



# POLICY & PROCEDURE

## ELKHART LAKE POLICE DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: **LAPTOP/MOBILE DATA COMPUTER USE**

NUMBER: 1.19  
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SCOPE: All Department Personnel  
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REFERENCE:

RESCINDS  
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INDEX AS: Laptop Computer  
Mobile Data Computer (MDC)  
Open Records (MDC)

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Policy & Procedure is to establish standard procedures and policies for the use of Elkhart Lake Police Department Laptop/Mobile Data Computers (“laptops”); to set forth rules governing their use; and to define the responsibilities of officers and supervisory personnel when using this equipment, as well as informing users of the impact of the Open Records Law regarding laptop communications.

This Policy & Procedure consists of the following numbered sections:

- I. POLICY
- II. PROCEDURE

### I. POLICY

- A. It is the policy of the Elkhart Lake Police Department to utilize radio and laptop communications in a professional and efficient manner. FCC and State rules ban unnecessary or superfluous communications. The Department member using a Department laptop shall be personally responsible for the proper and safe use of this equipment. The user of this equipment is capable of broadcasting open text messages to single units or to the Communications Center.

All messages shall be limited to duty related business. Under no circumstances shall a Department member using this equipment transmit messages that contain jokes, sexual comments or innuendoes of a provocative, suggestive or racist nature.

## II. PROCEDURES

### A. Laptop/MDC Use.

1. The Laptop/Mobile Data Computer shall be used to enhance and support radio communications. The laptop is not to be considered the primary source of communication between the Officer in the field and Dispatch personnel. Proper use of the laptop will reduce unnecessary radio traffic, provide the transfer of information in a secure method and allow the Officer, in the field, to better utilize available resources.
2. Laptops/mobile data computers, in addition to being a Windows compatible computer system, are fully functional radio transmitters and receivers operating in the 800 MHz radio range. As such, this equipment is subject to regulations of the State of Wisconsin as well as the Federal Communications System (FCC).

### B. Restriction on Use of Laptops/MDC.

1. Communications over Department laptops/mobile data computers (“laptops”) shall be limited exclusively to official Department business and shall be done in a professional manner. Indecent or profane language is strictly prohibited.
2. Only authorized Elkhart Lake Police Department employees or Sheboygan County Sheriff’s Office Deputies shall be authorized and permitted to use Department laptops.
3. All Department members may be required to be TIME certified before using any Department laptop/mobile data computer. CJIS security measures for TIME usage are required and are noted in Policy & Procedure 10.02: Criminal Records/TIME System.
4. Officers shall give due consideration to proper driving techniques and shall not attempt to type messages during the operation of a vehicle. All such operation of a laptop should occur while the patrol vehicle is stopped.
5. Internet usage and Social Media participation on Laptops/MDC’s are also governed by Department policy; refer to Policy & Procedures 1.17: Computer Protocol and 1.20: Social Media.

### C. Proper Use of Laptop/MDC.

1. Officers shall log in on the terminal at the beginning of the shift and log off at the completion of their shifts. Officers shall remain logged on to the system during their entire shift.
2. Officers shall log all office time, break time, follow up time, complaint time, traffic, etc., on the laptop CAD system via the laptop in the squad vehicle. This provides a permanent record of officer activity.
3. Calls for service will be broadcast to each unit via police radio as well as on the laptop:
  - a) Upon receiving a call for service, the officer shall acknowledge over the police radio and then depress the en route button or appropriate key stroke on the laptop.
  - b) Upon arrival at the scene of the incident, the officer shall depress the arrival button or appropriate key stroke on the laptop to indicate he/she has arrived at the scene. The officer shall also indicate arrival at the scene over the police radio.
  - c) Upon completion of the assignment, the primary unit or the unit leaving the incident shall clear from the call. Any back up units should depress the "available" button on the face of the laptop to put their unit back in service.
4. Officers making contact with individuals on traffic stops or other occupied vehicles shall contact the Communication Center via radio communication and inform the Communications Center of the officer's location, the vehicle registration number and other descriptive information as appropriate.

