

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Senator Peggy A. Pendleton, Chair  
Representative Douglas J. Ahearne, Chair  
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

**FROM:** Charles A. Jacobs, Deputy Commissioner  
Department of Administrative & Financial Services

**DATE:** April 19, 2000

**SUBJ:** Report on the Implementation of the Policy on the Use of Automated Telephone Answering Equipment

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Section 1, Resolves 2000, Chapter 90, requires the Commissioner to report in writing to the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government on the efforts of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services to implement the new policy on the use of automated telephone answering equipment by all state agencies. Attached please find a summary report from each cabinet agency. The summaries include information required by Chapter 90. There have been no changes to the policy since it was presented to the Committee in January.

If the Committee requires further information, we would, of course, be happy to provide it.

CAJ:sjt

cc: Chris Spruce

Attachment

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**Report to State & Local Government Committee  
April 19, 2000**

**LD 2176 “Resolve, to Require Certain Reports Concerning the Use of Automated  
Telephone Answering by State Government”**

**DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FINANCIAL SERVICES**

**Commissioner’s Office**

The Commissioner’s Office is in full compliance with the policy.

**Bureau of Accounts & Control**

Maine State Government has established a policy for all State agencies to follow on the usage of voice mail. This policy is effective February 14, 2000. Listed below are the Bureau’s guidelines which all employees will be expected to follow in order to abide with the statewide policy.

1. Beginning on January 26, 2000, there will no longer be a recorded message on the Bureau’s main line (287-4600). Any incoming calls on this line will be answered by the receptionist (Lorrie) or backup personnel. Calls will be transferred and announced to employees. **NO CALLER WILL BE TRANSFERRED TO VOICE MAIL WITHOUT BEING ASKED FIRST.** It will be the caller’s decision if they prefer to leave a message on the voice mail system or leave a message with the receptionist. All hand written messages will be delivered to employees, but it would be helpful if all employees check in with Lorrie periodically for messages.
2. If an employee is at their desk, they are expected to answer their telephones. Telephones are not to be left ringing for voice mail to pick up. *All calls are to be answered.*
3. Effective immediately, all employees are expected to update their voice mail daily. No one should have the system greeting on.
4. All messages must:
  - give the option to press “0” to reach someone else.
  - give another employee’s phone number, if you have a backup person.

Some examples of voice mail messages are as follows:

- If an employee is in, but is on another line (May also be used for daily message, when in the office):

“You have reached \_\_\_\_\_(name). Today is \_\_\_\_\_(day) and I am in the office today. However, I may be on another line at the moment and will return your call as soon as possible. If you need immediate assistance, please dial \_\_\_\_\_ (“0” or another number).

- If an employee is in , but is away from their desk at a meeting, lunch, etc.:

“You have reached \_\_\_\_\_(name). Today is \_\_\_\_\_(day/date) and I will be away from my desk until \_\_\_\_\_(time). Please leave a message and I will return your call as soon as possible. If you need immediate assistance please dial \_\_\_\_\_ (“0” or another number).

- If an employee is away from the office for vacation:

“You have reached \_\_\_\_\_(name) and I will be on vacation from \_\_\_\_\_(date) until \_\_\_\_\_(date). You may leave a message and I will return your call when I return or please dial \_\_\_\_\_ (“0” or another number) for immediate assistance.”

- If an employee is away from the office due to sickness the employee may call into their voice mail from home and change the message. In case of an emergency (accident, etc.) the bureau receptionist\* will place a message on the employee’s phone:

“You have reached \_\_\_\_\_(name). Today is \_\_\_\_\_(day/date) and due to illness I will be out of the office all day. Please leave a message and I will return your call as soon as possible. If you need immediate assistance please dial \_\_\_\_\_ (“0” or another number).

\*All employees are asked to give Lorrie the passwords on their voice mail. This is for emergency purposes only (accidents, lengthy illness, etc.) All passwords will be kept CONFIDENTIAL.

By following these guidelines, our customers will be served in a much more efficient manner. If you have any questions, please contact Joe Shaw or Debbie Jenney.

