



ANN ARBOR FIRE DEPARTMENT

Standard Operating Procedures – 3.05 Communications



COMMAND FUNCTION #5 – COMMUNICATIONS

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Approved: Fire Chief Mike Kennedy

I. COMMAND FUNCTION #5 - COMMUNICATIONS

The major goal for this command function is for the IC to initiate, maintain, and control effective incident communications.

Effective incident communications provide the very practical connection between and among the three management levels of the organization; the strategic, tactical and the task levels. Incident communications are the information “carrier” that the team uses to connect, commit resources, and to create effective, coordinated action.

II. USE PLAIN TEXT

We conduct incident operations using plain text communications that are directed toward the completion of the tactical priorities. The use of plain text (common English) is NIMS-compliant, as opposed to 10-code signals and other odd numbering based systems.

Where multiple agencies/disciplines operate together, the participants must all use plain text to share incident information.

III. FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

Face to face communication is the most effective form of communication. It should be the preferred form of communication on the task and tactical levels of the incident site. Face to face communications should be used whenever possible in the following circumstances:

- Company officers communicating with their crew members.
- Company officers communicating with other company officers in their work area.
- Tactical level bosses communicating with units assigned to their geographic location.

The entire purpose of placing an IC in a command post is to create the best possible communication environment. In the CP, the IC can more effectively monitor and control radio communications.

All members working on the fireground will avoid distracting the IC with face to face communications. Command must be the person to initiate this form of communication, and it should only be performed when the incident hazards have been controlled.

IV. GEAR COMMUNICATIONS TOWARD COMPLETING THE TACTICAL BENCHMARKS

Communications should focus on the completion of the tactical priorities and firefighter safety. This will help keep communications short, to the point and effective. It also leaves airtime free for important tactical messages that affect everybody working in the hazard zone.



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When the IC properly assigns Engine 1-3 to: “Lay a supply line to the Alpha side, stretch an attack line to the interior of the Delta 1 exposure for a primary search and check for fire extension. I’m going to make you Delta,” it becomes the basis for Engine 1-3 to structure their CAN report back to command. “Delta to Command, we have a primary all-clear in Delta 1, we have opened up the ceilings and have a working attic fire. We are applying water and opening up more ceilings. We’ll need another company to assist in Delta 1 with fire control in the attic space.”

V. UPGRADE THE FAST ATTACKING COMMAND POSITION

Most of the time, the operation will start out with the first arriving company officer on an Engine company. Initial arriving, fast attacking IC’s (IC #1) have a narrow window of being able to produce clear and concise radio communications before putting themselves in the worst communications position possible, in full PPE operating in a hazard zone.

Therefore, it is very important to use the very beginning of the event to transmit a complete Initial Radio Report (IRR) and Follow-Up Report before entering the hazard zone, when IC #1 is in their best communication position. These two reports tell other responding units exactly what’s going on at the incident, what the first arriver is doing about it, and where they will be located on the incident site.

These two initial reports also allow a fast attacking IC to complete the first 5 functions of command before they enter the hazard zone. This frees them up to then engage the problem and command the incident using a portable radio.

IC #1 from that point on the operation is in a position to quickly assign the next 2-3 responders to critical areas around the scene, but they are not in position to process lots of information or manage a large amount of resource. The entire response team must understand the communications position IC #1 is in, and support the IC by properly following all hazard zone SOP’s.

VI. LISTEN CRITICALLY

We put an IC in a strategic command post (outside the hazard zone, inside a vehicle designed to be a command post) so they have an ideal position to send and receive information. Companies operating in the hazard zone are in the worst positions for effective communications.

Many hazard-zone distractions can cause communications problems. The IC needs to understand this when communicating with operating companies. Companies also must understand that their portable radios provide the only communications link to the outside world. The command system depends upon coherent communications between the IC and the operating units.

All hazard zone transmissions shall be carried out on one (1) tactical radio frequency.

Some incidents may require the use of multiple radio frequencies in order to support operations outside of the hazard zone, e.g., Level 1 & 2 staging, Rehab, Safety, Planning, Logistics.



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Each additional channel activated for the incident must have a dedicated person assigned to manage that channel at all times. The IC must only be responsible for the operation of one (1) tactical radio frequency while an active hazard zone exists.

