

PRIORITY OF URGENT TOLL CALLS ESSENTIAL TO THE WAR EFFORT OR PUBLIC SAFETY

1. GENERAL PLAN. The Board of War Communications has issued an order directing the Telephone Companies to establish a plan whereby certain toll calls will be given priority as to order of completion and, in compliance with this order, three degrees of precedence have been provided whereby authorized persons or agencies may request and obtain priority when prompt completion of the call is essential to the war effort or public safety.

- a. Priority 1. Calls designated as "Priority 1" are given precedence over all other calls and, where necessary for the immediate completion of such calls, any conversation in process (other than one having Priority 1) may be interrupted.

Note: Special classes of calls such as aircraft and civil air raid warning, marine warning, C.A.A. blackout calls, etc. which are designated by special orders, markings, or channels will be handled in accordance with special operating practices issued for such calls, without request for priority.

- b. Priority 2. Calls designated as "Priority 2" are given precedence over all other calls excepting "Priority 1" calls and the special classes of calls specified in "a, Note."
- c. Priority 3. Calls designated as "Priority 3" are given precedence over all other calls excepting "Priority 1" and "Priority 2" calls and the special classes of calls specified in "a, Note."
- d. Other Emergency or Urgent Calls. Emergency calls placed by persons or agencies not authorized to request priority will be handled in accordance with long established procedures. In the case of urgent calls for Army, Navy, Government, and civilian defense agencies on which prompt completion is essential to the war effort or public safety, the supervisor may give such calls the degree of precedence which in her judgment the urgency of the call warrants. In the latter case, the supervisor will enter "Urgent" at the top of the ticket and will direct the operator accordingly but will not enter "Priority (no.)" at the top of the ticket, since this entry should be made only when a calling party has specifically requested, "Priority 1," "Priority 2," or "Priority 3." If the calling party uses the word "priority" without specifying the degree of priority, as for example, "This is a priority call," or if he specifies a priority code other than 1, 2, or 3, as for example, "This is a priority AAL call," do not consider nor handle the call as a priority call, but handle it as an urgent call. When priority is requested in an incorrect manner, after the call has been disposed of, give the ticket to your supervisor for reference to the Commercial Department through locally designated channels.

- e. General Operating Procedure. If any inquiry is received from a customer as to how to secure priority for his calls, he should be referred to the local business office. In the case of calls on which prompt or immediate completion is essential to the war effort or public safety, the calling party, if authorized, will request priority by saying, "Priority 1," "Priority 2," or "Priority 3." Precedence on priority calls applies on both initial and subsequent attempts.

Priority calls on which no delay in completion is encountered will be handled in general in the same manner as other calls except that (1) the degree of priority requested by the customer will be noted on the ticket, (2) the degree of priority will be prefixed to the order to any operator whose assistance you may require, and (3) details connected with charging or billing, such as obtaining the calling number or collecting the charge at a coin station, should be deferred, if necessary, to avoid delay in completing the call.

The supervisor will be notified as an overlap operation on every Priority 1 call or when a delay occurs on a Priority 2 or 3 call.

The practice is written on the basis that an "A" operator will make all practicable efforts within the limits of facilities available to her to establish the connection as quickly as possible, following the direction of her supervisor when the latter has been notified. As equipment limitations vary in different offices, it is expected that local directions will indicate the point at which a call will be turned over to Long Distance. Furthermore, it is expected that the supervisor under the guidance of these local directions, will exercise judgment in determining when faster completion of a specific priority call will be obtained by passing it to Long Distance.

2. TICKET ENTRIES. As soon as a call has been identified by a calling party as entitled to priority, enter "Priority 1," "Priority 2," or "Priority 3," as the case may be, at the top of the ticket followed by the time at which priority is requested. If locally directed, you may abbreviate this entry to "P1," "P2," or "P3."