### **Bureau of Alcoholic Beverages & Lottery Operations**

The Bureau of Alcoholic Beverages and Lottery Operations has implemented all of the policy for the use of automated telephone answering equipment except item number three; There will be no "layered" menus for office application. Due to two divisions (Liquor and Lottery) we have 2 layers.

### **Bureau of the Budget**

Effective April 6, 2000, staff of the Bureau of the Budget have taken the following steps to implement the new policy on automated telephone answering equipment:

- In the event all of the Bureau staff are out of the office, incoming calls will be directed by call forward to the location of the meeting, to the Commissioner’s Office or to Telco (e.g., staff meeting, Bureau Quality Council meeting, etc.).

- Staff will program their voice mail, as suggested in the policy, to indicate they may not be immediately available but will return the call as soon as possible. The selection of “0” to reach someone else in the office will be an option. Staff who are out of the office for one day or more (e.g., meetings, vacation, sick leave, etc.) will ensure that their voice mail message indicates where they are and when they are expected to return.
- All voice mail will include the option of pressing “0” in order to reach someone with whom to speak.
- Callers who are transferred will be advised that they may reach voice mail but will have the option to press “0”, if they so desire, in order to reach someone with whom to speak (Note: In some circumstances, staff taking incoming calls may not be aware that the person to whom the call is being transferred is at his or her desk).

### **Bureau of Employee Relations**

The Bureau of Employee Relations meets all of the requirements of the policy. We have one incoming line to the office with a rollover line when busy. We do not have menus and all personal lines have a "0" option with a voice mail option.

### **Bureau of General Services**

Agencies in compliance or partial compliance:

Full Compliance –

Risk Management

Purchases

Printing

Postal Center

Surplus Property

Building Control

Partial Compliance –

Professional Services Division

Property Management

Custodial Services

Lease Space Division

Schedule to reach full compliance

Those agencies in partial compliance will be fully compliant no later than May 15, 2000. This is necessary to accomplish needed operational and technical adjustments in accordance with the policy.

Problems Encountered

All published numbers have a zero (0) option as required. The logistics to arrange for a zero (0) option for every person with voice mail are complicated. In addition, an internal test is required

of each telephone number to be sure the zero (0) option is listed in the recorded message. This effort is planned to begin late May.

### **Bureau of Human Resources**

With regard to general policy for answering telephone calls, the Bureau implemented a new telephone policy in December 1999.

With regard to the use of automated operator functions:

- The main office does not employ the use of the automated operator functions, other than individual voice mail. Policy regarding the use of individual voice mail is detailed in the December 6, 1999 telephone policy.
- The Division of Employee Health and Benefits encourages telephone calls to individual lines, but the Division also uses automated services for calls coming into the main line. This service directs incoming callers to either Health and Benefits or to Workers' Compensation, or to "press 0" to talk to the receptionist. Calls directed to Workers' Compensation are answered by a service representative. Calls directed to Health and Benefits are further instructed to call our health and dental providers directly for certain services (phone numbers for our providers are repeated twice), or to "press 0" to speak to an operator.

The Division of Employee Health and Benefits implemented the automated system because the number of calls received by the office often means that all service representative lines are busy. The system helps by providing a means for callers to leave messages for routine services, such as requests for specific forms. We are currently evaluating the automated function in the Health and Benefits Division, in conjunction with the use of E-mail and web based services, to minimize the number of calls received by the office for routine services, and to maximize the number of incoming calls answered by a service representative.

### **Bureau of Information Services**

- "0" Option

All telephones in the Bureau of Information Services do have the "0" option. When the "0" option is pressed by the caller, the call will be transferred to a BIS Administrative support staff person or to the State of Maine Telephone Operators.

- Auto Attendant for the BIS Help Desk

The BIS Help Desk (624-7700) does offer a menu with options to assist the caller:

If the caller knows the extension they can press it immediately, OR  
Press 1 for Network/System problems  
Press 2 for Computer, Hardware, Software problems  
Press 3 for Telephone, Voice Mail problems  
Press 4 for MACWIS problems  
Or stay on line for the next available assistant.

During business hours, Help Desk calls will transfer to the Administrative support staff if the Help Desk staff is not able to pick up a call. For assistance on weekends, or from 5:00 pm to 7:00 am, callers are directed to the BIS Computer Operations shift employees for assistance.

