



ANN ARBOR FIRE DEPARTMENT

Standard Operating Procedures – 7.04 Radio Communication



RADIO COMMUNICATION

Effective: November 3, 2023
 Scheduled Review: November 3, 2026
 Approved: Fire Chief Mike Kennedy

I. PURPOSE

The intent of this policy is to provide direction on radio communication.

II. SYSTEMS

Michigan Public Safety Communications System (MPSCS): The MPSCS is the primary radio system used by law enforcement, fire, and EMS in Washtenaw County. This system has a capacity of thirteen (13) voice paths, i.e., thirteen people can talk on separate talkgroups simultaneously. All MPSCS Washtenaw County and Statewide Event talkgroups are recorded by the Washtenaw County Radio Consortium.

If on MPSCS and the user is “bonked” when attempting to get a channel grant (chirps), the system is busy, and there are no voice paths available at that moment. Having pressed the PPT (press to talk) button once, the user should wait for the channel grant tone and not continue to press the PTT button. The system knows that a request to talk has been made and will notify the user with the channel grant chirp when the next frequency is available. When the user hears the channel grant, press the PTT button and talk. If there is a queue of users waiting for a frequency, pressing the PTT button will take you to the end of the line each time you press it.

If additional talkgroups are needed for sector / division / group assignments, the Incident Commander may consider using the Zone F 7 TAC direct talkgroups. This will reduce the load on the trunked talkgroups. The 7 TAC talkgroupss are conventional radio to radio frequencies and do not have the capacity limitations of the trunked MPSCS or U-M talkgroups. MPSCS Direct (Talkaround) Channels: 7 TAC 51 Direct, 7 TAC 52 Direct, 7 TAC 53 Direct, 7 TAC 54 Direct, 7 TAC 55 Direct. Scan will not work when on 8TAC talkgroups. Central Dispatch will not hear the portables on 8TAC talkgroups. Depending on the physical proximity of the incident to Central Fire Dispatch, Central Fire Dispatch may be able to hear mobiles on 8TACs. However, all communications with Central Fire Dispatch shall continue to be on 81Fire1 or an InterOp.

III. TALKGROUPS

FIRE 1: The Ann Arbor Fire Department and Pittsfield Township Fire Department share “Fire 1” as their primary dispatch talkgroup. This talkgroup is on the Michigan Public Safety Communications System (MPSCS) and is assigned by the Washtenaw County Radio Consortium. For routine EMS incidents, fire alarms, and general service incidents, AAFD and Pittsfield Twp will do all communications on “Fire 1.”

InterOp: For incidents that require three (3) or more apparatus and / or two (2) or more departments, Central Fire Dispatch will assign an InterOp talkgroup. All responding units assigned an InterOp talkgroup will complete all radio traffic on that assigned talkgroup, i.e., enroute, arrival, requesting additional resources. When departments are assigned an InterOp talkgroup, the dispatcher will reserve the next corresponding InterOp talkgroup for the command staff to use as needed.



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The dispatchers will need to monitor both interop channels. This second interop channel will no longer be announced during the initial dispatch.

Zone A Radio Profile

Position 10 – “Ann Arbor Fire” is a private talk group for AAFD. No permission is needed to use this. Intended uses include training or weather events. Central Dispatch and other fire departments do not have this talk group. It is on the MPSCS, so scan features will work.

Position 11 – “UM MD” is for medical direction from U-M Hospital. This is to speak with an ER doctor regarding protocol deviation or medical direction.

Position 12 – “UM Ops 1” is on the U-M radio system. This system is completely stand-alone from the MPSCS. This talk group works enterprise wide at U-M: medical school, hospital, NCRC, College of Engineering, Central Campus, tunnels, etc. If personnel are getting “bonked” on an InterOp, personnel need to go to “UM Ops 1” or “UM Ops 2”. DPSS Dispatch and officers have this talk group.

Position 13 – “UM Ops 2” is on the U-M radio system. This system is completely stand-alone from the MPSCS. This talk group works enterprise wide at U-M: medical school, hospital, NCRC, College of Engineering, Central Campus, tunnels, etc. If personnel are getting “bonked” on an InterOp, personnel need to go to “UM Ops 1” or “UM Ops 2”. DPSS Dispatch and officers have this talk group.

