

# 6

Internal  
Communication

## Chapter 6

# Telephone and Radio Communication

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### Contents

Introduction	page 6-1
Office Telephones	page 6-1
Mobile Telephones	page 6-3
Two-Way Radio Communication	page 6-4

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### Introduction

Use this chapter as a guide when communicating by telephone or radio.

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### Office Telephones

#### Telephone Etiquette

Use the following tips to avoid misunderstandings and improve the efficiency of all office calls:

- ◆ When answering the telephone, identify yourself and work location.
- ◆ Pay attention to callers; make sure callers have your full attention.
- ◆ Speak slowly and clearly so that callers can understand what you are saying, especially when leaving voice mail messages.
- ◆ Try to answer by the third ring.
- ◆ Know the functions of your telephone.
- ◆ Keep a message pad near your telephone to record the caller's name and telephone number.
- ◆ When answering the telephone for someone else, be sure to ask for the nature of the call, as well as the caller's name and telephone number.
- ◆ If you are expecting an important call that refers to a certain item, such as a report, have that information at your fingertips so that callers will not have to wait for you to find it.
- ◆ Keep speaker telephones turned off or set at low volume, to avoid disturbing your neighbors—or use a headset.

Communicate

## Voice Mail

This section sets forth policies on the proper use of voice mail. Voice mail is an important tool that allows us to communicate with callers. It provides a way for callers to leave messages or make requests in our absence. When misused, voice mail becomes an obstacle to efficient and effective communication.

### Date, Name and Program

Provide the date, your name, and the name of your program, staff, or work unit.

### Daily Status

Update the message daily to reflect your work status (such as “on leave,” “in travel status,” “in the office, but in meetings,” or “in the office today”). For example, if you take an unplanned day of sick leave, change your message from home that morning to reflect the fact that you will not be in the office.

### Request for Message

Ask callers to leave a brief message regarding the purpose of their call. This will allow you to respond to them with an answer on their voice mail if they are not there when you return the call.

### Dialing Zero

Give callers the option of dialing zero to be transferred to a main telephone line. If this option is not available on your telephone system, provide an alternative number where callers can obtain additional help. Be sure these options are functional on your system.

### Primary Line

Primary telephone lines in each work unit should be answered during normal business hours. Restrict voice mail on a main number for after hours messages or in the event of an emergency, such as a building evacuation.

### Calling Window

When identifying normal business hours for your location, be mindful of all of your customers. For example, offices in the East that routinely do business with the West Coast, Alaska or Hawaii should ensure that telephone lines are covered during hours that give those customers a reasonable window of opportunity to make contact.

### Sample Message

“You have reached the voice mail box for Sally Smith of the Professional Development Center. Today is Monday, September 19, 2001. I am unable to take your call at this time. Please record your message after the tone. If you need immediate assistance, dial “0” and another staff member will help you.”

### Leaving a Message

When leaving a message on voice mail, be mindful of the recipient and be sure you leave your name, telephone number, time and date of call and a brief description of the purpose of your call to expedite a response. Speak slowly and clearly so the recipient can retrieve your information accurately.

#### Policy

<http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/DAPolicy/>

## Mobile Telephones

Cell phone communication is not necessarily private. Be aware of security, especially if you work with sensitive information. If you need to discuss sensitive information, use an approved method of communication for the level of security of that information. Follow the same rules of etiquette as used with office telephones ([See Telephone Etiquette on page 6-1](#)).

### Security

Cell phones operate on radio frequencies that can be monitored by commonly available radio frequency scanners. The volume of cellular phone traffic does not affect the ability to monitor cellular calls. It is easy to program a watch list of telephone numbers into a computer that automatically picks out all calls to or from the watch listed numbers and records the conversations. Although the law provides penalties for the interception of cellular telephone calls, it is easily accomplished and impossible to detect.