

Police Radio Calls Coded to Save Time

"Calling State car 10. Calling State car 10. Fresno Ten 82."

Radio fans who get a kick out of listening to police radio calls might hear the foregoing call any day. It is one of the code calls contained in the list authorized by the California Police Radio Association. And they might get a kick out of hearing it for, translated in the code book, it means "Reserve hotel room with bath for officer in Fresno." But more likely they would never hear it, for, like 891 other listed code calls, it is seldom used.

Fans Seek Information

Inasmuch as Lt. William H. Durham, head of the Los Angeles Police Communication Division, complains he has recently been swamped with requests for code-call lists, indicating that countless fans are interested in the police calls, it may be pertinent to outline a brief description of the call system. It might not only be helpful to Lt. Durham, who says he has no facilities for providing the general public with such lists, but also be informative to the fans.

The local department uses hardly more than a dozen code calls. The more common are 211 for robbery, 459 for burglary, 510 for speeding, 390 for drunk, 415 for a disturbance, 501 for drunk driving a felony, and 404 for a riot. The numbers correspond with the number of the section of the California Penal Code or Motor Vehicle Code describing the offense.

Used to Save Time

Code numbers are used not as a matter of secrecy, but to save time and avoid misunderstandings in transmission of instructions to radio cars, according to Durham.

This is explained tersely by the codes committee of the Police Radio Association. They say: "The loss of time due to transmission of superfluous words can be considerable in the course of a year. This time can be considered entirely wasted."

"The use of a standardized code increases the efficiency and effectiveness of our radio communication facilities."

There you have the reason for the standardized code. All police departments equipped with radio broadcasting systems use the same code. But as explained by Durham, not much or it locally.

"If we were to use all of them each officer would have to carry a code book with him and waste time looking up the calls," Durham says.

Some Used Regularly

And so having the long list would not be of much interest to police call fans. Some of the calls would mean little anyway. For instance "Ten 12" means "visitors present." "Ten 31" means "Is lie detector available?"

So if you know the principal calls for robbery, burglary and kidnaping, as already listed, you will have the codes you need to get a kick out of the calls.