VII. USE THE ORGANIZATION CHART AS A COMMUNICATIONS FLOW PLAN

Dividing the incident scene into S/Ds has a positive and profound effect on the communications process. When the IC assigns S/D officer responsibilities to the officers initially assigned to the different key tactical positions, it starts to manage their span of control and enhances the entire communications process.

In cases where the IC has not implemented/assigned SDG officers, they will have to communicate directly with each individual unit assigned to the incident scene.

Any time there are two or more units working in the same geographically area, Command should designate one of the units the geographic supervisor and all communications from that area will be from the tactical supervisor to the IC.

S/D officers will communicate with their assigned companies over the radio or face-to-face depending on their proximity to one another. Preferably, face to face. The S/D officer will communicate with the IC over the tactical channel.

VIII. MAINTAIN COMMUNICATIONS AVAILABILITY

The IC should not be in a tough communications position when they are operating in the command position. An IC working from a command post must focus squarely on the unit's operating in the hazard zone. This is how we manage strategic-level safety and coordinate the work required to complete the tactical objectives.

The IC must always operate the system (build, expand, reinforce) in a way that allows them to stay connected to the companies operating in these hazardous positions.

IX. UTILIZE THE STANDARD ORDER MODEL

The order model outlines the communications steps we follow to ensure messages are always received and understood despite the rushed, confusing and dangerous conditions we typically face during operations. The order model also standardizes how the incident's participants will exchange two-way radio communications. The order model's required steps are:

- A. When the sender is ready to transmit a message, they call the receiver to determine if they are ready to receive the message;
- B. The receiver then acknowledges the sender;
- C. When the sender receives the readiness reply, they can transmit the message;
- D. The receiver then gives a brief restatement of the message to acknowledge the receipt of the message; and
- E. The sender restates the message if misunderstood.

X. BASIC TYPES OF RADIO TRANSMISSIONS

There are 7 basic communications we routinely perform on the fire ground. They are:

- A. Initial Radio Report
- B. Follow-Up Report
- C. Assigning Units



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- D. Command Transfer
- E. CAN Reporting
- F. Roof Reporting
- G. Offensive to Defensive Strategic Shift

XI. BEGIN & CONTROL COMMUNICATIONS UPON ARRIVAL WITH A STANDARD INITIAL RADIO REPORT

The initial IC begins the command, control and communication process with an IRR. This report provides dispatch, as well as everyone else responding to the scene, with a size-up of conditions seen from the initial command position. It also provides an initial situation status report to those listening in, such as non-responding companies, bosses still in quarters, and staff officers.

The IRR is not an affidavit of absolute accuracy; it's just a quick snapshot of the incident that provides a "word picture" of what the IC can see from their command position when they first arrive on-scene.

The IRR must include the following reporting elements:

- A. Clear Alarm, announce your arrival on the scene
 - B. Building/area description
 - C. Describe the problem
 - D. Action being taken – Initial I.A.P.
 - E. Declaration of the Strategy
 - F. Resource Determination
 - G. Assuming and Naming of Command
- A. Clearing alarm: This accomplishes several things
- It insures that you deliver the IRR on the correct channel. If you clear Alarm on the wrong channel, they should immediately direct you to the correct tactical channel.
 - It notifies all other responders you are about to deliver an IRR and assume command
 - It automatically activates Level 1 Staging to go into effect.
- B. Building/area description: Will be described in 3 different categories:
- **Size:** the size of the structure should be defined by the overall area of a structure under roof. We should base our size description on how it relates to the areas we can cover with a 200 ft handline and the maximum depths that we can safely achieve inside the structure. Size will fall into 4 different categories:
 - Small - 200 ft line can access 100% of the potential fire area.
 - Medium - 200 ft line can access 75% of the potential fire area.
 - Large - 200 ft line can access 50% of the potential fire area.
 - Mega, huge, gigantic - 200 ft line can access less than 25% of the potential fire area.



