
Mobile Digital Computer Use

423.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the proper access, use, and application of the Mobile Digital Computer (MDC) system in order to ensure proper access to confidential records from local, state, and national law enforcement databases, and to ensure effective electronic communications between department members and Dispatch. See the CJIS Access, Maintenance, and Security Policy for additional guidance.

423.2 POLICY

Fargo Police Department members using the MDC shall comply with all appropriate federal and state rules and regulations and shall use the MDC in a professional manner, in accordance with this policy.

423.3 PRIVACY EXPECTATION

Members forfeit any expectation of privacy with regard to messages accessed, transmitted, received or reviewed on any department technology system (see the Information Technology Use Policy for additional guidance).

423.4 CARE OF MDC'S

Members are responsible for the proper care and use of the MDC which they are using, and may be administratively and financially liable in the event of loss or damage, in accordance with city and department policy.

Physical damage to or loss of the MDC and/or its components shall be reported immediately to the on-duty supervisor.

Members shall not place drinks, food, or other items directly on the computer, or in a location which may cause a spill onto the MDC.

Magnetic objects shall not be placed close to the MDC (e.g. emergency dash lights, magnetic clips, etc.).

MDC's malfunctioning or in need of repair shall be reported to the City of Fargo IS Department as soon as practical.

423.5 RESTRICTED ACCESS AND USE

MDC use is subject to the Information Technology Use, Protected Information, and CJIS Access, Maintenance, and Security policies.

Members shall not access the MDC system if they have not received prior authorization and the required training. Members shall immediately report unauthorized access or use of the MDC by another member to their supervisors or Shift Commanders.

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Use of the MDC system to access law enforcement databases or transmit messages is restricted to official activities, business-related tasks, or communications that are directly related to the business, administration, or practices of the Department. In the event that a member has questions about sending a particular message or accessing a particular database, the member should seek prior approval from their supervisor.

Sending derogatory, defamatory, obscene, disrespectful, sexually suggestive, harassing, or any other inappropriate messages on the MDC system is prohibited and may result in discipline.

It is a violation of this policy to transmit a message or access a law enforcement database under another member's name or to use the password of another member to log in to the MDC system unless directed to do so by a supervisor. Members are required to log off the MDC or secure the MDC when it is unattended. This added security measure will minimize the potential for unauthorized access or misuse.

423.5.1 USE WHILE DRIVING

When operating a vehicle, the safe operation of the vehicle is the officer's primary responsibility.

The use of the MDC is always of secondary importance. Use of the MDC by the vehicle operator should be limited to times when the vehicle is stopped. Information that is required for immediate enforcement, investigative, tactical or safety needs should be transmitted over the radio.

In no case shall an operator attempt to send or review lengthy messages while the vehicle is in motion.

423.6 DOCUMENTATION OF ACTIVITY

Except as otherwise directed by the Shift Commander or other department established protocol, all calls for service assigned by a dispatcher should be communicated by voice over the police radio and electronically via the MDC unless security or confidentiality prevents such broadcasting.

MDC and voice transmissions are used to document the member's daily activity. To ensure accuracy:

- (a) All contacts or activity shall be documented at the time of the contact.
- (b) Whenever the activity or contact is initiated by voice, it should be documented by a dispatcher.
- (c) Whenever the activity or contact is not initiated by voice, the member shall document it via the MDC.

All MDC messages sent via the MDC are recorded and subject to open records discovery. MDC messages will be reviewed randomly to assure proper content. Specific and focused reviews will be conducted when warranted.

423.6.1 STATUS CHANGES

All changes in status (e.g., arrival at scene, meal periods, in service) shall be transmitted over the police radio.

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Members responding to in-progress calls should advise changes in status over the radio to assist other members responding to the same incident.

423.6.2 EMERGENCY ACTIVATION

If there is an emergency activation on the MDC, and the member does not respond to a request for confirmation of the need for emergency assistance or confirms the need, available resources will be sent to assist in locating the member. If the location is known, the nearest available officer should respond in accordance with the Officer Response to Calls Policy.

Members should ensure a field supervisor and the Shift Commander are notified of the incident without delay.

Officers not responding to the emergency shall refrain from transmitting on the police radio until a no-further-assistance broadcast is made or if they are also handling an emergency.

423.7 EQUIPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

423.7.1 MALFUNCTIONING MDC

Whenever possible, members will not use vehicles with malfunctioning MDCs. Whenever members must drive a vehicle in which the MDC is not working, they shall notify Dispatch. In the event the officer needs to enter comments into a call for service, it shall be the responsibility of the dispatcher to document all information that will then be transmitted verbally over the police radio. Extended comments must be relayed to dispatch via cellular or landline communications, or added later on a functional computer. This will ensure the radio remains available for other emergency or routine communications.

The employee experiencing the MDC malfunction shall promptly notify the IS Department regarding the date, time, and nature of the MDC malfunction. The employee shall also leave a notice on the MDC indicating the MDC is not operational.

423.8 REVISION DATE 08/12/2025