

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**Office of the Inspector General**

Inspector General



**Executive Summary Concerning the Results  
of an Office of the Inspector General Investigation  
Into Employee Misconduct Violations by a D.C.  
Office of Unified Communications Dispatcher**

**Investigation 2008-0424(S)**

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**INVESTIGATIVE SYNOPSIS**

The District of Columbia Office of the Inspector General (OIG) initiated an investigation in June 2008 after receiving a complaint that an Office of Unified Communications (OUC) Dispatcher was inattentive to her duties and that her negligence jeopardized the safety of a D.C. Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) police officer. The OIG investigation revealed that the Dispatcher, who was on duty on April 11, 2008, engaged in conduct that violated four sections of the DPM<sup>1</sup> by failing to attend, in a timely manner, to a police officer's radio transmission because she was engaged in an inappropriate and personal telephone conversation with another OUC employee, a Universal Call Taker, who was off-duty.

During the investigation, OIG investigators reviewed the recording and transcript of the radio transmissions between the Dispatcher and the police officer, who is identified as Cruiser 1105, as well as the recording and transcript of the telephone conversation between the Dispatcher and the Universal Call Taker. OIG investigators also reviewed documentation related to the investigation conducted by OUC personnel concerning the telephone conversation between the Dispatcher and the Universal Call Taker. OIG investigators also conducted interviews with OUC personnel including the Dispatcher, the Universal Call Taker, and two managers, including the Dispatcher's direct supervisor. Finally, OIG investigators interviewed the police officer who is identified as Cruiser 1105.

A review of the pertinent radio transmissions and the telephone call reveals that on April 11, 2008, police officers assigned to MPD cruiser 7053 conducted a traffic stop of a vehicle in the 7<sup>th</sup> District. The vehicle was owned by the Universal Call Taker, who was off-duty and not in the vehicle at the time of the traffic stop. The Universal Call Taker was contacted by telephone by her nephew, who was driving the Universal Call Taker's

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<sup>1</sup> DPM § 1803, Responsibilities of Employees, provides, in pertinent part, that District government employees shall avoid conduct which might result in or create the appearance of: (a)(1) Using public office for private gain; (a)(2) Giving preferential treatment to any person; (a)(3) Impeding government efficiency or economy; or (a)(6) Affecting adversely the confidence of the public in the integrity of government.

vehicle at the time of the traffic stop. The Universal Call Taker then called the Dispatcher, who was on-duty and handling 7<sup>th</sup> District radio calls for MPD, to ascertain whether her vehicle would be towed and whether her nephew was going to be arrested. During their conversation, the Dispatcher and the Universal Call Taker made derogatory remarks about the police officer who had conducted the traffic stop. In her interview with OIG investigators, the Dispatcher stated that she knew the police officer who had conducted the traffic stop because he had responded to her residence in response to a 911 call and threatened to arrest her for assault in an incident involving her son. In all, the Dispatcher and the Universal Call Taker spent 4 minutes and 37 seconds discussing the traffic stop and their negative opinions of the police officer.

While the Dispatcher and the Universal Call Taker were having this telephone conversation, another police officer, identified as Cruiser 1105, initiated a radio transmission. After not receiving a response for 8 seconds, Cruiser 1105 initiated a second radio transmission, which, after 7 seconds, was answered by the Dispatcher. At that time, and with no more information than the cruiser number, the Dispatcher put Cruiser 1105 on standby. When Cruiser 1105 transmitted for a third time, indicating that another unit was needed in reference to a hit and run, the Dispatcher again told Cruiser 1105 that it was on standby. It was not until Cruiser 1105 stated that there was an officer safety issue that the Dispatcher finally requested Cruiser 1105's location. In total, 31 seconds elapsed between the time Cruiser 1105 first initiated a radio transmission and the time the Dispatcher requested Cruiser 1105's location.

It then took another 39 seconds for the Dispatcher to correctly obtain Cruiser 1105's location and dispatch another unit. During these 39 seconds, the Dispatcher was still engaged in the telephone conversation with the Universal Call Taker. The recording of the radio transmissions also shows that there were no other calls/incidents being handled by the Dispatcher that required her attention at the time of Cruiser 1105's radio transmissions.

In her interview with OIG investigators, the Dispatcher admitted ignoring Cruiser 1105's first two attempts to reach her. She also admitted putting Cruiser 1105 on standby during the third transmission, even though Cruiser 1105 had requested a back-up unit during this transmission. The Dispatcher denied that she did anything wrong regarding the transmissions from Cruiser 1105 and told OIG investigators that she had the right to place Cruiser 1105 on standby.

The OIG investigation also revealed that on April 25, 2008, the OUC received allegations regarding the April 11, 2008, telephone conversation between the Dispatcher and the Universal Call Taker and radio transmissions between the Dispatcher and Cruiser 1105. An OUC manager reviewed those allegations shortly after they were received by the OUC and decided that the scope of the OUC investigation would be limited to the telephone conversation between the Dispatcher and the Universal Call Taker and would not cover the OUC Dispatcher's actions in placing Cruiser 1105 on standby.

The OUC investigation of the telephone conversation between the Dispatcher and the Universal Call Taker concluded with written warnings to each employee, which did not amount to corrective or adverse actions. When interviewed by OIG investigators, the two OUC managers stated that both the scope of the OUC investigation and the resulting letters were appropriate and that the Dispatcher had not acted inappropriately or negligently regarding Cruiser 1105.

The Dispatcher and the two OUC managers told OIG investigators that Cruiser 1105 was at fault for failing to request priority status during the initial radio transmission. None of them, however, was able to provide OIG investigators with any written policy or procedure regarding priority status. OIG investigators contacted the OUC Accreditation Manager who informed OIG investigators that OUC has no written policy and procedure manual. The Accreditation Manager provided OIG investigators with 261 memoranda issued to OUC personnel since 2006, which OUC personnel currently use in lieu of a policy and procedure manual. A review of the 261 memoranda reveals that none address the use of the term “priority.”

In addition, OIG investigators contacted the MPD Director of Academic Services regarding the training provided to MPD personnel on the use of MPD radios and transmissions. The MPD Director of Academic Services told OIG investigators that MPD personnel are not trained to use the word “priority” in radio communications between MPD and OUC personnel. Our review of training materials provided by MPD confirmed that the word “priority” is not a term MPD personnel are trained to use.

### **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION**

The Dispatcher violated four sections of the DPM by failing to attend, in a timely manner, to Cruiser 1105’s radio transmissions because she was engaging in an inappropriate and personal telephone conversation with the Universal Call Taker. By doing so, the Dispatcher used her public office for the private gain of the Universal Call Taker and gave preferential treatment to the Universal Call Taker. The Dispatcher’s actions also potentially put the safety of the Police Officer identified as Cruiser 1105 in jeopardy and, therefore, impeded government efficiency or economy and affected adversely the confidence of the public in the integrity of government.

Therefore, the issue of whether the Dispatcher violated DPM §§ 1803.1 (a)(1) Using public office for private gain; (a)(2) (Giving preferential treatment to any person); (a)(3) (Impeding government efficiency or economy); and (a)(6) (Affecting adversely the confidence of the public in the integrity of government) is **SUBSTANTIATED**.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the results of this investigation, the OIG recommends that the OUC:

- Address the conduct of the Dispatcher in placing Cruiser 1105 on standby without a valid, work-related reason to do so, with appropriate administrative action;
- Train all OUC personnel on how their jobs directly impact the safety of the MPD personnel with whom they interact via radio transmissions;
- Create and implement a comprehensive policy and procedure manual.

*December 7, 2009*