

# DAILY NEWS



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## Melky 'cycles' Yanks over Chisox

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### 'HE'S NOT A KOOK'

### 'Bomber's' mom speaks

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# OFF THE HOOK



### News survey flunks more than 40% of precincts in answering public's calls

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HOLDING FOR THE NYPD

# Calling these precincts is a waste of your time

THE DAILY NEWS CALLED all of the city's 76 police precinct stationhouses at least seven times in June and July. Reporters found 44 of the precincts were rated "acceptable" — 57.9% — meaning that five of the seven times reporters called, they reached a person or a machine in fewer than 10 rings at the main stationhouse switchboard. Here are the best and worst of what the News found:



BRYAN PACE

## BEST

- **MANHATTAN 20th:** Automated answering system; calls answered immediately
- **MANHATTAN 7th:** Person picked up six times after one ring; one time after two rings
- **QUEENS 100th:** Person picked up five times after one ring; two times after two rings
- **BROOKLYN 81st:** Person picked up four times after one ring; twice after three rings; once after four rings
- **BROOKLYN 71st:** Person picked up twice after one ring; four times after two rings; once after three rings

## WORST

- **BROOKLYN 66th:** 52 rings before busy signal; 50 rings before busy signal; 36 rings before call dropped; 31 rings before person answered; 16 rings before person picked up and hung up; 10 rings before person answered
- **BRONX 44th:** Straight to busy four times; 33 rings before busy; 25 rings before busy; two rings before person picked up.
- **BRONX 46th:** 29 rings before busy signal; 20 rings four times before busy signal; five rings before person picked up and hung up; three rings before person picked up
- **BRONX 48th:** 23 rings before busy signal; 20 rings before busy signal; straight to busy three times; 15 rings before person picked up and hung up; six rings before person picked up.
- **MANHATTAN 9th:** 20 rings before machine picked up; 17 rings three times before machine picked up; 12 rings before person picked up; 10 rings twice before person picked up

## News finds long waits when dialing cops

CALLING THE COPS? Good luck getting through.

A Daily News survey found it's nearly impossible to reach anyone at the front desks of many precinct stationhouses across the city.

The lines are busy. The phones ring off the hook. Or, even worse, cops pick up the phone — and slam it back down.

As part of a month-long probe, The News telephoned all 76 neighborhood precinct stationhouses across the city at least seven times at varying times of day.

The results are a wakeup call. More than 40% of the stationhouses were found to be "unacceptable."

For an "acceptable" rating, cops had to pick up in fewer than 10 rings on at least five out of seven calls.

The News also went out to precinct stationhouses to observe the front desk in action — or, in some cases, inaction:

■ At a Bronx stationhouse The News caught a uniformed officer twice pick up the phone and immediately hang it up after a reporter discreetly dialed from the waiting area.

■ In Queens, we watched cops chatting next to a phone ringing — silently — off the hook. The ringer wasn't even on — or it was broken.

■ In Manhattan, a reporter saw four cops near a ringing phone, including one eating pizza, and no one bothered to answer it — even after 35 rings.

"I'm 72 and I'd be there till I was 82 if I waited around for them," said Diana Cubero, a writer from Kensington, Brooklyn, who last year spent 30 minutes trying to reach the 66th Precinct stationhouse in Borough Park, Brooklyn — the worst in the city, The News found.

"They have great cops in there," added Cubero, who had to call back several times to lodge a noise complaint. "But they can't pick up a phone."

Transfers were also a problem. At the 104th Precinct stationhouse in Ridgewood, Queens, when The News asked to be transferred to Community Affairs, the phone rang 175 times before a reporter gave up.

"You hold on while it keeps ringing because you're hoping, please, somebody pick up," said Queens shopkeeper Constantine Kalpaxis, 56, who had to wait and wait to reach the 104th last summer to complain about idling in front of his Fresh Pond Road store.

Meanwhile, cops at the 102nd Precinct stationhouse in Richmond Hill, Queens, said their out-of-date phones couldn't transfer a call. At the 22nd Precinct stationhouse in Manhattan, which covers Central Park, a cop said only one out of four lines could transfer.

"We need new phone systems in

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our precincts. They are outdated," said Maria Thomson, president of the 102nd Precinct Community Council. "Everything gets through eventually, but unfortunately, it's not usually through the telephone system."

At the 66th Precinct, reporters got through in fewer than 10 rings only once.

Twice, the stationhouse's phone rang at least 50 times before there was a busy signal. Once, someone answered the phone after 15 rings — and then hung up.

In all, The News got the hangup treatment eight times at seven precincts.

NYPD brass dismissed the findings. Spokesman Paul Browne said NYPD spot checks this year found only 19 of 97 neighborhood and specialized precincts failed to answer the phone promptly. The NYPD fails a precinct if the first call rings more than 15 times and a second one more than 10 times.

"When deficiencies are identified . . . remedial action is taken through training, equipment, disciplinary action or all three," Browne said, adding that the 66th Precinct got a perfect score on the most recent tests.

Browne, who stressed that callers should use 911 for emergencies and 311 for other issues, also said precinct phones are supposed to go to a busy signal after 20 rings.

Not all precincts had problems. The 20th on Manhattan's upper West Side aced The News' test by having an easy-to-use automated system that picked up on one ring.

The 100th in Rockaway Beach, Queens, got a perfect score even without a fancy system, by having an officer always answer within two rings.

"I see it when I'm there," said Danny Ruscillo, president of the 100th Precinct Community Council. "They can be in the middle of a conversation and I see them pick up the phone."

Cops on the beat told The News many officers dread answering the phone.

"Everybody acts like a boss, and doesn't bother picking up a phone," admitted one Brooklyn cop. "If you pick up the phone you are stuck with whatever . . . is coming out of the receiver."

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