

Communications Advances Aid Cincinnati Policemen

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Enquirer Reporter

Changes are in store for station X.

Station X, Cincinnati police communication center, is the place people call by phone to have policemen dispatched to them by radio.

When the center moved from the old tower in Eden Park to the third floor of District One station on Lincoln Park Drive in early 1970, the purpose was to gain more room for equipment to supplement the Personal Radio-Equipped Patrolman (PREP) radio system.

The pending changes to be made this summer, involve added personnel and more equipment for the trolman is issued a \$1000 same purpose.

Each Cincinnati patrolman with a microphone attached to his coat shoulder. With the radio an officer can contact Station

X, or other officers on the street, from anywhere in the Greater Cincinnati area. He is no longer tied to his car.

"PREP radio paid for itself the first night it was in use," Sgt. Raymond "Rod" Davis said, "when one of the guys, out of his car at Third and Plum Streets, was attacked by two men. He called for help and got it."

The new dispatching system, developed on the advice of outside experts in radio communications, divided the city into halves and allotted one frequency each to three of Cincinnati's six police districts, Col. William Bracke said.

Two other frequencies were available, one for conversations between officers on the street, and the other for inquiries on wanted persons, cars and guns.

A CONSOLE at Station X has a computer screen,

and the operator can tap state, regional and national files for wanted persons and stolen items.

"With these radios, each officer is carrying the equivalent of a volume of every wanted person, every stolen car and every wanted gun in the country," Bracke, head of the police communications section, said.

The use of PREP and the supplemental computer system increased manpower hours by 20%, Bracke said, and allowed the officers the added security they need in their work.

Station X personnel was trebled to 67 men in 1970 to handle the new system. But even with the added manpower, Com Sec overloaded police radio channels, Sgt. Thomas Condon said.

Com Sec, or Community Sector policing, was initiated 75 days ago. It put

more officers into the streets of District One, now split into six sectors. Police working a sector as a team developed rapport with their residents, and received more information to use for more complete enforcement of the law.

THE POLICE of Price Hill and the Clifton-College Hill area, who shared a radio frequency with Com Sec, discovered their radio time taken up by the men of District One, Condon said.

"On a warm summer weekend night, we handle between 400 and 600 dispatches," Patrolman James Burton said.

"We expect to handle two million transmissions this year," Bracke said.

As a result, Com Sec has been given a frequency of its own, and uses that channel for all radio work, including inquiries that were made on a separate channel.

At present three men answer any of the 96 telephone lines coming in to Station X, write the address and description of the complaint on a color-coded card and hand deliver the card to a dispatcher.

This summer, the three will be increased to six and the cards will be carried to the dispatcher by a conveyor, Bracke said. This will allow quicker handling of complaints.

Up to now, only one console at Station X has been equipped to handle computer-linked inquiries. Officers on the street often had to wait to get access to the computer.

To end this bottleneck in one of the most important parts of Cincinnati police communications, an added man will be stationed by each of the three dispatchers. This man will handle a computer screen, to be added to the desk, for inquiries, Bracke said.

IN THE PLANNING state is an additional staff of 12 people at Station X. These Secondary Complaint Operators will handle the many calls to the center that do not require police presence.

Another item in the planning stage is call-stacking. Call-stacking involves the rating of complaints by their seriousness into three categories: Urgent, Expedite and Routine, Bracke explained.

If a person is hurt or in danger, a red Urgent card will be used and a policeman sent immediately, if a crime is reported, but the criminals have fled and no one is hurt, a green Expedite card will have an officer dispatched within five minutes.

If the complaint does not involve people but property, and affords no danger to anyone, then an officer will be sent within 15 minutes.

The system is to assure that a limited number of

police officers are available for the calls they are most needed for, Bracke said.

POSSIBLE PLANS in the future for Station X include a system, now in use in Dallas and Seattle, which gives each telephone operator a visual data screen, on which he types the call. The message is stored automatically in the computer memory bank, and can be transmitted to the screen of the dispatcher by a flick of a button.

At present, tapes and cards with time punches on them are used to keep track of all police runs and all calls to the center.

Microwaves may be used in the future for police radios, making police communications independent of the telephone lines now used to transfer the radio messages.