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At the earliest opportunity and as an overlap, obtain the calling party's name unless it has been volunteered or is otherwise available. Do not insist upon the name but if other identifying information is given use it. Enter the name immediately after the calling number if space permits, otherwise enter it in the remarks or special instructions space.

If conversation between customers is interrupted in your office on a busy circuit or trunk or on a busy line, note this in the remarks space as "conv int on ckt (trk or line)." The conditions for interrupting are covered in "5."

Do not file the ticket but give it to your supervisor so that it may be specifically marked, as by a large colored circle around the priority entry, and filed separately.

3. HANDLING CALLS. Try to establish connection in the regular way except that you precede your order to an intermediate ringdown, terminating ringdown, or toll tandem operator with the priority, as for example, "Priority (no.), (old. pl.)." Also be governed by the following.

a. Priority 1 Call. Give the call your undivided attention and, as soon as practicable, notify your supervisor who will give the call her undivided attention.

- (1) Trunks on First Route All Busy in Multiple. (Direct or Tandem) Go in on a busy trunk and announce, "This circuit is required for an emergency war call," adding if necessary, "Please hang up and call later." As soon as you believe the trunk is cleared proceed with your priority call. Do not interrupt on a call which you know is a priority call, and when you announce as above, if you are told that the call is a priority call, acknowledge, disconnect, and try another trunk.

In applying this general procedure, be guided by the following points for certain situations.

- (a) If a plug is in a trunk in the desired group at your or an adjacent position, use that trunk, if necessary claiming it from the adjacent operator for your priority call. If conversation is in progress on such a trunk, interrupt as above or if necessary have the adjacent operator do so, but in such a case, add to the announcement, "Hang up, please, and I'll call you later." Reestablish connection on the interrupted call as soon as you can, proceeding as on a cutoff.
- (b) If you have, or your supervisor authorizes, a ringdown (including toll tandem) alternate to a first route of any other type, do not interrupt on the first route but concentrate on the alternate, interrupting on it if the trunks appear in the multiple and are NC.
- (c) If there is no ringdown (including toll tandem) alternate to a route of any other type, listen in successively on trunks in the group until you find one on which there is conversation, either of customers or operators, and then attempt to claim that trunk.
- (d) If a ringdown trunk group is to be used, select a trunk that is in use on a direct circuit connection, if possible. In making the announcement, if you receive no response, ring, and when you receive a response, repeat the announcement.
- (e) If the group is of the multiple cutoff type and there is no trunk in use at your own or an adjacent position which you can obtain, do not go in on a busy trunk but tell your supervisor and wait until she obtains one which you may use.
- (f) If you have difficulty in making customers understand what you wish, and you cannot readily have the connection cleared in your office, ask them to signal their operators, and when an answer is received, repeat the announcement.
- (g) When you make the announcement on a busy trunk, if an operator answers and does not indicate she will permit you to use the trunk, at once compare precedence being guided by the general rules in "6."
- (h) After you have secured release of a busy trunk and before conversation starts on the priority call, make sure that the interrupted connection has been cleared from the trunk in your office, unless you know this has been done, by momentarily disconnecting and testing it or observing the busy visual. On a straightforward, or dial or key pulsing trunk, do this before advancing the priority call. On a ringdown trunk, do not delay advancement of the priority call to make this check, but on any type of trunk if you find it has not been cleared, tell your supervisor, who, if it is practicable to do so, will locate where the trunk is held and have it released.

