car 6 - Deputy Superintendent of Patrol
- Car 13 - possibly Deputy Chief of the Special Functions Division
- Car 41-43
  - 41=Area Central Deputy Chief
  - 42=Area South Deputy Chief
  - 43=Area North Deputy Chief
- 5800 units - Forensic Services (evidence technicians, crime lab) these units are under the command of the area Detective Divisions and the Commander of Detectives.
- 7300 units - Public Transit Detail
- M# units - Marine Unit
- PH# - Police Helicopter 1 or 2
- 4600 units - SWAT team
- 4900 units - Mounted Unit
- ##00 - district commander
- ##00X - district executive officer
- ##01 - desk sergeant
- ##99 - watch commander
- 51xx - Area South Detectives (Area 1) (Unit 610)
- 52xx - Area Central Detectives (Area 2) (Unit 620)
- 53xx - Area North Detectives (Area 3) (Unit 630)
- 71xx - 73xx units Area 1 through Area 3 Special Victims Detectives. Special victims follows the *old unit identification plan* for Detective assignments by area. 71xxs is Area North, 72xx is Area Central, 73xx is Area South.

CPD Callsigns work like this: The first two numbers are the district number, the third number is the sector, the last number is the beat. Example: 1721….. 17 is the district, 2 is the sector, 1 is the beat. 17th district, second sector and first beat = 1721. Chicago has 22 districts. We used to have 25. Chicago used to have five detective areas, we now have three. Some specialized teams have a letter in their callsign after the first two numbers. For instance, 53G22A would be the area 3 (Area North) gun and gang team.

Hear a callsign/identifier not on this list? Try searching it on CrimeIsDown.com.

Codes

To "code out" an incident, the officer gives a combination of a number and a letter, representing the incident type and the police action taken. For example - 11-Frank, 19-Paul, etc.

Code #	Meaning	Code Letter	Meaning
1	Domestic Disturbance	A (Adam)	Not a bonafide incident
2	Teen Disturbance	B (Boy)	No person found

3	Drunk Disturbance	C (Charlie)	No such address
4	Noise Disturbance	D (David)	No police service necessary
5	Other Disturbance	E (Eddie)	Perpetrator gone on police arrival
6	Illegal Parking	F (Frank)	Peace restored
7	Sick Removal/Confinement	G (George)	Advised warrant
8	Injured Person	H (Henry)	Adv. to re-contact police if repeated
9	Person Down	I (Ida)	Transported to hospital or detox
10	Animal Bite	J (John)	Returned to home or family
11	Suspicious Person(s)/Auto	K (King)	Taken to district station
12	Calling for Help	L (Lincoln)	Information report submitted
13	Lost Person Found	M (Mary)	Issued traffic citation
14	Auto/Burglar/Holdup Alarm	N (Nora)	Issued ordinance complaint
15	Inhalator	O (Ocean)	Advised legal help
16	Fire Call	P (Paul)	Other police service
17	Escort	R (Robert)	Arrest made
18	Traffic Accident	S (Sam)	Supervisor referral to Alternate Response Section (311) - used by supervisors only
19	Other Miscellaneous Incident	X (X-Ray)	Miscellaneous incident report
		Y (Young)	Animal bite report
		Z (Zebra)	Mental health related

Source:
http://directives.chicagopolice.org/directives/data/a7a57bf0-12d85bb3-7df12-d862-848a98f8135f601b.html

OEMC Assignments For CPD Units

About UCR codes, from the City's data portal:
"Illinois Uniform Crime Reporting (IUCR) codes are four digit codes that law enforcement agencies use to classify criminal incidents when taking individual reports. These codes are also used to aggregate types of cases for statistical purposes. In Illinois, the Illinois State Police establish IUCR codes, but the agencies can add codes to suit their individual needs. The Chicago Police Department currently uses more than 350 IUCR codes to classify criminal offenses, divided into "Index" and "Non-Index" offenses. Index offenses are the offenses that are collected nationwide by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports program to document crime trends over time (data released semi-annually), and include murder, criminal sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault & battery, burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. Non-index offenses are all other types of criminal incidents, including vandalism, weapons violations, public peace violations, etc."

Check this PDF for a full list of UCR codes (see "offense code"):
http://directives.chicagopolice.org/forms/CPD-63.451_Table.pdf. They can also be searched on
CrimeIsDown.com.

RD numbers are unique to crimes and generated in order of occurrence. Each RD number hs a two letter
prefix specifying the year it was generated. For RD numbers generated in 2016, HZ (Henry Zebra) is the prefix,
followed by six numbers - for example, HZ249108. (2015) was HY. (2014): HX. 2017 brought us the JA (John
Adam) prefix.

Event Numbers are assigned to *everything*! "Squad, gimme an event number for a robbery mission", "Squad
gimme an event number for a personal", "Hey squad, I need you to shoot me an event number for a Homeland
Security check of the Blue Line at Clark & Lake"......you'll also hear OEMC tell units pulling an RD# to also
assign an event number to the report. Event numbers are tracking numbers that pin every officer's or
detective's activity to every job they perform throughout their watch. Event numbers look like this:
016017XXXXX, but you'll only hear the last five digits given. The first three numbers indicate the year, followed
by the Day, Month, and then the five numbers you hear on the air.

PMIS Oecec 602 Report

Date

From Date		From Time	
To Date		To Time	
Time Usage		Use Period	
Watch		075959	
Scheduler Label		Report	

Include Geo

Service Location	
Address of Occurence	

Standard Location Search Report Summary

Entry Date	Event Number	Event Type	Disposition	Loc. Of Srvc.	Addr. Of Occ	Unit
	1712101615	DEATHR				132R
	1712104336	ETECH2				5834
	1712106190	CHECWB	19A			172
	1712106283	INFOPO				
	1712106480	DIST				
	1712114154	NPS	FILE			
	1712116536	DISTMU	5P			172R
Total		7				

Above is a Chicago OEMC assignment ticket. This is what dispatchers refer to on the air when they say "have
a ticket", or "getting multiple tickets" on any given 911 call. This is given as a good illustration of what you're
hearing when you're listening.

Here's how you read these tickets: From Date / From Time: this is the time the unit started the job, and the To
Date / To Time is the end time when the unit ended the job. This measures how long the unit spent working
that given assignment. Scheduler label is the OEMC Radio Console Assignment (Radio Dispatcher ID). This is
what police and dispatchers use when they address PDT messages to each other. The service location and

address of occurrence are listed because the two addresses can be different. It's very common for a police unit to be given a job, and find out the actual address of the job is different from what was originally assigned.