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- **Height:** Identifying the height of a structure is very important to all responders. Every floor (or story) that is added to a structure makes it a more complex problem and tactically challenging for all the incident players.
 - Use the number of stories above grade to describe the height of a structure.
 - Use the number of sub-levels (basements, parking garages, etc.) to describe the depth below grade of a structure.
- **Occupancy type:** This will many times drive our IAP. Identifying it on the IRR paints a picture to all other responders of the type of situation they're responding into. Here are some basic, common occupancy types:
 - Single family residence
 - Apartments
 - Townhomes
 - Row houses
 - Restaurant / bar
 - Public assembly
 - Commercial
 - Big Box
 - High rise
 - Institutional
 - Strip Mall

Apartment complexes gives us a much greater tactical challenge with arrangement as it relates to access, exposures, water supply, handline lengths, ladder/truck access, possible standpipe issues, master stream application, etc.

Complexes must be identified in the very beginning of the event and there must be a standard response to this information:

- No other unit should enter large complexes until the exact location of the problem is located and identified to units' level 1 staged.
- Placing pumper's in key tactical positions early on in the incident is critical as it relates to handline lengths and water application.

C. **Describing the problem:** For the fire service, this usually means we are describing "Fire Conditions". The following are four (4) terms that are to be used when describing fire conditions:

- Nothing showing
- Smoke showing
- Working fire
- Defensive fire conditions

The term "working fire" indicates a situation that will at least require the commitment of all responding companies.

This report advises dispatch that the companies will be engaged in tactical activities and will be held at the scene for an extended period of time.



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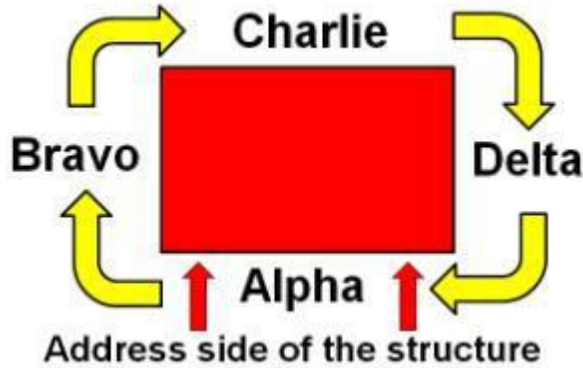
The location of the problem must also be identified on the IRR. This includes reporting:

- What floor the problem is located on
- For longer buildings (apartments, strip malls, etc.) middle or what end (Bravo or Delta)
- For larger structures – What side of the structure is problem located on

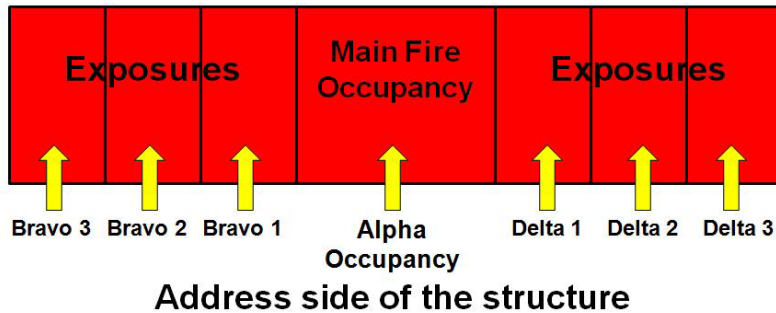
Describing what the problem is and where it is located paints a very good picture to everyone on what the scene looks like and where the subsequent arriving units will probably fit into the IC's IAP.

Geographic Landmarks:

Sides of a building will be described as:



The Alpha side of the structure is "usually" the address, street side. There will be many situations where it is not clear where the Alpha side is. In situations where there is any confusion on the incidents landmarks, initial arriving IC's must make it clear where the Alpha side is located.



Exposures: We identify exposed structures to the main fire occupancy by the side they are on starting with the closest, moving to the next exposure and so on. When the IC can give the exposure number and the occupancy type/apartment number it greatly enhances our directional sense of awareness.

Floors: Are identified by stories above and below ground level. Using divisions, the individual floor will take on the same floor number as the division (floor 2 becomes "Division 2").