Automatic car locators may be installed in the center so the dispatcher could tell at a glance which car is closest to the scene of a given event, Davis said.

"We were the first major police force in the United States to go to PREP radio," Bracke said. "We are continuing to plan five to 10 years ahead of ourselves."



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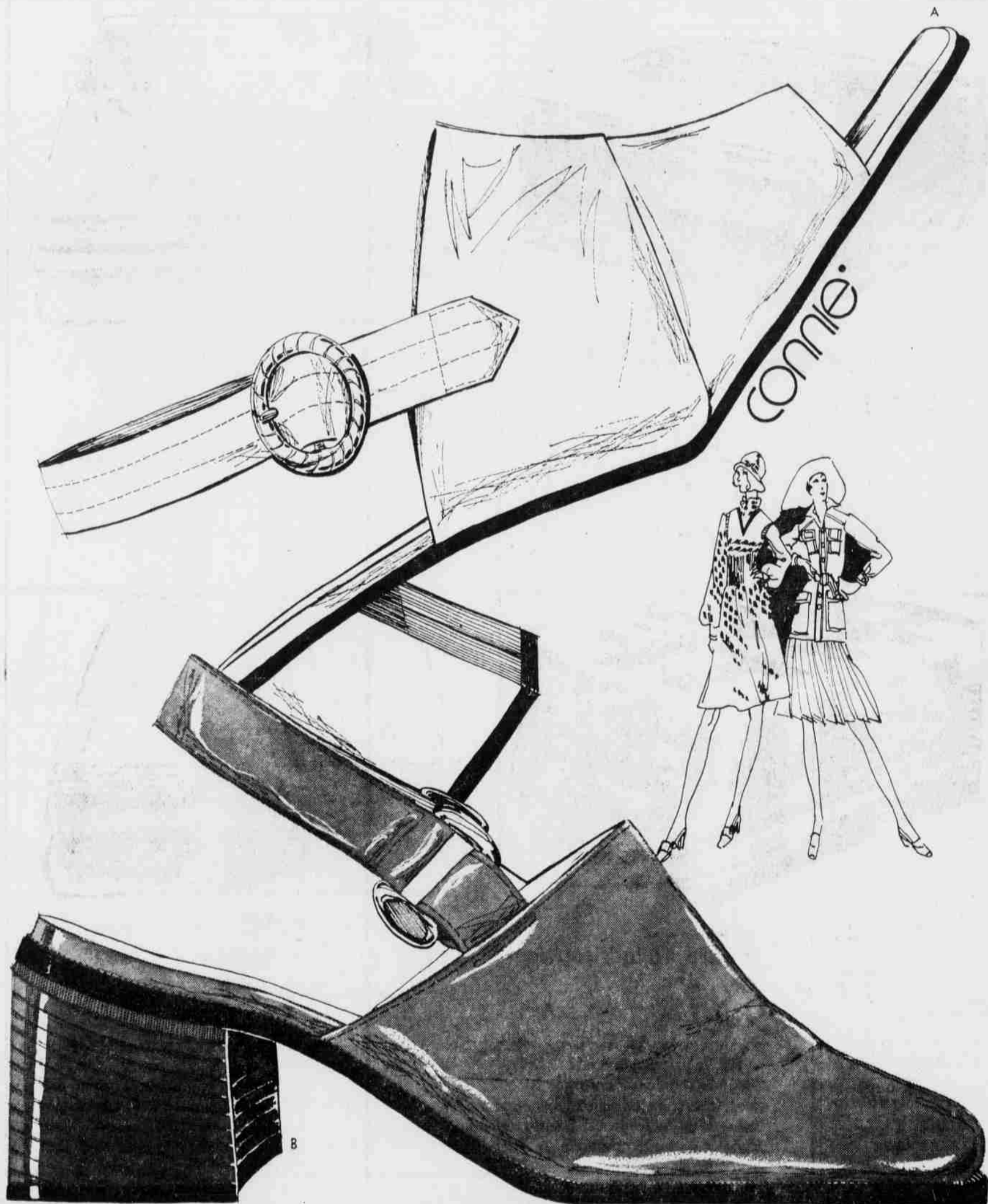
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