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- (2) Trunks on First Route Reached through Toll Tandem. When you pass an order to toll tandem as "Priority 1, (cld. pl.)," if no circuit is available, tandem will either (1) connect you to an operator who can obtain a circuit for you and who will answer "Circuit Request," or (2) announce to you that she is connecting you to a busy trunk, depending on the arrangements at the toll office.
 - (a) Connection to Circuit Request Operator. Repeat your order, "Priority 1, (cld. pl.)" and wait for her to obtain a circuit for you. If she reports "Ready," she will have obtained and cleared a circuit, and will connect you to it and ring; when the distant operator answers, pass the priority order and proceed with the call. If the circuit request operator reports, "(Cld. pl.) (circuit no.), without," acknowledge, disconnect, and immediately pass an order to tandem for the circuit specified, preceded by "Without."
 - (b) Connection to Busy Trunk. Interrupt and claim the trunk as on a ringdown trunk in your multiple in "(1)" except with regard to the following points: (1) do not try to check the clearing of the trunk as in "(1) (h)"; (2) if you find that you have been put in on a priority call, acknowledge, disconnect, and re-pass your order as on a new priority call.
 - (3) Overflow on a Dial or Key Pulsing Trunk, or Repeated Reorder from Tandem. If you have, or your supervisor authorizes, an alternate ringdown route, concentrate your efforts on that route. If no such route is available, continue to try to obtain a trunk until your supervisor directs you to pass the full details of the call to Long Distance. The supervisor will do this in accordance with local directions or at any time when in her judgment circumstances indicate that this would ensure faster completion.
 - (4) Posted Delay on Required Route. Disregard this fact and proceed with the call.
 - (5) Called Line Busy. If you are using a ringdown trunk, immediately say, "Priority (no.), (Cld. no.) busy, I'll hold the circuit," and remain cut in for a further report. Give the report to the calling party in any case and say, for example, "Do you wish me to interrupt the conversation?" If he wishes this done, have the call announced as on an emergency call in Gen. Div. Sec. 3; otherwise tell him you will call him, and hold the ringdown trunk for five minutes for a further report before you disconnect, or if you used some other type of trunk, try the call at frequent intervals for five minutes. Then if the line is still busy give the calling party the report and make voluntary subsequent attempts in the regular way.
- b. Priority 2 or Priority 3 Call. The only difference between the handling of a Priority 2 and a Priority 3 call is that a Priority 2 call takes precedence over a Priority 3 call regardless of precedence time. In general, continue to search for an idle trunk, notifying your supervisor as an overlap, until the Priority 2 or 3 call is disposed of or passed to another operator for handling. You or your supervisor may seek assistance from any other operator who may be controlling a trunk. When you have obtained an idle trunk, proceed with the call. In applying these general procedures, be governed by the following.
- (1) Trunks All Busy in Multiple. (Direct or Tandem) Watch closely for a trunk to become idle. Meanwhile try any authorized or specially authorized route at frequent intervals and obtain your supervisor's aid in obtaining a trunk that may be held elsewhere in the office.

If you are locally directed to do so, try to secure a trunk by listening briefly on each trunk as in "a(1)," but do not interrupt or try to take a trunk on which you hear customer conversation or if you hear the ringing signal. In any other case, announce "This circuit is required for a priority call." If a customer answers, excuse the call and disconnect but if an operator answers and does not indicate that she will release the trunk, if necessary establish precedence with her being guided by the general rules in "6". If no response is received to your announcement, disconnect and continue your effort to obtain a trunk if the trunks involved are not ringdown; if they are ringdown, ring and repeat your announcement when an operator answers.
 - (2) Trunks on First Route Reached through Toll Tandem. If you are connected to the circuit request operator, repeat your order, "Priority (no.), (cld. pl.)," to her and wait for her to obtain an idle circuit for you, proceeding as in "a(2)(a) or (b)." Meanwhile, if your supervisor thinks it warranted, she may try to locate a trunk that is being held elsewhere in the office.
 - (3) NC Report from an Intermediate Operator on First Route. Acknowledge with "Priority (no.). I'll hold the circuit," and wait for her to obtain a trunk for you, meanwhile trying any authorized alternate route.