### **Maine Revenue Services**

The MRS phone system is driven by volume. We have made an effort to meet the intent of DAFS policy notwithstanding our view that much of our telecommunications activity does fall within the "call center" exception. The Income Tax call center, alone, received over 400,000 calls in 1999, of which we answered over 333,000 (the rest of the people hung up before their call came up in the queue. Probably most of them successfully called later.) A great deal of thought, planning, and testing has to go into any change we make to our phone system, no matter how minor the change. We have invested much of our resource in improvements to the phone system, in an attempt to meet public demand, enhance customer service, and comply with legislative requirements.

BIS Telco is unable to provide the number of incoming calls for 287- Centrex numbers. Digital 624- and 626- numbers can provide incoming call statistics but we have never asked for them. Changes are required in the monitoring software at BIS Telco. We have asked for this to be done for selected 624-, 626- numbers.

MRS has four auto-attend phone numbers with menus, all of which are published (287-2076 is the general MRS number, 287-2011 is for Property Tax, 287-2336 is for Sales Tax, and 626-8475 is for Income Tax). Additionally, we have a call center for Income Tax; the Telefile, Teletax, and Telerefund numbers; and the Forms ordering lines.

Referring to the bulleted items in the "Policy on the Use of Automated Telephone Answering Equipment", we note the following:

- None of the four auto-attend numbers have a clearly stated "0" option, early in the recording. We will make that change to the recordings. Most published numbers comply with this, as do most personal numbers with voice mail. A few divisions do not have a receptionist, so there is not a well defined place to send "0" options for them. A receptionist has recently been added in Compliance and all their "0" options now go to that number.
- All "0" options that are defined go to a live person during business hours.
- Only one of our auto-attend numbers (287-2076) has layered menus. Three of the five options go to another menu. Unless 287-2076 can be given to a receptionist, we have no other choice.
- Two of our menus have five options. Both have been reduced to five from longer menus. We will continue to try to shorten them. After talking with many of the people who monitor the various auto-attend numbers, we find that we receive no significant number of complaints about the menus or the wait. There has been no perceived reduction in the number of complaints since the menus were shortened and improved. No actual complaint statistics have been kept.
- There is no voice mail on receptionist numbers during business hours.

- Employees who deal with the public and who have voice mail have been, and continue to be, instructed in the use of voice mail. They are told to not use voice mail for call screening and to change their greeting, if possible, when they are not available for extended periods. Several do not have a viable "0" option.
- Receptionists are instructed to ask before transferring to voice mail. Without the employee password, receptionists or co-workers cannot change the voice mail greeting or options on another person's voice mail. Employees are instructed to transfer their phone to a co-worker or change their voice mail greeting if they are going to be out of the office for an extended period.

#### Accomplishments

1. In early March, a receptionist was designated for Compliance, to answer the 287-3301 published number. This phone has become the "0" option for 38 people in Compliance, none of whom previously had a viable "0" option. This was our largest remaining group without a viable "0" option.
2. In March the Property Tax menu at 287-2011 was redone to reduce the number of menu items from five to three. This seems to be satisfactory.
3. In February, the Income Tax menu at 626-8475 was redone to reduce the number of menu options from nine to five. Results seem satisfactory.
4. Most employees throughout MRS have been reminded in the proper use of the "0" option, to forward their phone when absent for an extended period, to change their greeting when appropriate, to answer their voice mail promptly, and to not use voice mail to screen calls.

#### Action Plan

1. A clearly stated "0" option, early in the recording, will be implemented on all menus by May 12, 2000.
2. The remaining employees who do not have a well defined "0" option will have one assigned and their voice mail setup, at BIS Telco, will be changed to reflect this, by May 26, 2000.
3. We will review the use of 287-2076 with the objective of shortening the menu and removing layering, by May 26, 2000.
4. We will review the menus with five options with the objective of reducing the number of menu items to four or fewer, by May 26, 2000.

#### **Division of Financial & Personnel Services**

For the Division of Financial and Personnel Services (DFPS):

- DFPS does not have an auto attendant system.
- All employees will verbalize the "press 0" option on their standard voice mail messages.
- All DFPS phones have our main number (287-4500) as the "press 0" option. A "live person" answers the main line from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. daily, and breaks are staggered to ensure full time coverage of that line.
- The main number (287-4500) is not sent to voice mail from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. daily.