The "entry date" is the date the event number and job were assigned, which sometimes are not the same.This particular ticket starts with an event number for a death that occurred and was assigned to Beat 132R (overnight unit), 5834 was the Evidence Tech assigned, and the E-Tech was assigned his own event number for this assignment, 172 was assigned a "check the well-being" and 172R (1st district wagons) was assigned their own job, each being given their own event numbers as well.

The "disposition" slot on the ticket is where we see the "code" assigned to the job by the responding unit. On this ticket, beat 172 gave this job a 19A = Miscellaneous Incident, Not Bonafide. Was this job *really* a misc incident that wasn't bonafide? Yes! Ahh, but the event number assigned to the death has no final dispo code. For this job in particular, the job was never coded out because there is no CPD code for this sort of incident. The death was assigned a UCR of 5085 in this instance, an RD# was issued, notification made to CW2 for removal, the deceased was transported to the Cook County Morgue, and assigned an M.E. Record Number. This is why we *always* say "trust, but verify" and *never* make assumptions.

Technical Terms and Hashtags

In no particular order at the moment…

Term	Meaning
10-4	10-4 means the car responding is identified is a two-person car.
10-99 (or 99)	10-99 means the car responding is a single person car, and this response is sometimes shortened to "99."
10-1	Code for an officer, firefighter or paramedic in distress. Officers are to disregard jobs they are on, for the most part, and respond. Dispatcher "holds the air" and keeps all other jobs from getting assigned until the unit in distress is accounted for.
HBT	Hostage-Barricade-Terrorist - an incident which requires a SWAT response. HBT incidents are usually handled on Citywide 6, if not on the zone the incident started on.
SWAT	SWAT stands for Special Weapons and Tactics - this is a unit in the Chicago Police Department (and many other departments) which use specialized or military equipment and tactics. SWAT responds to hostage/barricade/terrorist incidents, and/or suicide intervention, as well as initiates service of high risk warrants. It may also be called to break up protests in which the protesters are chained together.
SORT, SORT car	Special Operations Response Team, usually includes personnel from the SWAT team
VRI	Violence Reduction Initiative
CIT	Mental Health Crisis Intervention Team Officer
HSFP	Heard shots, felt pain

Beat	The area a police officer is assigned to patrol, an area within a police district.
Watch	"A police shift. The police workday is divided into three watches. The first watch begins at 11 pm or midnight; the second, at 7 or 8 am; and the third, at 3 or 4 pm." - CPD website
PDT/Box	Portable Data Terminal (PDT), the computer seen in police cars.
CAD	Computed Aided Dispatch. Police Computer Aided Dispatch (PCAD) is the police component of the CAD system.
19-Paul	The generic code which means a job was handled. Also see list of codes below. A poem taught in the Police Academy: "There ain't no call, too big or small, that can be dispo'd (disposed), Squad 19-Paul"
Bonafide	Genuine or real - something did actually occur.
Loud reports	Possible gunshots heard by a police officer (as opposed to shots fired, heard by citizens)
Ticket	A ticket used to be cards call takers/dispatchers would write down jobs on at OEMC. Now this is all computerized, but dispatchers still use the term.
####-Robert unit	Beat cars working the first watch, also called "midnight cars".
####-Adam unit	An auxiliary beat car - for example, 1913A is an auxiliary unit to beat 1913 which is a dedicated beat car in the 019th District.
####-X-ray unit	An "X-Ray Car" means that the Beat has gone over their designated relief time for various reasons. The dispatcher makes them an "X-Ray Car" so he/she can keep that car logged into the dispatch system in the event they still need to use their PDT (Police Data Terminal). The oncoming Beat would take over their beat number minus the X. For example, 1913X (X-Ray), went over their end of tour, so the dispatcher kept them in the CAD system so the oncoming 1913 can log in.
##6#-A thru E	As far as tact teams go 1968 A,B,C,D,E,would designate the specific team(Usually determined by day off groups)
Dicks	Short for detectives. Usually used in the phrase "call the dicks"
TRR	Tactical Response Report http://directives.chicagopolice.org/forms/CPD-11.377.pdf
Crime Lab	The CPD's Mobile Crime Lab, which is used to process homicide scenes and incidents where an officer's weapon was discharged.
OEMC	Chicago's Office of Emergency Management and Communications, the 911 and dispatch center for the city. #ShitOEMCSays is something a dispatcher said.
UCR	A four digit codes that law enforcement agencies use to classify criminal incidents when taking individual reports.
Generic UCR (5000)	Usually pulled when a notification (for ET, detectives, etc.) must be made from the

	zone in a timely fashion but unsure of final UCR code. Will be changed when things get sorted out.
Event Number	A numeric designation the dispatch system assigns each event.
Body Snatchers	Allied Removal Services, the company which removes deceased individuals to the Medical Examiner's office (or other places).
ISPERN	The Illinois State Police Emergency Radio Network, a statewide frequency used for agency interoperability during pursuits or to give flashes on major crimes. Frequency of 155.475MHz.

Sources:

http://home.chicagopolice.org/home/frequently-asked-questions/
http://forums.radioreference.com/chicago-metro-area-discussion/202625-cpd-radio-term-question.html

Radio Channels

Busy/important zones and citywides will be noted in **bold**. You can find the streams for these channels on the Cook County Broadcastify page, or on CrimeIsDown.com (click "Listen Online"). CrimeIsDown.com also will show you what zone to listen to from a given address.

- Zones (abbreviated as Z# e.g. Z6 for Zone 6)
    - Zone 1 - 16th and 17th districts
    - Zone 2 - 19th district
    - Zone 3 - 12th and 14th districts
    - **Zone 4*** - 1st and 18th districts (* - during protests, other major events)
    - Zone 5 - 2nd district
    - **Zone 6** - 7th and 8th districts
    - Zone 7 - 3rd district
    - **Zone 8** - 4th and 6th districts
    - **Zone 9** - 5th and 22nd districts
    - **Zone 10** - 10th and 11th districts
    - Zone 11 - 20th and 24th districts
    - **Zone 12** - 15th and 25th districts
    - Zone 13 - 9th district
- Citywides (abbreviated as CW# e.g. CW1 for Citywide 1)
    - **Citywide 1** - major accidents, K9, SWAT, marine unit, gangs, traffic, mass transit unit, and police helicopter requests
    - **Citywide 2** - evidence technician, crime lab, and body removal requests (tune to this after a shooting)
    - Citywide 3 - gets road service (car repair) requests and formal "flash" messages and I almost always lock this out
    - Citywide 4 - name checks
    - Citywide 5 - used by mass transit units operating in the subway, and so can be listened to both above and below ground
    - **Citywide 6** - for major events - marathon, parades, etc, or HBT incidents

- ○ Citywide 7 - used by the Traffic Management Authority for handling traffic control at major events
- ○ **Citywide 8** - a short-range "car to car" channel that cannot be listened to by a dispatcher, you're lucky if you pick up traffic on it.
- ○ **Chicago 1 / "Chi 1"** - short-range 800MHz FM tactical channel (853.2125MHz) - sometimes used at special events or for security details of VIPs
- ○ NOTE: Both Citywide 5 and 6 are backup frequencies for the zones, used when there is radio trouble or maintenance on the zone.