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Floor 4 – Division 4
Floor 3 – Division 3
Floor 2 – Division 2
Floor 1 – Division 1
Sub-Floor 1 – Sub-Division 1
Sub-Floor 2 – Sub-Division 2

D. **Initial Incident Action Plan (IAP):** Incident action plans describe our operational plan for completing the tactical priorities. IAPs should be short and to the point. The initial IAP should include the following:

- Tasks of the initial arriving unit
- Location of the tasks
- Objectives of the tasks

Tasks: Some of the standard tasks that should be include in the IRR:

- Investigating (nothing showing)
- Establish a water supply
- Stretching handlines
- Operating a master stream
- Performing forcible entry (takes a while)
- Performing a physical rescue

Location of those tasks should include:

- What floor will you be operating on
- What occupancy/exposure will operate in
- What side you’ll make entry on
- What side will you be operating on (defensive)

The tasks objectives should center on completing the tactical priorities for the chosen strategy. They are:

- Search/Rescue = Primary and Secondary “All Clears”
- Fire Control = “Under Control”
- Loss Control = “Loss Stopped”

E. **Declaration of the Incident’s Strategy:** Overall operational strategy is divided into only two categories: Offensive or Defensive.

- Offensive operations are conducted inside a hazard zone
- Defensive operations are conducted outside of the hazard zone - in safe locations

Declaring the incident strategy up front, as part of the initial radio report will:

- Announce to everybody the overall incident strategy.
- Eliminates any question on where we will be operating on the incident scene (inside or outside the hazard zone).



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F. **Resource determination:** First arriving IC's must match the incidents problems with the resources required to solve the incidents problems. The request for the appropriate amount resource must happen at the beginning of the event, where our window of opportunity has the greatest chance for success. One of the following resource determinations must be made on the IRR:

- Cancel the original assignment
- Hold the original assignment (lights/sirens vs. normal traffic)
- Upgrade the original assignment
- Strike additional alarm

G. **Assume and name command:** The absence of an effective IC is the most common reason for ragged incident beginnings and unsafe endings. Effective (and coordinated) action is the result of beginning (and ongoing) incident operations with an in place and in charge IC.

Use location/occupancy to name command. The radio designation "COMMAND" will be used along with the major cross road, or the specific occupancy name of the incident site, i.e. "Main Street Command", "Michigan Stadium Command."

The designation of "Command" will remain with the IC throughout the duration of the entire incident.

XII. FOLLOW-UP REPORTS – 360'S

The initial radio report is usually performed from the front seat of an engine company. Once the report has been given and Central Fire Dispatch acknowledges that report (using the order model) the company officer of the unit is probably out of the cab and has started to go to work.

Follow-up reports make the IRR a little shorter and they give the initial IC a little bit more time to size-up the situation. The follow-up report will probably be the last radio transmission a fast attacking IC gives before entering the hazard zone. This report gives the IC a "last chance" to give clear, concise information before they don full PPE and enter the hazard zone.

Follow-Up Reports should include the following information after a 360 has been performed:

- A. Verify the fire's size, location, and extent (if different from the IRR)
- B. Verify basement type (if present) and the stories from the Charlie side
- C. Verify the life safety profile of the incident
- D. Confirmation of the initial Strategy
- E. Any changes to the initial IAP stated on the IRR (if necessary)

Number of stories on the Charlie side: The number of stories from the rear will need to be announced in the follow-up report if the stories don't match up to side alpha. This does not include the basement.



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Example: There is one-story presenting on the Alpha side. On the 360, you have one-story on the Charlie side with a walk-out basement. This would still be considered a one story structure and should be reported as, “One story on the Charlie side with a walkout basement”.

Basement conditions must be identified before entering the structure whenever possible. Conditions in the basement will need to be reported on using the four standard narratives to describe smoke and fire conditions.

Life Safety: Immediate life safety issues are the primary reason we do 360's on residential occupancies. The first thing to note on the Charlie side is whether or not there are any immediate life/safety rescue concerns. If there are any rescue issues, the IC will need to announce it over the tactical channel and re-adjust their IAP to address the life safety issue(s) present.

Confirmation of the initial Strategy after performing a 360-degree assessment: The overall incident strategy must be re-confirmed as part of the Follow-Up report.

Changes to IAP: Performing a 360 gives the initial IC a view of all sides of the fire to report on. Most of the time, the initial strategy stated on the IRR will not change. But there are times when the 360 size up will require a change in the initial strategy and/or the IAP stated on the IRR. These changes must be announced over the tactical channel in the Follow-Up report. If there no changes to the IAP stated on the IRR, the initial IC does not need state this on the initial follow-up report. The entire response team will assume the initial IAP has NOT changed from what was stated on the IRR.