Position 14 – “Fire 1 Backup” is the equivalent of “Fire 1” but on the new U-M radio system. This is if there is a catastrophic failure of the MPSCS. Dispatch operations can go to this talk group and have communications throughout the City of Ann Arbor.

Position 15 – “7 TAC 53 direct” is the same as prior. This takes us off the MPSCS. This is radio to radio with very limited range. It is better for building penetration or task level inter-crew communication without the need to speak with a dispatch center.

Position 16 – “81 Com” this is an open talk group to both Central Dispatch (EHP) and Metro Dispatch. Both centers listen to this all day, and this is the primary way the centers communicate. If an officer needs a law enforcement response, checking on the status of an unsecure scene, or any other law enforcement issue, the officer is best to go to 81 Com and call Metro Dispatch direct, e.g., “Metro from Ann Arbor Rescue 1-1 please send PD to 727 Miller for a combative patient” or “Metro from Ann Arbor Engine 1-6, is our scene on Eisenhower secure?”

IV. OUT OF RANGE

When crews are working in non-U-M buildings such as underground structures or large, concrete buildings, there is possibility that portable radios will experience a communications loss, otherwise known as “out of range.” This means the portable radio cannot reach a tower and is no longer connected to the MPSCS.



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When crews enter a building and hear an out of range indicator the following shall occur:

- A. Crews shall immediately stop and retreat to where their portables re-connect to the MPSCS. Crews shall not proceed into a building without communications.
- B. Central Dispatch will be advised of the situation, and the battalion chief shall be requested to respond to the scene.
- C. Upon arrival of the battalion chief, the battalion chief shall move the mobile radio in the battalion chief vehicle to 7TAC53D. All crews entering the structure will move to 7TAC53D. 7TAC53D is in the A zone of all radios. The battalion chief shall establish communications with the crew prior to entering the structure. A portable in the battalion chief vehicle shall be on 81Fire1.
- D. All radios shall be returned to 81Fire1 prior to leaving the scene.

V. RADIO IDENTIFIERS

Radio identifiers are modeled after the standard forth by the Washtenaw Area Mutual Aid Association. In addition to this SOP, AAFD has adopted the Washtenaw County Central Fire Dispatch Communications Handbook.

Radio designators are comprised of three parts.

- A. Radio designator type
- B. Department base number
- C. Number

Examples include “Engine 1-6” or “Rescue 1-1.” Similarly, stations would be identified as “Station 1-5”

- A. Chiefs, training division, mechanic division, and fire prevention shall follow the following standard.
Fire Chief: Chief 1 (Using only the designator and base number.)
Assistant Chiefs: “Chief 1-2” and “Chief 1-3”
Training Officer: “Training 1-1”
EMS Coordinator: “Training 1-2”
Logistics Officer: “Logistics 1-1”
Fire Marshall: “Fire Prevention 1-1”
Fire Inspectors: “Fire Prevention 1-2” and “Fire Prevention 1-3”

Unless assigned an incident-specific identifier, e.g., safety, personnel assigned to an apparatus will use the following protocol.

- Officer: “Rescue 1-1”
Driver/Operator: “Rescue 1-1 Driver”
Senior fire fighter: “Rescue 1-1 Fire Fighter 1”
Second senior fire fighter: “Rescue 1-1 Fire Fighter 2”



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Other fire departments in the county may identify individual command officers or fire fighters using their department base number, followed by the officer abbreviation (“C” for captain, “L” for lieutenant, “S” for sergeant, and “F” for firefighter), followed by a number. Examples include 12-C-3 (Twelve-C-Three) or 10-L-2 (Ten-L-Two) or 16-F-26 (Sixteen-F-Twenty-six). This format should be used by AAFD personnel when a member is communicating on the radio who is not associated with an apparatus and who does not have an administrative identifier. This may be applicable in situations when individuals are using administrative vehicles for training or are on specialty teams. The “number” used will be the individual’s NFIRS number. An example would be “1-F-187.”

When communicating on talk groups to dispatch centers other than Central Dispatch or to agencies outside of Washtenaw County, radio users must identify themselves as members of the Ann Arbor Fire Department as the initial part of their identifier, e.g., “Engine 1-6” would become “Ann Arbor Engine 1-6.”