- No caller is transferred to voice mail without first being asked if that is acceptable.
- All employees will indicate scheduled absences on their voice mail messages, and will include the “press 0” option in those messages.
- In the case of unscheduled absences, the absent employee's voice mail will be disabled and his/her phone will be forwarded to his/her supervisor.

## **DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

The Department of Agriculture is in compliance with the following items of the new policy:

- Recordings provide a “0” option.
- The Department has eliminated the “layered” menu format. No menus are in use at this time.

The remaining items within the new policy are currently being addressed. We have assigned a staff member to review the issues, work with other department staff to define possible solutions, and to present proposals for review. That process began approximately one week ago. We expect the research period to last approximately 4-5 weeks.

One issue in particular is going to be difficult to address. The Department has one unit that has only one secretarial position. This unit currently utilizes voice mail during business hours when the person needs to be away from the workstation. The policy clearly prohibits the use of a “0” option going to voice mail during business hours. Although this is not an insurmountable issue to address, it will require careful consideration and planning to change.

## **DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION**

The majority of the Department’s staff is located at parks, historic sites, and field offices. Most of the parks are not staffed year around and will not open until May. At that time, we will review our policy at these sites for automated telephone answering equipment, and report back to you.

For the headquarters office in Augusta, we do have some automated equipment. We are in the process of organizing an internal group comprised of members from each of our five bureaus to determine the extent to which we can comply, and a timeframe for doing so. We do anticipate several areas where it may be very difficult to totally comply unless additional staff are hired or we use the statehouse operators. We assume if need be, we will be able to use the statehouse operators as we do now--in cases where someone calls in sick and the backup goes to lunch, etc. We will report back to you by July 1, 2000.

We have not had any responses from the public to this policy.

## **DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**

The Department of Corrections has implemented the policy on Automated Telephone Answering Equipment.

The Department has a number of facilities, regions, as well as Central Office.

Those who work at our facilities can activate voice mail at their respective phones with their "0" being a main switchboard which is manned 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

Our regional offices vary in size. The larger offices have one or more clericals so if a person calls and dials "0", they will be able to speak to a live person. The Department does have numerous one and two person offices with no clerical support. Those offices do not have voice mail but do have answering machines.

Some concerns for our Department are: Central Office does not have a "live" person after 4:30 P.M.; one suggestion was to have a call waiting feature on the phones; another was to be sure each person has a 2 line phone at their workstation.

## **DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, VETERANS & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

1. This report is a summary of the implementation actions of the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management and it's three Bureaus:

a. Maine Emergency Management Agency

The Agency has no telephone lines with voice mail during business hours. Calls are answered by an operator who takes messages. During non-business hours, an answering machine is utilized with a "0" option for emergencies that is answered by the Maine State Police Dispatch Office.

b. Bureau of Veterans' Services

The Bureau has no telephone lines with voice mail during business hours. During non-business hours, calls are answered by an answering machine.

c. Military Bureau

The current voice mail system does not comply with the policy in that it does not support the "0" option requirement. Callers can make a selection only at the end of the recording that will forward them to a receptionist. A new Voice Mail/Automated Answering System (AUDEX) is currently under review for cost and compliance. A July purchase and November installation is anticipated.

2. To date, the Department has not received any public reaction to the policy.

## **DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

The Department of Economic & Community Development is in compliance with the requirements of the new policy.

## **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

The Department of Education is in compliance with the requirements of the new policy.

The Department is now reviewing numbers that are posted on the web to make sure all listings are correct.

## **DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

- Provided the policy to all employees when it was issued.
- Have never had front line automated answering lines, and no nested menus.
- Nearly all of the policy is the way we were already doing business.
- Only continuing work is every now and again reminding employees to keep their voicemail updated.

## **DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

The Department of Human Services is generally in compliance with the policy.