Any immediate safety concerns: This includes:

- Potential collapse area
- Hazardous roof structure
- Power lines down or arching
- Gas meter/tank exposed to fire
- Swimming pools

XIII. ASSIGNING UNITS

Incident operations are conducted around the completion of the tactical priorities. Incident communications should mirror this simple concept. This will help keep communications short, to the point and effective. It also maximizes the available free airtime. The IC must structure unit assignments around:

- Addressing the incident’s critical factors
- The completion of the tactical priorities
- Tactical reserve (on-deck)

When subsequent arriving units arrive to Level 1 staging locations, they will simply announce that they are Level 1 staged; “Engine 1-4, Level 1 staged.” Command will then contact Level 1 staged units and assign them to the incident site based on their IAP.



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Orders to Level 1 staged units should be structured in a T.L.O format:

- Tasks
- Location of the tasks
- Objectives of the tasks

Location of those tasks should include:

- What floor to operating on
- What occupancy/exposure to operate in
- What side to make entry on
- What side to operating on (defensive)

When assigning a unit to deploy a handline, the IC MUST designate the following:
What the company needs to do with their apparatus:

- Lay a supply line
- Pump a supply line
- Spot your apparatus out of the way (manpower only)

Where the company will get their handline from:

- Their own company
- Another forward pumper designated by the IC

The tasks objectives should center on the completion of the tactical priorities for the chosen strategy. They are (objective = completion benchmark):

- Search/Rescue = Primary and Secondary “All Clears”
- Fire Control = “Under Control”
- Loss Control = “Loss Stopped”

When assigning companies to areas that already have units assigned, the IC must inform the unit being assigned of who they will report to/work under. The IC must also contact the area supervisor and inform them of the unit being assigned to their location.

XIV. COMMAND TRANSFERS

When a fast attacking IC transfers command to a subsequent arriving command officer, they are physically located in the hazard zone, so the transfer will take place using a portable radio. Command must be transferred in a standard manner. The following sequence represents a standard command transfer:

- Verify that all operating positions match the current incident conditions
- Announce your arrival to scene (Dispatch will acknowledge)
- Contact the current IC using the Order Model
- Verify, document and confirm the position and function of all resources located in the hazard zone with the current IC along with obtaining a CAN report
- Inform the current IC that you’ll be “Taking it from out here”
- Contact Central Fire Dispatch
- Announce that you will be assuming command, “Battalion will be assuming Main St. Command.”
- Re-announce the overall Incident strategy



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- Make a resource determination
- Announce the CP location

One of the following resource determinations must be made when transferring command:

- Cancel the original assignment
- Hold the original assignment (emergency traffic versus normal driving)
- Strike additional alarms

XV. CAN REPORTING

CAN reporting gives firefighters a regular, consistent way to report back to the IC on their progress and needs. CAN reporting keeps things simple and it delivers the IC the information needed to keep the strategy and IAP current. The CAN acronym stands for:

- Conditions
- Actions
- Needs

All CAN reports should start with the tactical objectives that have been completed prior to giving the report. Here is a basic list of reporting items to choose from when providing a CAN report to command:

XVI. RADIO DISCIPLINE

When three to four units (and up) are assigned to the incident site, the tactical channel can start to fill up with unnecessary radio traffic. The two main reasons for this are:

- A. Assigned units are communicating/contacting the IC with non-essential radio traffic.
- B. The IC is communicating non-essential radio traffic.

The IC **MUST** control the radio traffic on the tactical channel or they will not be able to control the overall incident site. The following radio guidelines are to be strictly adhered to when there are units assigned into a hazard zone:

- Know exactly what you are going to say before clicking the microphone to talk.
- Only communicate information on the tactical channel that pertains to the completion of the tactical priorities and firefighter safety.
- Always let communication loops close before clicking the microphone button to talk.
- Let the IC be the one to contact you.
- Always end every CAN report with a NEED assessment (or with “No Needs”).
- Never get on the radio to give good news (All-Clears and PARs) unless it is request by the IC.

- A. **Routine radio traffic:** Routine radio traffic should be the most common communication performed on the emergency scene. In most instances, routine radio traffic should only be initiated by the IC.

Command must structure all routine radio traffic using the Order Model.

Once a Unit is assigned into the hazard zone, they should maintain radio silence unless they are contacted by Command.