Additionally, the Chicago Police Department has nine future frequencies currently licensed by the FCC. At this time, there is no word as to when or if they plan to implement these nine frequencies. **View a list of all the channels and the corresponding frequency for scanner programming on RadioReference.com.**

Radio Traffic

Police Dispatchers and the officers they communicate with, dispatchers acting as their very lifeline, need to know who is at the other end of that microphone at all times. Because of the security and safety - sensitive need to authenticate each other, there is a policy in place at the Chicago Police Department and at the Chicago Office of Emergency Management & Communications stating that each CPD officer MUST identify themselves upon keying up their mic and at the end of every transmission. Likewise, dispatchers must identify their zone or citywide console at times determined in FCC regulations, and by OEMC policies.

On the dispatch side, you're likely to hear "This is KSJ1745, Chicago Police Zone Four Point to Point Radio, console time is 1430 Hours, and the zone is clear"

To learn more about CPD's radio communications protocol and policies, view this directive:
http://directives.chicagopolice.org/directives/data/a7a57be2-128ff3f0-ae912-8ff7-442a6e5fde43e2df.html

The primary job of CPD OEMC Dispatchers is to assign police units to calls received at the 911 center, track each responding unit for progress on each call, make any needed notifications to other city departments or officials, and close each assigned job out by obtaining a final disposition code from the responding unit.

Assigning Jobs

Dispatch: "187F"
Unit: "187F, go squad"
Dispatcher: "187F, I've got a disturbance with the homeless person at Macy's 111 N. State St. in the food court. Caller didn't give a description"
Unit: "187F, 1099 squad. I'm on the way, I'm coming from Randolph & Clark"
Dispatcher: "Ok, lemme know what ya got when you get there"

Translated:
Dispatcher: "187 Foot, I just got a job handed to me by a calltaker. The call information says a homeless person is causing a disturbance at 111 N. State St in the food court and the caller didn't give us any physical description"

Officer: "Ok, I'm the foot unit you're assigning and I understand I'm to go to 111 N. State St in the food court to handle an alleged disturbance with a homeless person and we have no description. I'm a single unit with no partner, and I understand you want me to contact you to let you know if I need help once I lay eyes on this situation"

OR:

Officer: "I'm 187 Frank (a foot unit) and I'm with a partner (I'm a 10-4 unit) and we understand we're to go to 111 N. State St in the food court to handle an alleged disturbance with a homeless person and we have no description. we understand you want us to contact you to let you know if I need help once we lay eyes on this situation"

Handling Jobs

Dispatcher: "1632, domestic on the beat, between Harlem and Nagle on the north side of the street on Addison. Two people screaming and yelling at each other, throwing objects at each other as well, alcohol involved, neighbors calling it in."
Responding Unit: "1632, 10-4 squad, we're en route."
Dispatcher: "1631, can you take a ride with 32 on their domestic?"
Responding Unit: "1631, 10-4."

These units arrive on-scene, and no one is there. They take a ride around the area to see if the involved parties may have moved this domestic to another nearby location. The dispatcher says they need a code for the assigned job. The units give a 19B (no one found). In cases of complaints, and petty violations of city ordinance / state law, etc. that turn out to be unfounded - because the alleged offenders have moved, the situation resolves by the time the officers get there and no violation is found - they're told by dispatchers to "code the job out" Please see the "Technical terms and hashtags" section for the full list of CPD disposition codes.

Unit calling in: "1632."
Dispatcher: "1332, go."
"Officer: "1632, squad, we're on Addison between Harlem & Nagle, and saw nothing. We're touring the area, hold us down here looking around for a bit."
Dispatcher: "10-4."

(A few minutes later).

Responding Unit: "1632"
Dispatcher: "1632, go."
Responding Unit: "Squad, we find nothing. Give this a 19-Boy." (19 means miscellaneous disturbance, boy means person not found - to understand what the codes mean, refer to the "Technical Terms and Hashtags" list. 19-B and 19-P are the most common disposition codes.

Dealing with Violent Crime

The zone is active with all the usual traffic when suddenly…."Units in 25, and units on citywide, we got a call of shots fired, shots fired at Division & Springfield, several shots heard, we're getting multiple tickets" "2532, can you ride on this?" "2530 and 2534 can you also ride on this?" Several other units in 025 also call in to say they're going on this as well. The units arrive at Division & Springfield to find a victim shot multiple times. They come over the air and tell the zone dispatcher it's "bonafide" and they tell the zone to roll an ambulance. 2563D also on-scene reads out a "flash" message with suspect information. Every bit of this is done in plain English.

Then:
Dispatcher: " Who's the paper car for this? I need the UCR on this so we can pull an RD and start making our notifications, are you going with 0110 or is it still an 041A?" (Zero-one-one-zero or oh-four-one-adam).

Responding Unit: "2532, Squad, make this an RD for a 041A. But it may change, he's not looking too good"

Dispatcher: "10-4, Henry X-Ray 666666, again, HX-and all sixes for the ucr of zero-four-one-a-adam. Let me know any updates on the victim's status changes. Who's riding with the ambulance and what's the ambulance number?"

Translation:

Dispatcher: "I need you to give me the uniform crime reporting code that you're assigning to the person shot. We need to create an internal "records division" number. We also have to start making notifications required by general order. Will you be using 0110 (homicide - first degree murder) or 041A (aggravated battery with a handgun)? I'm asking because some piece of information relayed to me - either from the call taker who spoke with a 911 caller or by an officer at the scene -was that the victim was in grave condition, but if still alive, it's 041A."

Responding Unit: "2532, he's still alive and we want a records division number for an aggravated battery with a handgun."