With regard to the regional offices:

- Voice mail is not allowed on any telephone number publicly listed (central answering points) in the Bell Atlantic telephone directories.
- These published numbers are not left unattended. If the regular employee is unavailable, a substitute performs the functions or the "ring" is forwarded to another central answering point for a live response.
- Other employees have been directed to provide an "0" option on their individual voice mail to connect to a live person during business hours.
- There are no menus on voice mail applications.
- We have been providing copies of the policy to employees and expect everyone to comply with the prescriptions therein as well as the spirit of the policy.

The ability to comply with the full policy is limited in the new South Paris office for technical reasons. The Department and BIS are working to resolve this.

Also, with some smaller office non-AT&T Systems, it may not be possible to forward the central answering points.

## DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has worked diligently to serve its customers in all areas, and recognizes the limitations of voice mail and automated answering services. To that end, we have been working with our employees and the Bureau of Information Services to insure that we are in compliance with State policy.

As you know, the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has offices throughout the State. Many of these offices are regional field offices that do not have clerical support, as such, one of the biggest challenges we face is complying with the guideline that all "0" options must always go to a live person during business hours. We are exploring a number of options and working closely with the Bureau of Information Services to address this concern.

In regards to all other elements of the State's policy, I am pleased to report that the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has no issues in conforming to the guidelines listed. If you have any questions regarding this issue, please contact Rick Record at 287-5210.

## DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

NAME: MDOL Bureau, Division or Office	Date MDOL formal policy distributed for review NOTE: No auto answering on publicly listed phones lines	Planned formal review	Planned implementation	Planned Implementation validation dated (Not later than)	Date actually validated
OAS	4/14/2000	4/19/2000	4/26/2000	5/15/2000	
OIP	4/14/2000	4/19/2000	4/26/2000	5/15/2000	
OHR	4/14/2000	4/19/2000	4/26/2000	5/15/2000	
OFS	4/14/2000	4/19/2000	4/26/2000	5/15/2000	
BRS	4/14/2000	4/19/2000	4/26/2000	5/15/2000	
BES	4/14/2000	4/19/2000	4/26/2000	5/15/2000	
BLS	4/14/2000	4/19/2000	4/26/2000	5/15/2000	
DAH	4/14/2000	4/19/2000	4/26/2000	5/15/2000	
LMIS	4/14/2000	4/19/2000	4/26/2000	5/15/2000	
MLRB	4/14/2000	4/19/2000	4/26/2000	5/15/2000	
BUC	4/14/2000	4/19/2000	4/26/2000	5/15/2000	
MCC	4/14/2000	4/19/2000	4/26/2000	5/15/2000	
OOP	4/14/2000	4/19/2000	4/26/2000	5/15/2000	
OOO	No Auto Answering	No Auto Answering	No Auto Answering	No Auto Answering	

Key; (OAS) Office of Admin Service (BRS) Bureau of Rehab Services  
(OIP) Office of Information Processing (BES) Bureau Of Employment Services  
(OHR) Office of Human Resources (BLS) Bureau of Labor Standards  
(OFS) Office of Facilities Services (DAH) Division of Admin Hearings  
(LMIS) Labor Market Info. Services (MLRB) ME. Labor Relations Board  
(BUC) Bureau of Unemployment Comp. (MCC) ME Conservation Corps  
(OOP) Office of Operations (OOO) Office of the Commissioner

## **DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES**

The Department of Marine Resources strives to provide professional and courteous service to our constituents and the general public. To meet that goal, we have taken measures to implement the requirements of the new policy on Automated Telephone Answering Equipment. The following steps have been taken to implement this policy.

The following reception lines at the Department are attended by a live operator during Department business hours, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday:

- Hallowell Administrative Services office (624-6550)
- Bureau of Resource Management's West Boothbay Harbor facility (633-9500)

We are also working toward implementing a plan to have reception lines to the Bureau of Marine Patrol attended by a live operator during all business hours. Those lines are:

- Bureau of Marine Patrol Administrative Offices in Hallowell (624-6571)
- Bureau of Marine Patrol, Division 1 Headquarters in West Boothbay Harbor (633-9595)
- Bureau of Marine Patrol, Division 2 Headquarters in Lamoine (667-3373)

The Department expects to have the plan for the Bureau of Marine Patrol in place shortly; we will inform you when we have fully implemented the plan. Callers to all of these lines are always asked first if they wish to be transferred to voice mail if the staff person is not available.