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All communications that details the routine work that units perform in their assigned work areas should be done face to face and must not be transmitted over the tactical channel. The purpose of this policy is to eliminate all “good news” reporting over the tactical channel. This includes:

- Knock downs
- No extension reports
- Primary all-clears
- PAR’s

This policy does not eliminate a Unit’s responsibility to contact the IC with:

- Fire control reports
- Status changes
- Roof reports
- Priority traffic

Command may also order a unit to “get back to them” as soon as an information target has been obtained or verified. Unit’s contacting command with an IC information request that result in good news, should structure their report as a standard CAN report using the Order Model, e.g., “Command from Tower 1-1 with a CAN report.” Information requests that result in bad news to the IC should be structured as priority traffic (covered later in the section).

B. Tactical Benchmarks: The following benchmarks shall be communicated over the fireground talk group.

“Water on fire” indicates that the attack line or lines are in operation and have begun extinguishment.

“Primary All Clear” indicates the completion of the primary search and that no victims were located.

“Water Supply Established” indicates a continuous water supply to the fire attach engine is established off of a hydrant.

“Fire under control” will be transmitted when the main body of fire has been extinguished and all seven sides of the fire have been confirmed as having no fire extension (or when extension has been controlled) in an assigned unit’s geographic / operational area. The fire under control benchmark report represents a major shift in the overall focus of the operation going from a water application, to a focus on ventilating the structure followed by secondary searches.

“Fire Out” indicates all visible fire is out.

“Utilities Controlled” indicates all utilities, e.g., gas, electric, have been shut off.



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- C. **Status changes:** A status change is defined as: moving from an assigned work location to a different geographic work location or exiting the structure to recycle or rehab.

Status changes should be given as soon as possible, but the sender must use the Order Model to structure the report. When clearing the IC with a status change, the sender should start the communication with a “status change,” e.g., “Command from Ladder 1-5 with a status change.”

If a unit has completed their entire work assignment, they should contact Command with a status change and request another assignment, e.g., “Command from Engine 1-4 with a status change,” ” Engine 1-4 has a primary all-clear, there is no fire extension to the second floor or the attic space, we are at 75% air, and our NEED is to be reassigned.”

- D. **Roof Reports:** Ladder companies have the apparatus and equipment (ground ladders/power tools) to access and operate on the roofs of most mid-level structures. These units can provide very valuable tactical information to the IC and the rest of the troops about what is going on above interior operating units.

A company assigned to the roof will make the following assessment (size-up) of the roof:

- Type of roof if not easily identified from the ground, e.g., peaked, flat, bowstrung.
- Stability of the roof (stable, unstable)
- Fire or smoke conditions and their location on the roof
- Location of any firewalls
- Unusual heavy roof loads (if present)
- Conditions in the Attic (if known)
- Basic blueprint of the building if unusual

Any roof report containing significant tactical information should be given to the IC shortly after the roof company has made access to the roof and has obtained the information. The sender must use the order model to structure a standard report. When clearing the IC with a standard roof report, the sender should start the communication with; “roof report,” e.g., “Tower 1-1 to Command with a roof report.”

Reports from the roof containing any of the following information should be structured as priority traffic and should be made as soon as possible:

- Unstable roof
- Eminent collapse potential
- A locally identified hazardous roof structure (bow stung)
- Working fire in the attic space

- E. **Priority Traffic Reports:** Once a unit is assigned into the hazard zone, they should maintain radio silence, and wait to be contacted by the IC. The following are



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examples of the ONLY instances where a unit can break radio silence. These transmissions should be structured as Priority Traffic reports, e.g., “Command from Delta – Priority Traffic.” and they MUST be transmitted as soon as the information is obtained:

- Unable to complete a critical assigned task/tactical objective
- Urgent need to be reinforced/backed-up to complete an assigned task/tactical objective
- Victims encountered
- Working concealed space fires not easily controlled by the locating unit
- A roof report that includes: attic fire, unsafe roof structure, eminent collapse threat
- Sudden, significant incident events (flashover, back draft, collapse)

All Priority traffic reports are to be direct to and acknowledge by the IC. Having Central Fire Dispatch acknowledge priority traffic reports will greatly slow down the IC’s ability to quickly readjust their IAP and/or Strategy based on these reports.

Unit/members with priority traffic are allowed to break into the order model of routine radio traffic to deliver their priority traffic report. Once the IC has acknowledged the priority traffic report, they should conclude their radio transmission with the unit whose traffic was broken into.