Dispatcher: "OK. The number is HX-942999 for the agg batt. Make sure you get back to me if the victim dies so we can change the UCR to 0110"

Other Things to Listen For

A "10-1" is code for an officer, firefighter or paramedic in distress. Officers are to disregard jobs they are on, for the most part, and respond. Dispatcher "holds the air" and keeps all other jobs from getting assigned until the unit in distress is accounted for.
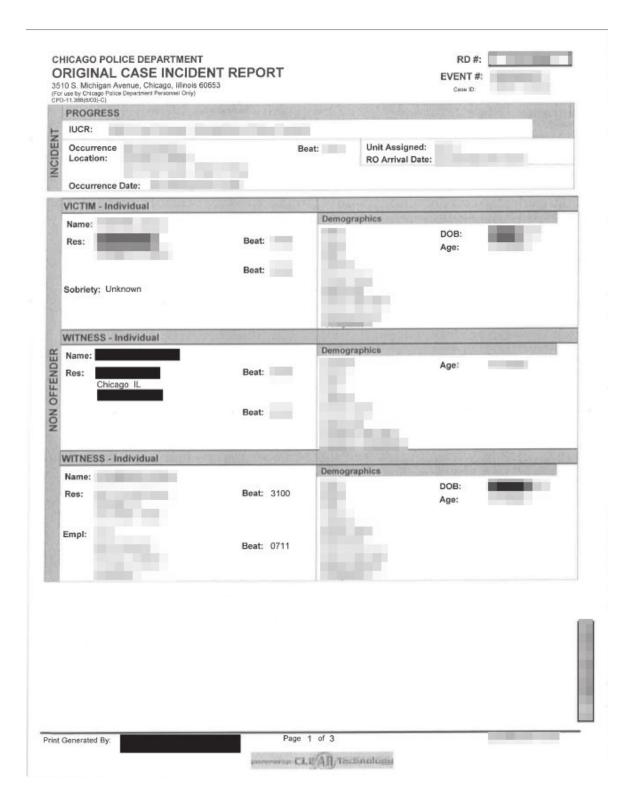
After a shooting / other violent crime / burglary / death not attended by a physician (suicide, sudden death, sudden illness resulting in death, accident involving death, or homicide: citywide 2 gets the evidence technician (ET), crime lab and body removal requests. ET / Crime Lab arrival is usually as soon as possible after a shooting. They try to be there between 10 to 30 minutes after. Body removal could occur any time. The scene belongs to the police, the body and all belongings belong to the medical examiner. Once body removal is called for, they have 75 minutes to arrive on-scene. This conversation happens like this:

In the case of body removal: Dispatcher will ask for the officer's unit number, name, star #, RD# and UCR code from original report, Detective's Name and Star #, Detective's Area Assignment and Detective Beat

Assignment, then followed by the Medical Examiner star # and name. The dispatcher asks follow-up questions now: "What's the address for removal?", "What condition is the body in?", "Natural death or some other circumstance?", and "How heavy is the body?"

For violent crimes and property crimes, the dispatcher will usually just get the address, officer's name and star #, RD# and UCR, victim name, victim contact information, and ask what needs to be done….(photographs, fingerprint dusting, DNA samples, gun shell recovery and / or scene processing, etc.)
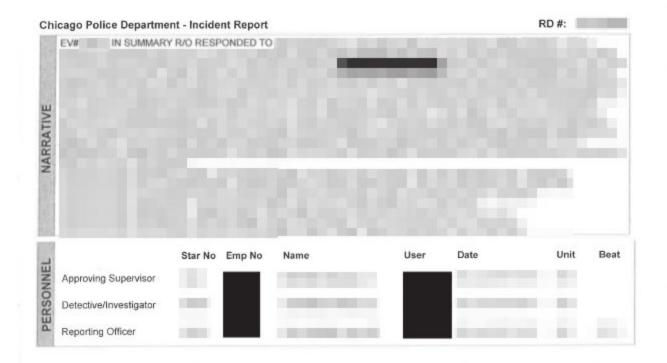
Chicago Police Department Incident Reporting - Behind The Scenes of What You Hear

CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT
ORIGINAL CASE INCIDENT REPORT
3510 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60653
(For use by Chicago Police Department Personnel Only)
CPD-11.388(5/03)-C)

RD #: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
EVENT #: ▮▮▮▮▮▮
Case ID: ▮▮▮▮▮

PROGRESS

INCIDENT

IUCR: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Occurrence Location: ▮▮▮▮▮▮	Beat: ▮▮▮	Unit Assigned: ▮▮▮▮
		RO Arrival Date: ▮▮▮▮▮▮

Occurrence Date: ▮▮▮▮▮

NON OFFENDER

VICTIM - Individual

Name: ▮▮▮▮	Demographics	
Res: ▮▮▮▮	Beat: ▮▮▮	DOB: ▮▮▮
		Age:
	Beat: ▮▮▮	
Sobriety: Unknown		

WITNESS - Individual

Name: ▮▮▮▮	Demographics	
Res: ▮▮▮▮	Beat: ▮▮▮	Age: ▮▮▮
Chicago IL ▮▮▮▮		
	Beat: ▮▮▮	

WITNESS - Individual

Name: ▮▮▮▮	Demographics	
Res: ▮▮▮▮	Beat: 3100	DOB: ▮▮▮
		Age:
Empl: ▮▮▮▮		
	Beat: 0711	

Print Generated By: ▮▮▮▮	Page 1 of 3	▮▮▮▮

powered by CLEAR Technology

Chicago Police Department - Incident Report   RD #: ▒▒▒▒▒

INJURIES

Injury Info (▒▒▒▒▒▒▒ **- Victim)**

CPD First Aid Given?	▒▒	Injury Extent: ▒▒	Pronounced Date: ▒▒▒▒▒
CFD First Aid Given?	▒▒		Removed By: ▒▒
			Removed Date: ▒▒▒▒
Responding Unit:	▒▒▒▒		Authorized By: ▒▒▒▒

Type	Weapon Used	Other Weapon Used
▒▒	▒▒	▒▒▒▒▒

Injury Info (▒▒▒▒▒▒▒ **- Witness)**

Responding Unit:

Injury Info ▒▒▒▒▒▒▒

Responding Unit:

DOMESTIC INFO

OTHER

Miscellaneous

Victim Information Provided   Flash Message Sent ? No

NOTIFICATIONS

Request Type			Date		
On Scene			▒▒▒▒		

Request Type	Unit	Agency Name	Date	Star #	Name
Notification	620	Detective Area - South	▒▒▒▒	▒▒▒	▒▒▒▒

Request Type	Unit	Agency Name	Date	Star #	Name
Notification	116	Deployment Operations Center	▒▒▒	▒▒▒	▒▒▒▒

Request Type	Date	Star #	Name
Notification	▒▒▒	▒	▒▒▒▒

Request Type	Date		
Notification	▒▒▒▒		

Request Type	Date	Star #	Name
Notification	▒▒▒	▒▒	▒▒▒

Request Type	Date		Name
Notification	▒▒▒		▒▒▒

On this page, the "paper car" or R/O (reporting officer) will list the name of the injured victim if there are injuries, first-aid information, who the CFD responding ambulance was by ambulance number, extent of injuries (minor, critical, or fatal) and if the victim died….the date victim was pronounced, who removed the body, when the body was removed, who authorized the removal, and information about the weapon. Next will be injury information about the witnesses if any, demographic information about the victim, offender, and witnesses (Domestic Information), any other information needed, then information about notifications made by the R/O.

