



Responding to a Citizen

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the MTAS website ([mtas.tennessee.edu](http://www.mtas.tennessee.edu)). This website is maintained daily by MTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee municipal government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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It's important to keep in touch with citizens who have asked for service or have complained. If the request is made in person or on the phone, the first contact is to acknowledge receipt of the request and thank the citizen for the information. Some cities also contact the citizen upon completion of the work.

When acknowledging receipt of a service request by letter, e-mail or phone, it's typical to give a date the request will be handled and to name the department handling it. In a centralized system, it's a good practice to have the department give the citizen a call back the same day, since many problems may be resolved before a letter is received.

Callbacks and e-mail are significantly less expensive than letters for towns with a lot of citizen service requests. Charlotte, N. C. aims for a one-day callback. The citizen is told when the work will be done, that the work is completed, or why it can't be done at all. Most cities will track work progress for any citizen who asks.

Many cities make contact with a citizen only when the request is satisfied. Towns with smaller budgets and those with a large amount of service requests should remember that a phone call or e-mail is cheaper than postage. Another option is to leave a notice at the citizen's door after the work is done.

DISCLAIMER: The letters and publications written by the MTAS consultants were written based upon the law at the time and/or a specific sets of facts. The laws referenced in the letters and publications may have changed and/or the technical advice provided may not be applicable to your city or circumstances. Always consult with your city attorney or an MTAS consultant before taking any action based on information contained in this website.

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