Once the Communication Center has been informed, officers shall conduct all necessary inquiries via the laptop, unless the officer feels that circumstances are such that his/her safety may be jeopardized using laptop.
5. Officers are able to access Wis. DOT and CIB records through the TIME system, via the laptop. Generally, officers will run their own checks. If safety or accessibility becomes a factor, the checks can be run through the Communications Center. Officers may have the Communications Center run inquiries whenever the readout is confusing.
6. Officers may print a screen of a response. This needs to be done for each screen of the response. When a citation is written, the accompanying documentation, registration or driver file information received from WisDOT should be printed using this method, if necessary.
7. If an officer determines from CIB via the laptop that a particular person is wanted on an outstanding warrant or other type of hold, the warrant or hold will have to be confirmed with the agency involved. This cannot be done directly from the squad vehicle via the laptop.

The officer will have to notify a telecommunicator at the Communications Center who in turn will have to send a confirmation request to the agency involved. Officers shall have the Communications Center re-run any wanted person data and confirm the status of the individual with the appropriate agency.

8. When dealing with laptop responses on wanted persons, the officer should be mindful of the geographic restrictions found on many wanted entries. These restrictions limit where the warrant is valid.

They include the county of the originating agency only and, in some cases, adjacent counties only. It is the officer's responsibility to determine if the warrant or hold is valid in the Department's jurisdiction by use of these "limiter" messages. This determination should be made prior to requesting a telecommunicator to confirm the warrant through the originating agency.

9. Officers who are checking out of the squad vehicle for warrant service, checking for a wanted person, or when they believe that an arrest may result from the situation shall communicate such over the radio in addition to the laptop.
10. The laptop alone should be used for communications in the following situations when an officer is checking out of the squad vehicle:
  - a) Administrative purposes (i.e. reports or follow up work at the office).
  - b) Breaks.
  - c) Civil process, unless serving a Temporary Restraining Order.
  - d) Follow up investigations or interviewing witnesses when no arrests are anticipated.
11. Generally, complaints shall be dispatched and acknowledged over the radio. Communications during tactical events or information of a sensitive nature that may be inappropriate to broadcast over the radio shall be transmitted by use of the laptop. Officers are required to keep all Department personnel informed of these situations.
12. Generally, officers should always go on scene and be available over the radio and also on the laptop.
13. Officers shall add notes on the laptop on any complaint. This is especially important where no detailed report will be completed explaining the disposition.
14. All inquiries that are necessary because of related follow ups or which are checks that can be done at the officer's convenience shall be run on the laptop.

15. Officers shall retain the discretion to use radio transmissions in lieu of the laptop in circumstances when the facts/situation indicate the use of the laptop would jeopardize the officer's safety.
16. The message sending feature of laptops allows the officer to send a text message to any telecommunicator position, as well as any single vehicle in the entire County system.

Text messages should relate to law enforcement business only, and, further, a law enforcement purpose. When two (2) officers need to communicate about a law enforcement matter, the laptop messaging system should be employed rather than the two patrol units meeting to talk, side by side.

#### D. Shift Supervisor Oversight and Training.

1. Supervisors will ensure that officers are not using the radio for communications that should be transmitted via the laptops.
2. Shift supervisors will train and require that officers under their supervision are familiar with proper laptop operations.

#### E. Laptop Messages and the Open Records Law.

1. The Wisconsin Open Records Law essentially states that any record generated by government must be preserved and be available for public inspection upon appropriate request. Messages sent from Department laptops as well as radio voice communications fall within the category of "records" for the purposes of this law.

Every message sent via Department laptops shall be recorded and maintained by the Communications Center. Likewise, messages received by Wis. DOT and CIB data bases are saved to an audit trail.

All voice communications are recorded. These "records" are available for public inspection upon request. Said records will only be made available and/or released by the Department's records custodian.

Michael Meeusen  
Chief of Police

This Policy & Procedure cancels and supersedes any and all written directives relative to the subject matter contained herein.

Initial 06/01/2015