Chicago Police Department - Incident Report

RD #:

	Star No	Emp No	Name	User	Date	Unit	Beat
Approving Supervisor							
Detective/Investigator							
Reporting Officer							

The summary on these CPD reports starts with "Event# XXXXX, in summary R/O responded to (insert address and facts here, and go from there). The last section for CPD personnel is simple.

Chapter 3: Chicago Fire Department Lingo

The Chicago Fire Department responds to all fire and medical emergencies in the City of Chicago. The most common responses are for auto collisions, carbon monoxide, house and apartment fires, allergic reactions, shooting scenes, murders / homicides, suicides, dead persons, drug overdoses, drunk persons, persons down, bike collisions, heart attacks, strokes, asthma / respiratory emergencies, and psychiatric emergencies.

The Chicago Fire Department currently has 75 Advanced Life Support ambulances (since 2014 - previously 15 of those were BLS). It is well-known in the City of Chicago that you'll know when a CFD ambulance is transporting a deceased person….a trip with lights and sirens that end up getting shut off before the ambulance arrives close to the hospital usually indicates that the transport is no longer an emergency.

Just like the Chicago Police Department, CFD documents all their responses with an incident report number and an event number. CFD incident report numbers do not look like, or function like CPD report numbers. They look like this: XX (last two digits of the year) - XXX(3 digit run number)-XXXX(4 digit event number)-00.

The Chicago Fire Department two-way radio communications system is a P25 digital non-trunked system (Digital conventional = one user per frequency). Chicago is divided into 2 dispatch areas: Main (North) and Englewood (South). The south branch of the Chicago River / Sanitary Ship Canal (which runs just north of I-55/Stevenson Exp.) is the dividing line. North of the Canal – MAIN, south of the Canal - Englewood.

Find the [frequency and digital/analog mode information from RadioReference.](#)

Accident Types
Sometimes on the radio you may hear a CFD unit saying they are involved in a "1B Accident" and asks for a chief to respond. The number refers to an accident class, and the suffix denotes if there are injuries or not.

- Classes
    - Class 1 - One other vehicle
    - Class 2 - Two other vehicles
    - Class 3 - Pedestrian
    - Class 4 - Fixed object
    - Class 5 - Unreported damage
- Suffix (e.g. Class 1B)
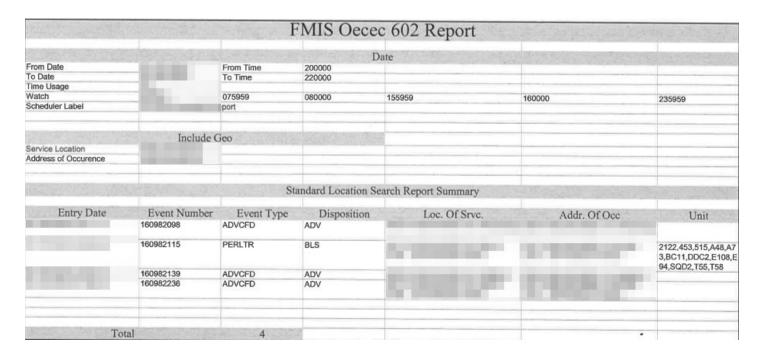   - A - Injuries
    - B - No injuries

Other Definitions
Emergency Change - Lights & Sirens
Administrative Change - No Lights or Sirens

More definitions can be found at https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cfd/supp_info/cfd_definitions.html

OEMC Assignments For CFD Units

The Chicago Office of Emergency Management and Communications (OEMC) doesn't just dispatch Police, they also dispatch Fire and EMS jobs. The Fire & EMS Dispatchers are in a separate section of the 911 call center than CPD. Just LIKE CPD, they also have a ticket they read from when assigning jobs to Fire & EMS units.

FMIS Oecec 602 Report

		Date				
From Date	From Time	200000				
To Date	To Time	220000				
Time Usage						
Watch	075959	080000	155959	160000		235959
Scheduler Label	port					

	Include Geo			
Service Location				
Address of Occurence				

Standard Location Search Report Summary

Entry Date	Event Number	Event Type	Disposition	Loc. Of Srvc.	Addr. Of Occ	Unit
	160982098	ADVCFD	ADV			
	160982115	PERLTR	BLS			2122,453,515,A48,A73,BC11,DDC2,E108,E94,SQD2,T55,T58
	160982139	ADVCFD	ADV			
	160982236	ADVCFD	ADV			
Total		4			•	

These tickets are read the same as CPD tickets, with one exception. The event type and disposition are different. ADVCFD is Advanced Life Support, and a disposition of ADV means advanced transport to level 1 trauma center. Just as with CPD, CFD is also issued event numbers, only CFD's event numbers are only four digits long on their incident reports, and are part of the incident report number. The event numbers for CFD on this ticket, are the LAST four digits seen in the listed event number.

Chapter 4: Other Department/Agency Lingo

This chapter is a work in progress. Contributions detailing the operation of the following organizations are appreciated:

- Illinois State Police
- IDOT
- Chicago Transit Authority
- MABAS

Chapter 5: Ethically Reporting the Scanner

As anyone with a scanner knows, what is heard on the air may be confidential or sensitive, either to victims, police/fire, or the general public. Thus, ethics is very important when listening to scanner traffic. Here at CrimeIsDown.com, we have developed our own code of ethics around listening to and reporting information heard on the scanner.

This code of ethics is inspired by Howard Owens's ["The Batavian's basic rules for scanner reporting"](#) and the [Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics](#) which applies to any kind of reporting. This code is meant to be an extension of that code of ethics, specifically targeted at the nuances of sharing what we hear on the police scanner. Note that this is merely a guide, not a set of rules which must be followed every single time. Take this code in full and know that CrimeIsDown.com encourages anyone tweeting out what they hear on the scanner to do so ethically by following this code.

Code of Ethics

Report the truth

Scanner reporting is often controversial and can be quite inaccurate at times. We seek to provide truth and clarity on situations, not muddy them further. There are some basic guides one can follow to help do this:

- Keep in mind this is preliminary information and is an incomplete picture of what is actually happening.
- Do provide in-progress and accurate information about newsworthy emergency situations.
- Don't take anything heard on the scanner as official information.
- Feel free to talk with or alert your followers, ensuring they are aware what is being reported comes from a scanner, thus is not to be taken as official or fact.
- Let the police inform the public about how to react to a dangerous situation. If giving personal advice, ensure it is distanced from any official response by the authorities.

