

# Police Officer Communications

A reference guide for Police 10 Codes, Scanner Codes,  
Phonetic Alphabet and Acronyms used in Law Enforcement

## Police Officer Communication Codes

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## What are Police 10 Codes?

Police 10 Codes are signals used by police officers, law enforcement officials and government agencies in two-way radio communications. The codes are numbers that correspond to words, phrases and messages that are frequently used in law enforcement work. Variations of the codes are also used by private citizens in Citizen's Band (CB) radio transmissions.

Police officers are in constant communication with dispatch, other officers, support departments, the local jail and county correctional facilities and others. The codes help streamline communication and also add an element of secrecy to shield communications from the general public.

## The Origin of Police 10 Codes

Police 10 codes originated in the United States law enforcement community prior to the second World War. In 1940, the Association of Public Safety Communication Officials (APC) published the first official set of police 10 codes. The codes were invented to help reduce the use of speech on the police radio. In addition, the codes enable a certain amount of privacy to the radio transmissions, as one must know the meaning of the signals to understand the discussion.



In 1974, the Association of Public Safety Communication Officials expanded use of the police radio codes to make them more brief and to standardize message traffic.

## **Lack of Standards / Consistency**

Police 10 codes were originally intended to be a concise, standardized communication system. However, the proliferation of different meanings has rendered the code system somewhat useless in situations where officers from different agencies and jurisdictions need to communicate.

As a result, there is no truly universal or official set of police 10 codes. The meaning of a particular code may vary between departments and geographic areas. In addition, the meaning of individual codes may vary between law enforcement and other public service units such as Emergency Medical Services (EMS), fire departments, etc.

In 2005, the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) began discouraging the use of ten-codes and other law enforcement radio signals due to their high variability in meaning between departments and agencies. In addition, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security may discontinue use of the signals.

## **Alternative Coding Systems**

Some organizations and municipalities also use other types of police radio codes. For example, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) uses "eleven codes", and the Port Authority Police uses "eight codes". These were established in an attempt to have a new and unique set of signals.

## List of Police 10 Codes

- 10-1 = Poor reception
- 10-2 = Good reception
- 10-3 = Stop transmitting
- 10-4 = Message received, affirmative, OK
- 10-5 = Relay this information to (name of person, officer, etc.)
- 10-6 = Busy
- 10-7 = Out of service
- 10-8 = In service
- 10-9 = Please repeat, please repeat the message
- 10-10 = Negative (no)
- 10-11 = Dog case
- 10-12 = Standby
- 10-13 = Civilians present and listening
- 10-14 = Prowler report
- 10-15 = En route to the station with suspect
- 10-16 = Domestic problem
- 10-17 = Meet complainant
- 10-18 = Urgent
- 10-19 = Return to the station
- 10-20 = Specify location/my location is (name of location)
- 10-21 = Place a phone call to (name of person)
- 10-22 = Disregard
- 10-23 = Stand by on this frequency (also stands for "on scene")
- 10-24 = Assignment completed
- 10-25 = Please report in person (meeting)
- 10-26 = Detaining suspect
- 10-27 = Vehicle registration request
- 10-28 = Arrests / warrants found on driver's license
- 10-29 = Arrests / warrants found on the vehicle
- 10-30 = Unnecessary use of police radio

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- 10-31 = Crime or criminal act in progress
- 10-32 = gun / firearm
- 10-33 = emergency traffic follows, hold routine messages
- 10-34 = frequency open (cancels 10-33)
- 10-35 = Major crime alert
- 10-36 = what is the correct time of day?
- 10-37 = Suspicious vehicle (investigate)
- 10-38 = Suspicious vehicle (stopping)
- 10-39 = False alarm, premises was occupied
- 10-40 = False alarm, no activity, premises appears to be secure
- 10-41 = Begin watch
- 10-42 = End of watch
- 10-43 = Information
- 10-44 = Permission to leave
- 10-45 = Fueling squad car / vehicle
- 10-46 = Provide motorist assistance
- 10-47 = Emergency road repair needed at
- 10-48 = Traffic standard repair needed at
- 10-49 = en route to assignment
- 10-50 = accident
- 10-51 = Tow truck needed
- 10-52 = ambulance needed
- 10-53 = road blocked at (name of location)
- 10-54 = animals on the highway
- 10-55 = security check (also used for intoxicated driver)
- 10-56 = Intoxicated pedestrian
- 10-57 = hit-and-run accident
- 10-58 = direct traffic
- 10-59 = escort
- 10-60 = squad in vicinity, lock-out
- 10-61 = personnel in area

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- 10-62 = reply to message
- 10-63 = clear to copy info?
- 10-64 = message for delivery
- 10-65 = net message assignment
- 10-66 = net message cancellation
- 10-67 = person calling for help
- 10-68 = dispatch message
- 10-69 = message received
- 10-70 = prowler, fire alarm
- 10-71 = gun involved, advise nature of fire
- 10-72 = shooting, fire progress report
- 10-73 = smoke report
- 10-74 = negative, no
- 10-75 = in contact with (name)
- 10-76 = en route / on the way
- 10-77 = Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA), amount of time until
- 10-78 = need assistance
- 10-79 = bomb threat, coroner's case
- 10-80 = bomb has exploded
- 10-81 = breathalyzer report
- 10-82 = reserve lodging
- 10-83 = work school crossing at (location)
- 10-84 = if meeting \_, please advise ETA
- 10-85 = delay due to (reason)
- 10-86 = officer on-duty
- 10-87 = pickup
- 10-88 = present phone number of (person)
- 10-89 = bomb threat
- 10-90 = bank alarm going off at
- 10-91 = pick up a prisoner
- 10-92 = improperly parked vehicle

