ABBREVIATIONS

The use of standardized abbreviations is useful when recording (writing or typing) or broadcasting information pertinent to calls for service.

The purpose for using standardized abbreviations is to enhance effective communications between dispatchers and other employees, agencies and responders.

Each agency may use abbreviations that are unique to it (example: SCSO-Spokane County Sheriff's Office; VPD-Vancouver Police Department, etc). Abbreviations may include those used for various public safety or municipal agencies or other governmental agencies (example: DSHS-Department of Social and Health Services; DOL-Department of Licensing). Other abbreviations may be more widely used (such as NCIC codes). It is important to remember that someone else may have to read or hear the abbreviations or acronyms so they should be as standardized as possible.

VEHICLE DESCRIPTIONS

Formatting descriptions of vehicles and persons in a uniform, standardized way is professional. When standardized procedures are used, it lessens the chance of omitting or repeating information.

- VEHICLES: Use the acronym CYMBALS for the order in which vehicle descriptions are given:
  - **C** - COLOR
  - **Y** –YEAR
  - **M** – MAKE [and] MODEL
  - **B** - BODY STYLE
  - **A** - ACCESSORIES or ALL other descriptors (tinted windows, body damage, spoilers, mag wheels, etc)
  - **L** - LICENSE PLATE NUMBER/LETTERS
  - **S** - STATE OF ISSUANCE

For example: Black, 82 Honda Accord, 4-door, tinted windows, ABC123, Washington

Broadcast the information in this format every time.

Even if you are unable to obtain specific vehicle descriptors, the CYMBALS format may still be used. For example: Dark color, large, older model 4 door with shiny wheels, unknown license.

PERSONS

Descriptions of people also have a uniform format:

- NAME (last name, first name, middle initial)
- RACE
- GENDER (male or female)
- AGE (actual or approximate)
  - DATE OF BIRTH (eight digits: Oct. 1, 1962 = 10011962 OR 19621011 with the year first – depending on agency)
- HEIGHT
- WEIGHT
- HAIR COLOR
- EYE COLOR
- FACIAL HAIR, GLASSES, ANYTHING NOTICEABLE STARTING AT TOP OF HEAD
- CLOTHING
  - Clothing descriptions are given from head to toe and from the outside in:
  - HAT OR HEADGEAR
  - UPPER, OUTER CLOTHING (coat or jacket)
  - LOWER, OUTER CLOTHING (pants, shoes)
  - UPPER, INSIDE CLOTHING (shirt, blouse)
  - LOWER, INSIDE CLOTHING
  - ACCESSORIES OR ANYTHING CARRIED (gloves, brief case, fanny pack, umbrella, etc)

Recording and broadcasting descriptions of persons and vehicles the same way each time, ensures consistency. Everyone know what to expect.

PLAIN LANGUAGE VS. 10 CODES

Many agencies use some of both plain language and 10 codes. The important point to make here is that if 10 codes are used, they should be used per the policy of the department.

There are pros and cons with each type of usage, but for those agencies only using the occasional 10-code, it is imperative the officer understand which 10-codes may be used.

DO NOT use 10-code references when dealing with another agency. If another agency uses a 10-code reference, confirm you understand its meaning. DO NOT use 10-codes when in a Unified Incident Command System event with multiple agencies or disciplines (e.g., law enforcement, fire and EMS responders).

Obviously, the most important of codes will be the "***officer needs help***" phrases or those which pertain to responder safety such as notification of felony wanted subjects, stolen vehicles, etc.

For the agencies employing a 10-code, use it as it was designed, for brevity. Beware of redundant phrasing like, "10-8, in service" (if your agency's "10-8" means in service).