Minimize harm

What gets broadcast on the scanner is often sensitive and sometimes even confidential in nature, thus listeners must exercise good judgement when reporting on what they hear. What should one consider if they are going to have good judgement?

- Basic dispatch information is generally safe.
- Don't broadcast exact police movements/locations in a sensitive situation.
- Don't encourage people to flock to the scene.
- Be sensitive to potential victims. Do not report a possible crime in a way that might identify an individual unless a description is necessary to help identify a fleeing suspect. This means *never* giving out:
    - Victim or caller names
    - Phone numbers
    - Driver's License or State ID information
    - Social Security numbers
    - Other identifying information
- Don't give specific medical conditions of patients. Defer to using the good/fair/serious/critical spectrum, knowing that "stable" is not a condition but rather a lack of changing condition.

Be accountable

As a reporter of breaking news, information can come from multiple sources and can be frequently changing. Ethical scanner reporters must take responsibility for their work and ensure it is as ethically sound as possible. Major news media corporations are watching us. City, County, State, and Federal authorities / officials are watching us. A lack of integrity or accountability can lead to lawmakers attempting to create overly restrictive laws & regulations, and will mean the major media will not take us seriously. This would also result in the reporting of breaking news becoming extremely difficult to perform.

- Avoid making assumptions whenever possible.
- Always credit your sources.
- It's good to be fast; it's also good to wait.
- Draw conclusions about crimes, criminals, and situations at your own risk. If you *must* give a personal opinion, you should clearly indicate that the remark made is your personal opinion. The moment you do this, you should consider your credibility and whether or not you want to act as a Journalist / Reporter in the situation, or act as a person merely making their own personal commentary.
- "Acknowledge mistakes and correct them promptly and prominently. Explain corrections and clarifications carefully and clearly."

Twitter Community

Once you have a good scanner setup and you're listening, why not share what you hear with the world? There's a large scanner community on Twitter, providing breaking news to journalists and others. Some #ChicagoScanner and #CrimeisDown participants are local journalists / reporters who work for major companies and are well-known, and others are independent. Independent reporters / journalists work for themselves and may even have their own media operations going on. Check out the hashtag #ChicagoScanner and join in. Definitely follow @Chicago_Scanner and @SPOTNEWSonIG for great scanner tweets. Use our scanner tools to include more information in your tweets. Those participating for more than hobby purposes should be prepared to seek out better, more credible resources ahead of time as a matter of being pro-active, and remember to check that those alternate sources are functioning regularly. #ChicagoScanner and #CrimeisDown participants sometimes stop tweeting and participating without notice. Some users block people without reason, and some protect their accounts without warning.

Please note: Use the #ChicagoScanner and #CrimeisDown hashtags only for newsworthy incident reporting. Refrain from using it for routine calls such as drinking on the public way, parking offenses, traffic offenses, petty quality of life offenses, petty business offenses, city ordinance violations and petty misdemeanor crimes in general.

Monitoring Citywide 2
ET Requests / Death Investigations / Homicides / Suspected Suicides

You may hear CPD and CFD respond to natural deaths where the decedent was discovered by a friend, neighbor, or relative. You'll hear them respond to Homicides, Suicides, and other incidents that require either a body removal, an evidence tech, a crime lab, or *all* of these services. Those requests are made on Citywide 2. There are special legal and moral considerations to make when monitoring and reporting traffic on this citywide. Sensitivity to the safety and protection of victims is first at all times!

- NEVER give ANY information about the victim beyond the known sex of the victim, victim's age, injury type, and where the person is injured (I.E.: Knee injury, shot in the arm, stabbed in the chest, etc) If a victim wants to go public with more detail about their situation, they will do that on their own!
- Give only the RD#, Event #, Service Requested, Beat #, Police Unit # if given or if listed in this guide, in the Chicago Police Directives System, in CARMA docs, or in the CrimeIsDown database. Give the address as the first two numbers followed by xx or xxx so as to obscure the address. Police Officer / Detective Star # and name is public record and may be given.
- If a service is being asked for at a hospital for a Domestic Violence victim or Sex Crime victim, NEVER give the hospital name or address! Example: "1162C requesting an E.T. for a 25 year old male or female (choose one) sex crime victim (sexual assault / sex abuse). Need photos of victim and retrieval of rape kit". Note no address or hospital name is given, no victim name or any other identifiers given. Adhere to this for DV victims as well.
- For burglary victims, the only rule is DO NOT identify them or give out their contact information, and when giving the address, make sure to obscure the last digits.

Calls you'll inevitably hear if you monitor even sporadically will be: "body removal - natural", "body removal - 0110", and "body removal - 5085". Suicides, no matter the method used, are assigned the UCR code 5085. The vast majority of train vs. pedestrian calls in Chicago will be UCR 5085. In the event the police aren't sure that it's a suicide, they'll assign the UCR code for a Death Investigation, 5078. In any other non-criminal and non-traffic - related death, UCR 5084. During the spring and summer, you'll hear 5084 being used a little more than usual because of accidental drownings that occur on the lakefront, at our beaches, and as a result of boating incidents where an accidental drowning may occur.

- NEVER assign a manner or cause of death unless the M.E. has made it public or you've spoken with the M.E. Spox!
- NEVER give the identity of the victim! Police and the M.E. will make that public after the family has been notified.
- M.E. Names and M.E. Star / Shield numbers are public record, you may give those publicly
- Police Officer / Detective Names and Star Numbers are public record, you may give those publicly
- Information about condition of the body may be given. This is public record. Please remain professional.
- M.E. Record Numbers are public record. You may give those out if context and need dictate it to be material to your report
- The citywide 2 dispatcher asks the police for specific information during the body removal request. Most of that is public information. The portions that are not public information relate to victim identity, phone numbers, email addresses, social media identifiers, URL's, social security numbers, etc.
- Sometimes OEMC sends out a call of a natural death that was expected and attended by a licensed physician. Police generally will either code it out, or they'll respond, make contact with the family, and explain that natural death is not an emergency and law enforcement can only make a non-criminal report and depart the scene.
- Sometimes, very rarely, a celebrity death occurs where CPD responds and must request Detectives, Crime Lab, ET's, and Body Removal. All above protocol applies. DO NOT deviate. Remember, family / next of kin needs to be notified. The M.E. will release the identity of the deceased.
- You may be monitoring CW2 or a zone and find out someone you personally knew has died. This may be traumatic for you. This scenario HAS played out in the past for some people. We highly recommend immediate disengagement from #ChicagoScanner and #CrimeisDown activity so you can deal with your loss. We will be here when you return. Please accept our condolences, and know that we wish you all the best!