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- 10-93 = blockage
- 10-94 = drag racing
- 10-95 = prisoner/subject in custody
- 10-96 = Psych patient
- 10-97 = Check signal (means "On Scene" in California and other areas)
- 10-98 = Prison break or jailbreak
- 10-99 = Wanted/stolen record
- 10-100 = Dead body found
- 10-101 = What is your status?
- 10-106 = Secure
- 10-200 = Alarm
- 999 = Officer down / urgent help needed

## List of Police Scanner Codes

- 5150 = Mental case
- 10851 = Auto theft / stolen vehicle
- 10852 = Tampering with vehicle
- 20001 = Hit and run – Felony
- 20002 = Hit and run – Misdemeanor
- 20007 = Hit and run – Unattended
- 21958 = Drunk pedestrian on roadway
- 22350 = Speeding
- 22500 = Illegal parking
- 23101 = Drunk driving – with injuries
- 23102 = Drunk driving
- 23103 = Reckless driver
- 23104 = Reckless driver
- 23105 = Driver under the influence of narcotics
- 23109 = Auto Racing
- 23110 = Person throwing objects at vehicles
- 23151 = Drunk driving – with injuries
- 23152 = Drunk driver

## Use of the Phonetic Alphabet in Radio Communication

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is an alphabetic system of phonetic notation that is based primarily on the Latin alphabet. The **Phonetic Alphabet** was devised by the International Phonetic Association as a standardized representation of the sounds of spoken language.

The Phonetic Alphabet is used by police officers, private investigators, military and even civilians during radio communications. These individuals use the alphabet to ensure clear communication, such as when communicating a description of a subject, the correct spelling of a name, a tag number, or a street address.



## Military Phonetic Alphabet

Following is a table explaining the letters of the phonetic alphabet and their pronunciation:

A = Alpha (AL fah)  
B = Bravo (BRAH VOH)  
C = Charlie (CHAR lee)  
D = Delta (DELL tah)  
E = Echo (ECK oh)  
F = Foxtrot (FOKS trot)  
G = Golf (GOLF)  
H = Hotel (hoh TELL)

## Military Phonetic Alphabet (continued)

I = India (IN dee ah)

J = Juliett (JEW lee ETT)

K = Kilo (KEY loh)

L = Lima (LEE mah)

M = Mike (MIKE)

N = November (no VEM ber)

O = Oscar (OSS cah)

P = Papa (pah PAH)

Q = Quebec (keh BECK)

R = Romeo (ROW me oh)

S = Sierra (see AIR rah)

T = Tango (TANG go)

U = Uniform (YOU nee form)

V = Victor (VIK tah)

W = Whiskey (WISS key)

X = X Ray (ECKS RAY)

Y = Yankee (YANG key)

Z = Zulu (ZOO loo)

## Civilian Phonetic Alphabet

Following is a version of the phonetic alphabet used by civilians:

- A = Adam
- B = Boy
- C = Charles
- D = David
- E = Edward
- F = Frank
- G = George
- H = Henry
- I = Ida
- J = John
- K = King
- L = Lincoln
- M = Mary
- N = Nora
- O = Ocean
- P = Paul
- Q = Queen
- R = Robert
- S = Sam
- T = Tom
- U = Unicorn
- V = Victor
- W = William
- X = X-Ray
- Y = Yellow
- Z = Zebra

## List of Acronyms Used by Police Officers

Police officers also use a wide variety of acronyms to help streamline communications. Below is a sample of some of the most commonly used acronyms:

- ADW = Assault with a Deadly Weapon
- B & E = Breaking and Entering
- BOL = Be On the Lookout
- DL = Driver's License
- DOA = Dead On Arrival
- DOC = Department of Corrections
- DMV = Department of Motor Vehicles
- DEA = Drug Enforcement Administration
- DOB = Date Of Birth
- DUI = Driving Under the Influence
- DWI = Driving While Intoxicated
- ETA = Estimated Time of Arrival
- GTA – Grand Theft Auto
- OIS = Officer Involved Shooting
- FBI = Federal Bureau of Investigation
- FTA = Failure To Appear
- GTA = Grand Theft Auto
- PD = Police Department
- SRT = Special Response Team
- VIN = Vehicle Identification Number

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## Other Types of Codes and Signals

Occasionally, departments may use codes to identify different parts of a city or "beat". For example, departments may use terminology such as "Patrol Area 1, 2, 3, etc. to differentiate between geographic areas.

In addition, some police departments may use special codes to refer to different types of units within the department, such as: motorcycle units, swat teams, marine units, etc.

## Amateur Radio Operators

Amateur radio ham operators do not use police 10 codes. Instead they use something called **Q codes**, which are derived from Morse Code. Use of 10 codes are highly discouraged in amateur radio use, especially among seasoned professionals. However, they are sometimes used by novice operators.



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## About the Author

Michael Kissiah is the owner of Brandy Lane Publishing, LLC, which owns and operates a portfolio of websites, including eInvestigator.com. Michael created eInvestigator.com more than 20 years ago after working as a private investigator in the state of Florida. Since that time, he has become an expert at how to find information online and has written over 1000 articles on topics related to the investigation industry. In addition, he is the author of the "**Private Investigator Licensing Handbook**", available at Amazon.com.



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