All communications that details the routine work we perform in our assigned areas should be done face to face in the work area and must not be transmitted over the tactical channel. Wait for the IC to contact you if you do not have bad news (the above list).

XVII. EMERGENCY TRAFFIC

Emergency traffic should only be used for true emergencies.

The IC is the only person who can initiate an emergency traffic report. Companies operating in and around the hazard zone will contact the IC with priority traffic reports and the IC will determine the need for emergency traffic and the corresponding tones. When emergency traffic is given, the IC will contact Central Fire Dispatch directly to initiate the report. Once emergency traffic has been requested, the Central Fire Dispatch will immediately activate the emergency traffic tones. It is very important to get the emergency traffic tones transmitted as soon as possible. The sooner they are activated, the sooner the IC and all other affected units can initiate corrective action(s).

The emergency traffic report should be structured in the following manner:

1. IC will contact the Alarm/Dispatch center directly and ask for emergency traffic
2. Central Fire Dispatch will sound the emergency traffic tones
3. IC will deliver the emergency traffic radio report
4. Central Fire Dispatch center will sound the emergency traffic tones
5. Central Fire Dispatch will repeat the emergency traffic report verbatim on the channel it was given on

Example



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- IC, “Main St. Command to the Alarm/Dispatch center, emergency traffic”
- Central Fire Dispatch sounds the emergency traffic tones
- Central Fire Dispatch, “Go ahead with your emergency traffic Command”
- IC, “Main St. Command to all units, we are going defensive on this structure. All units operating in the fire structure, exit the structure and report PAR’s upon exiting.”
- Central Fire Dispatch sounds the emergency traffic tones
- Central Fire Dispatch, “Central dispatch to all units command is reporting this is a defensive fire on the main occupancy. All units operating exit the structure and report PAR’s upon exiting.”
- Central Fire Dispatch, repeats Command’s radio traffic verbatim

Once the situation that caused the emergency traffic has been mitigated, e.g., PAR’s obtained, power shut off, the IC should contact Central Fire Dispatch and clear the emergency traffic with a brief report stating why. Example; “Central Dispatch from Command”, “Alarm go Command”, “Command to all units 456 Main St. all units have exited the structure with PAR’s. Command is clearing Emergency Traffic and will remain in the defensive strategy. All Units return to routine radio traffic”.

XVIII. OFFENSIVE TO DEFENSIVE STRATEGIC SHIFT

When the offensive strategy is chosen on our initial arrival, most of the time, a well-placed initial attack solves the incident’s problem. But there are many times, that our initial, and sometimes re-enforced attack efforts, do not solve the incidents problems and conditions continue to deteriorate to the point where the critical factors indicate switching from an offensive to a defensive strategy.

IC’s must be very pessimistic in these types of situations, especially if the structure has a primary “All Clear.” Command must change strategies before the building is disassembling itself due to structural damage. When this happens, Command is very late in the strategy shift and on the receiving end of the building’s decision governing the new strategy. The IC must be the single person to make the defensive decision, NOT the building coming apart.

The announcement of a change to a defensive strategy will be made as follows:

- Clear Dispatch – Ask for Emergency Tones/Traffic
- Emergency Tones transmitted
- Announce to all hazard zone units:
- Shifting to the Defensive Strategy
- All Unit’s “Exit” or “Abandoned” the structure
- All Units report PAR’s upon exit
- Dispatch/Alarm repeats Emergency Traffic report - verbatim

“Exit the Structure” will be defined as: an orderly withdrawal where interior lines and equipment will be withdrawn and repositioned/shut down when changing to a defensive strategy.

“Abandoned the Structure” will be defined as: an emergency retreat where all hoselines and heavy equipment will be left in place and all members in the hazard zone will exit the structure as quickly and as safely as possible.



ANN ARBOR FIRE DEPARTMENT

Standard Operating Procedures – 3.05 Communications



A PAR (Personnel Accountability Report) shall be obtained for all units exiting the hazard zone after any switch from an offensive to a defensive strategy. Command's greatest priority once a strategic shift has been initiated is the safe exit of all units located in the hazard zone. Level 1 Staged units and other units working outside the hazard zone shall maintain radio silence until all PAR's have been tallied (unless they have priority traffic).