Information That May Interfere With Public Safety Operations or Active Investigations

You will hear offender names, and personal information about offenders given on the air. This is true especially when it applies to someone who is wanted in a serious incident, or in an offense that may lead to more serious things. Police will often give a flash message in these cases. You may give out that flash, but there are times when you want to think twice about which part of the flash information may result in the offender finding out they're wanted and then going on the run, or someone who wants to protect the offender acting to aid and abet the offender as a fugitive. The best practice is only to give out the physical description and direction of flight, vehicle or bike / motocycle description and license plate info. NEVER give out information about where the license plate is registered or who it's registered to until such time as the offender has been arrested and formally charged, or arraigned.

#ChicagoScanner and #CrimeisDown "On-View" Reportage

Chicago is an active city, so, you will eventually see a breaking news event. This may be a crime, a fire, an auto-collision, a suicide, a severe weather event, a lakefront / riverfront / other water related incident, large protest, a CTA Rail / Metra / Amtrak collision with a vehicle or a person, or worst-case scenario…..an act of terrorism. YES!! We WANT to know about it! The public wants to know! However, we ask that you protect yourself first! Provide for your own safety and well-being before you do anything!

IN ANY situation involving police and / or fire response, DO NOT IMPEDE THEM! You should definitely find a place to photograph or film that allows you to get good footage without getting in their way. Impeding an emergency response or police activity is a crime. Journalists, Reporters, and members of the general public should never place themselves in legal jeopardy to obtain footage. If police or fire direct you to move farther away, then you need to do that. If you're directed to a media staging area, go there. If you're told the area is not safe for you to be in, follow all directions without hesitation to get out. Unless you're in a position to know something police, fire, or emergency management don't know, you should never second - guess them!

Who is a Reporter and Who is a Journalist?

From time to time, someone may challenge the legitimacy of "scanner reporting". Along with this, the challenge often arises as to who a reporter or a journalist is. "What college / university did you attend?", "Where's your media credentials?", "Who do you work for?". There's also the common refrain…"oh, you're just a blogger" or "your just some person on twitter, you're not a legitimate reporter / journalist!", and "you need permission from the police department or FCC / homeland Security to do what you're doing!"

Some may even threaten to "report" you to the "authorities". There are many legal organizations that protect your rights. They are The Electronic Frontier Foundation, The ACLU, The First Amendment Coalition, American Library Association, Society of Professional Journalists, Reporter's Committee For Freedom of The Press, First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, and The Freedom Forum.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution found in the Bill of Rights has been interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court to mean the following:

- The 1st Amendment does not confer a burden on any speaker to first attend any college or university before they can engage in free speech and free expression
- The 1st Amendment does not mandate or confer a burden on any speaker to work for a major corporation specializing in the creation of content or distribution of that content before they can engage in freedom of speech and freedom of expression
- The 1st Amendment does not mandate or burden any speaker with first obtaining any credential or license before they can engage in freedom of speech or freedom of expression
- The method and / or medium of publishing information to the public does not matter, and this means platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Periscope, Wordpress, Blogger, LiveJournal, and other platforms are valid.

Refer to [EFF's Legal Guide for Bloggers on Reporter's / Journalist's Privilege](#) for additional information on the subject.

Chapter 6: Reporting Sensitive Calls & Calls With Special Circumstances

Calls and Reports Involving Racial, Religious, Ethnic, Sexual, and Gender Spectrum Minorities

#ChicagoScanner and #CrimeIsDown WILL NOT tolerate racism, xenophobia, dismissal of / persecution of religious beliefs, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, or any provocation of hate / behavior that is less than inclusive. You will eventually hear calls involving people from these social groups. City, County, State, and Federal Dispatchers aren't allowed to discriminate or make jokes, quips, backhanded remarks, etc. WE don't practice it either!

Calls involving mentions of race and / or ethnicity should be reported as simply and professionally as possible. "The black male was seen hitting the Mexican female on S. Parnell" will do. At times, dispatchers will ask for a spanish speaker, a polish speaker, a Ukrainian speaker, etc. If it's relevant to your report, and you must include it, simply say "OEMC is looking for an officer that speaks (insert language)"

In the 14th, 18th, 19th, and specific other areas of the city, you'll hear "The store is calling in a suspicious person, they say it's a man dressed as a woman / woman dressed as a man". This should be sent out as "The business is calling in the transgender person who they think is suspicious" personal remarks need not apply. You may hear calls involving same sex domestics, or other kinds of crimes / victimization done by or done to LGBTQIA persons. WE DO NOT use the terms "Fag", "Fag Hag", "Lesbo", "Carpet Licker", "Homo", "Tranny", "He-She", "She He", "it", "Transvestite". "CD wimp", "CD Tranny", "LGBT Predator", "LGBT Perv", or any other derogatory term, no matter how coded your language may be. For immediate clarification, being LGBTQIA is not recognized by any medical or legal authority as a threat, mental illness, or reason for concern.

"Two LGBT individuals fighting at Center on Halsted, no weapons observed, one white male and one hispanic male with no further description" is good enough.

See the [GLAAD 10th Edition Media Reference Guide](#) (PDF)

In the same vein, "Nigger", "Polack", "Wetback", "Spic", "Illegal", "spigger", "Sand Nigger", "Whop", "Kike", "Wihte Power", "White Pride", "Aryan", "Muzzie", "Muzzy", "Terrorist Muslim", "Arab POS", or any other racial epithet / racial or ethnic hate reference will not be tolerated.

"Getting a call on Devon and Clark involving an Indian restaurant owner who says he was stiffed on the bill when the patron ate and ran" is good enough.

"Disturbance at the Mosque in the 017th district on Elston near Lawrence with a protester and a Muslim family trying to gain entrance" is all that's needed.

Libel, Defamation of Character, Slander, Incitement of Violence, Fighting Words, or True Threats based on race, Religion, Ethnicity, National Origin, Sexuality, Gender Spectrum Identification / Gender Presentation, Body Type, Familial Status, Marital Status, Ability or Disability, Mental Status, Sex, Political Affiliation, Age,

Financial Class, Immigration Status, Nationality / National Origin, or other protected status will not be welcome or tolerated. There are legal and social consequences for these behaviors.

Emergency responders belong to all of these groups and more. Your prejudice may place them at grave risk of harm.

Calls & Reports Involving Juveniles - Runaways, Abuse / Neglect, Mental Illness, Other Juvenile Emergencies

In the State of Illinois, a juvenile is a person under the age of 18 or any person who has been determined by a licensed physician, or court of law, to be incompetent due to persistent severe, chronic, or total mental incapacitation and who does not have the ability and / or skill to function at an adult level.