The Department has informed all our employees of the new policy both through staff meetings and by publishing in our newsletter and on our intranet web site. We invite you to review those at: <http://only.state.me.us/dmr/Intranet/Newsletters/March13-27.pdf>

We have informed all employees that they should regularly update voice mail messages and that they should always indicate the '0' option to callers.

To date, we have had no reaction from the public to this policy to report to you.

## **DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH, MENTAL RETARDATION & SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES**

The Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services is in compliance with the new policy and has not experienced any problems in implementation.

## **DEPARTMENT OF PROFESSIONAL & FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Recently all agencies within the Department of Professional and Financial assessed their compliance with the Policy on the Use of Automated Telephone Answering Equipment dated February 14, 2000. This report indicates our efforts that have been made to address the implementation of this policy in the following areas:

- There must always be a clearly stated “O” option on every published number and every number with voice mail. This option must be stated early in the recording.

RESULT: All agencies are in compliance with this guideline including every published number and every number with voice mail.

ACTION STEPS: Agencies have required the use of the “O” option on every published number and voice mail and have made changes where appropriate. The option is stated early in the recording.

- All “O” options must always go to a live person during business hours.

RESULT: All agencies are in compliance. There are, however, circumstances when an “O” option will move to a secretary or another staff member before reaching a live person.

ACTION STEPS: Agencies have required this option and are currently reminding staff of the policy.

- There will be no “layered” or “nested” menus for office applications.

RESULT: All agencies within the department are in compliance.

- Menus for office applications should normally be limited to four.

RESULT: All agencies are in compliance.

- There will be no voice mail on reception numbers during normal business hours.

RESULT: All agencies are in compliance.

- Voice Mail should be updated when out of the office to include the day(s) the employee will be out and an explanation that by pressing “O” the caller will reach a receptionist.

RESULT: All agencies are reminding employees that it is necessary to update these voice messages when appropriate.

- Individuals who are responsible for answering published numbers for their units should be responsible for:

Asking each caller if they would like to be transferred to voice mail when the person they are trying to reach is unavailable. No caller should be transferred to voice mail without being asked first.

Making sure the voice mail of co-workers who are unexpectedly out of the office for the day is handled appropriately.

Reminding all co-workers to leave a voice mail greeting which describes where they are and when they will return.

RESULT: All agencies are in compliance. A copy of this policy is being electronically transferred to all employees within the department.

CONCERNS: The caller need not know where the employee is but when they will return to the office. The live person who answers the "O" option should be aware where the person is and how to reach them during their absence when appropriate.

COMMENTS: All agencies within the Department of Professional and Financial Regulation have reviewed the telephone coverage path list that was provided by the Bureau of Information Services. Adjustments have been made when any phone line was found to be out of compliance with this policy. The dissemination of the policy to all employees will remind employees that they are responsible for following these guidelines.

We have also shared the Policy with all boards affiliated with the Department and believe that they are making efforts to comply with the policy.

#### **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

The Department of Public Safety has implemented the new policy. It has been distributed to DPS employees.

The vast majority of telephones that fall under the legislation are in compliance and the few that are not will be addressed in the near future.

There are three phones with layered menus that will be revised: State Bureau of Identification - 624-7009, State Police Licensing - 624-8775 and Fire Marshal Licensing - 624-8744. There are also a number of employees who will need to be retrained on voice mail procedures to familiarize them with the system and how they can utilize voice mail to better serve the public and themselves.

Two common problems cited by employees about the new policy are:

1. In small offices and bureaus, there is commonly only one receptionist and if they are away from their desk, a voice mail is preferable to having the telephone ring with no answer or getting a busy signal. With voice mail, the caller at least has an option to leave a message vs. no one answering the telephone.
2. It is very common to transfer telephone calls to another extension, but it is nearly impossible to determine if that call will be answered direct or go to voice mail, because the person on that extension may already be on the phone.

We pride ourselves at Public Safety in serving the public and giving prompt answers to telephone calls. I am not aware of any adverse reaction by the public to our past phone procedures and we will work toward improving that service in the future.