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- (4) Overflow on a Dial or Key Pulsing Trunk, or Repeated Reorder from Tandem. At frequent intervals, try the first route and any alternate which you know or your supervisor authorizes, except that, on an alternate if you reach the circuit request operator, proceed as in "(2)," or if you reach an intermediate ringdown operator who reports "NC," proceed as in "(3)," until the supervisor directs you to pass the full details of the call to Long Distance. The supervisor will do this in accordance with local directions or when in her judgment, circumstances indicate that this would ensure faster completion.
- (5) Posted Delay on a Required Route. Do not give a posted delay report to the customer but handle the call as though all trunks are busy.
- (6) Called Line Busy. Proceed as in "a(5)" but do not offer to interrupt conversation. If, however, the calling party asks you to interrupt conversation on the called line or states that the call is sufficiently important to warrant immediate connection, take steps to have the call announced on the called line as on an emergency call in Gen. Div., Sec. 5.

4. GIVING REPORTS OF CIRCUIT CONGESTION TO THE CALLING PARTY. If the customer is on the line and you have said nothing in his hearing for some time, give a suitable report at about one minute intervals, such as "I'm trying to secure a circuit to (cld. pl.). One moment, please?" or, for a report after the first one, "I'm still trying to get a circuit. Hold the line, please?" If you encounter posted delay or continued NC and are to continue to handle the call, do not give the report of posted delay or NC but in the case of a Priority 1 call use a report such as that above, and on a Priority 2 or 3 call, simply say for example, "I'm sorry but the circuits are busy now (are still busy). I'll call you as soon as one is available."

5. AT AN INWARD POSITION YOU RECEIVE AN ORDER INDICATING A PRIORITY CALL. Give the call special care as regards such matters as ringing, watching for recalls, etc.

After you give a busy report, if the calling operator says, for example, "Priority (no.), (Cld. no.) busy, I'll hold the circuit," say, "Right." Make a memorandum of the called number and of the fact that it is a priority call. Then watch the line closely to seize it as soon as it becomes idle or make attempts to secure it at frequent intervals. If the line is still busy at the end of five minutes, reach the calling operator, if necessary, repeat the busy report, and when she acknowledges, disconnect.

After you give a busy report, if the calling operator on a priority call says, "Interrupt conversation," at once proceed in general as for an emergency call in Gen. Div., Sec. 3.

6. PROCEDURE ON USE OF A CIRCUIT FOR A PRIORITY CALL WHEN THAT USE IS CHALLENGED.

a. Operator Announces an Emergency War or Priority Call on a Busy Circuit.

- (1) When an operator has announced an emergency war call (includes Priority 1, air raid warning, army flash etc.), the other operator involved should acknowledge with "Right" and permit the first operator to use the circuit unless the second operator is also handling an emergency war or priority call. In this case the second operator should say, for example, "Holding for priority" and the first operator should release and try another circuit.
- (2) When an operator has announced a call as a priority call (either Priority 2 or Priority 3), the other operator involved should acknowledge with "Right" and permit the first operator to use the circuit unless one of the following conditions exists
 - (a) If the second operator is also holding the circuit on a priority call, she should say, for example, "Holding for priority," following which the first operator should release and try another circuit.
 - (b) If the second operator is holding the circuit waiting for a station answer, she should say, for example, "Waiting for an answer," in which case the first operator should release and try another circuit.

b. Two Operators Simultaneously Try to Secure an Idle Circuit. If an operator has plugged into a circuit and meets another operator with an incoming call, the first operator should say, for example, "I have a priority (no.) call, (time at which priority requested)," following which the second operator should permit the first operator to use the circuit. If, however, the second operator has a call of higher priority or one of the same priority with an earlier time, she should announce this fact and the first operator should give her the circuit.

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- c. In Response to a Supervisory Signal, Circuit is Requested for an Emergency War or Priority Call. The operator who answers the supervisory signal should proceed as in "a" and if she is to give the circuit to the other operator she should disconnect it or in the case of a ring-down trunk, split the connection if there is one, and wait on the trunk for further orders. If customer conversation is interrupted an explanation should be given and an offer made to reestablish connection as soon as possible.