The Chicago Police Department Special Victim's Unit investigates crimes and some non-criminal incidents done by, and done to:
- Children
- Elderly Persons
- The Mentally Ill and / or Developmentally Disabled regardless of their age

The appropriate Detectives may respond to and / or assist / coordinate with SVU Detectives depending on the facts and totality of circumstances of an incident. When reporting on these incidents, we NEVER give out the identity of a child, Elderly, mentally ill, or developmentally disabled person until 1. Amber Alert sends out an alert with that information 2. CPD News Affairs publicly releases the identity 3. The M.E. releases an identity when a death is involved

We DO NOT give out any addresses unless Amber Alert or CPD News Affairs releases such information. DCFS cases are almost never on-air, but the very first mention of DCFS should be an indicator that the case is about to take some very dramatic twists and turns, and you should follow closely without saying much until everything can be substantiated either by your own journalistic efforts or that of a credible party involved in the investigation, or by an official release. #ChicagoScanner and #CrimeisDown will rarely, if ever, take the blame for a DCFS case going wrong. DCFS needs no help making critical errors or mishandling their cases. That's their trademark.

The most common case involving a juvenile will be the runaway scenario. Some are habitual runaways, others are first timers. The next common scenarios involving juveniles will be the neighborhood disturbance, the big school fight, the classroom or hallway disturbance, shoplifting, and gang / mob activity. During the nicer weather, juveniles like to clique up in groups and randomly physically attack people in populated areas, commit strongarm robberies as a group, or victimize lone juveniles as a group.

See the CPD Directives for Juvenile Arrests, Interrogation, and Processing:

[Processing of Juveniles and Minors Under Department Control](#)
[Printable and Non-Printable Offense Procedures](#)
[Processing Juvenile Arrestees Charged as Adults](#)
[Arrestees Processed as Adults and Later Determined to be Adults](#)
[Juvenile Intervention and Support Center](#)

The next common call you'll hear is child abuse / neglect. This is a call that will automatically generate a response by DCFS after the police response. That response may happen right away, or it may happen within 24 hours. DCFS has been known to wait as long as half a year before assigning a response.
Juvenile responses are the most sensitive and difficult to report on because the juvenile offender is also likely to be a victim. For Juvenile reporting in the context of Juvenile victims, see the CPD Directives System:

[Abused, Neglected, Dependent, and Abandoned Children Coming Under Department Control](#)

ALL information and remarks released by DCFS should always, always, always, be triple checked and taken in an extremely critical light. DCFS has lost all credibility even in the eyes of Illinois Courts, and should never be the final word on anything involving a child, an elderly person, or a person with mental illness or developmental disability. The default sources of credibility should always be the Commander of Special Victim's Detectives, an area Detective Commander, and the Illinois Court Judge involved in the case.

As these cases move through the court system and resolve, the Office of The Guardian Ad Litem will be involved at each step. Their office is also not to be given any substantial credibility. DCFS Regional Counsel may make statements, and those statements should always be triple researched. These two offices are noted to be engaged in mostly political endeavours, and rarely are ever noted to make public statements based on fact.

See [Illinois DCFS Outcomes website](#) for IDCFS for policies involving the tracking, placement, treatment, and well-being of Illinois youth in care. Many of the applications available through this site employ the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment instrument.

See also, [DCFS Policies, Rules, and Forms](#)

[DCFS FOIA](#)

[Child Abuse and Neglect Investigation Records](#) (PDF)

School Shooting Responses

This modern day and age means we are hearing more about school shootings done either by students, or other persons. The Chicago Police Department sometimes receives calls of suspected active shooter situations or suspected shots fired at Chicago Public Schools.

CPS has a [Student Code of Conduct](#) and an active shooter policy.

[Plan and Prepare Illinois](#)

[Ready Illinois - Schools / Campus](#)

Appendix A: Additional Resources

This appendix is a work in progress.

[EFF Index of All Questions](#)
[City of Chicago FOIA Contact Information by Department](#)

Contacting Agency Spokespersons

Chicago Police Department
Anthony Guglielmi is the Spokesperson for the Chicago Police Department. You may contact him on Twitter @AJGuglielmi or anthony.guglielmi@gmail.com.

Chicago Fire Department
The Chicago Fire Department has an official twitter account which is operated by Larry Langford most times, and is sometimes handed off to other CFD media officials as needed. This account tweets out one-way alerts on major CFD responses and updates will be seen as determined by CFD Media Affairs.

Larry Langford may be reached for official press inquiries at lawrence.langford@cityofchicago.org.

Cook County Medical Examiner
Becky Schlickerman is the Spokesperson for the Cook County Medical Examiner, and by law, she may not answer tweets about case specific information via twitter. You can e-mail Becky about official press business at becky.schlikerman@cookcountyil.gov.

Mapping Tools

- [You are here. Chicagoland political boundaries](#)
- [Crime in Chicagoland by the Chicago Tribune](#)
- [Red X Buildings](#)
- [Chicago Cityscape](#)
- [Edifice - building maps](#)
- [Vacant and Abandoned Building Finder](#)

Scanner Recordings

You may need to right click and download the MP3 file if it does not play in your browser.

- [Cook County Illinois Live Audio Feeds](#)
- [Chicago Mass Shooting Cornell Square Park EMS Radio Traffic 9/19/13](#)
- [Chicago Police Zone 8 - 8:55pm Aug 24 - Clyp](#)
- [10-1 at 80th and Avalon - Aug, 26 2014 - Clyp](#)
- [7204 S Lowe - 10-1, officer shot & standoff](#)
- [Fatal pursuit, 4001 W Ogden](#)
- [Chicago Police Officer written up for lack of radio discipline](#)

- ["Santa Claus just set a car on fire"](#)
- [#BrownFriday protest - CW6 audio, 11:47am - 12:47pm](#)
- [#BrownFriday protest - CW6 audio, 12:07pm, CPD hints at possible Stingray use](#)([alternate mirror](#))

Journalism

- [HeyJackass.com - Chicago Murder, Crime & Mayhem Stats](#)
- [Chicago Under The Gun - Chicago Tribune](#)
- [Chicago Tribune Breaking News](#)
- [Chicago Sun-Times Crime News](#)
- [How Chicago Became 'Chiraq'](#)
- ["Deceptive numbers" - Crime statistics in Chicago](#)
- [The Truth About Chicago's Crime Rates](#)
- [Crime in Chicagoland - Data Journalism](#)
- ["Curb crime. Save Chicago."](#)
- ["A new Plan of Chicago: 12 ways to heal a city"](#)
- [GunCrisis.org Reporting Principles and Practices](#)
- [Batavian's basic rules for scanner reporting](#)
- [Set of Principles in Fair Use for Journalism](#)

Appendix B: Addendum

Corrections, clarifications, and notices of future updates shall go in this section.