



Standard Operating Guideline	
SOG Name:	Communication Procedure
SOG Number:	100.5
Standard:	TBD
Guideline Owner:	Emergency Operations – Incident Operations
Implementation Date:	May 31, 2017
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Authority:	Larry H. Williams, Jr, Fire Chief

PURPOSE: Effective management of the current radio system is imperative due to the capabilities and options available that can rapidly tax the human resources in emergency communications. The combined efforts of the Fire Department and Communications Center are necessary to achieve maximum utilization of the system.

A. GENERAL

SECTION 1

The City of Dothan’s Motorola P25 radio system utilizes multiple talk groups in a trunking format to provide City agencies with simulcast transmissions from three tower sites. This system provides coverage for all portable and mobile radios within the City.

SECTION 2

Radios are programmed to utilize multiple talk groups, with designations for Command Personnel and Operational Personnel. Personnel are required to become familiar with the location of the frequencies installed in their assigned radios.

SECTION 3

All portable radio terminals shall be cleaned with an approved cleaner each Monday morning.

B. DISPATCH AND INCIDENT COMMUNICATIONS

SECTION 1

The majority of incidents will be dispatched initially on the “Fire Dispatch” channel. For a multi-company response, the responding Battalion Chief or the Communications Center will assign a tactical operation channel (TAC) when units are dispatched.

SECTION 2

The Communications Center shall make every effort to assign a TAC channel at ringdown of a multi-company response. In this instance, units should not call out en-route on Fire Dispatch and then move to a TAC channel. All communications for the alarm should take place on the assigned TAC channel. Once a TAC channel has been assigned, all units shall switch their mobile and portable radios to the specified frequency. The Company Officer shall acknowledge to the responding Battalion Chief on the specified TAC channel that his /her radio has been changed to the assigned frequency. All units shall remain on the assigned frequency until authorized by the Battalion Chief or Incident Commander to return to “Fire Dispatch.”

SECTION 3

The Communications center will assign a dispatcher, if possible, to monitor the TAC channel. If Communications is not able because of shortage of personnel or workload, they must advise the responding Battalion Chief. Units will continue to operate on the assigned TAC channel. The responding Battalion Chief will monitor TAC and switch back to the “Fire Dispatch” channel to convey any and all radio messages to Communications throughout the incident, for example:

1. Arrival on scene
2. Incident benchmarks
3. Additional resources
4. Accountability reports

Every possible effort will be made by Communications to monitor the TAC channel as soon as possible. Communications will notify the Battalion Chief when they are able to monitor TAC.

SECTION 4

For difficult incidents or an incident of extended duration, a senior fire officer shall report to the senior dispatcher to assist with fire-rescue communications. The non-responding Battalion Chief or a Senior Staff Officer will generally make this assignment.

SECTION 5

The Incident Commander will be responsible for requesting that the Communications Center broadcast and/or page out the incident benchmarks. This request should be made at significant incidents only, i.e.: working fires, hazmat situations, or persons trapped in vehicles, etc.

SECTION 6

To ensure that all members are accounted for at all times, the Incident Commander will ask Communications to give 10-minute notifications during the incident. Also, the Incident Commander shall indicate which operational mode is being utilized.

Example: “Communications to Columbia Highway Command”; “Command to Communications”; “Command, you are 20 minutes into the incident”; “Command copies 20 minutes into the incident, Columbia Highway Command is still in the offensive mode, stand-by for PAR.”

SECTION 7

At all significant alarms, the Incident Commander shall declare the alarm a major incident followed by the type of alarm (i.e.: working fire, hazmat, rescue, mass casualty, etc.). Upon declaring a major incident, the Communications Center shall page out this information on the Fire Command group as soon as possible. After normal office hours, 1700 hours, Communications shall notify the Fire Command group by telephone that a major incident has occurred. If a delay of more than a few seconds occurs in the paging

out of the report, the non-responding Battalion Chief shall be notified immediately that the Communications Center cannot make this page or notification. The non-responding Battalion Chief shall take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the Command Staff is notified.

SECTION 8

The Dothan Fire Department utilizes plain text (**no “10 codes”**) in all radio communications. The Dothan Fire Department also uses the communications order model (repeating information, orders and/or directions back to the sender).

C. RADIO SYSTEM/COMMUNICATION MALFUNCTIONS**SECTION 1**

Occasionally a malfunction in the City’s Radio Systems will occur. Common causes of malfunctions are adverse weather (lightning, wind, storms, etc.), routine repairs, and maintenance. Adverse weather cannot always be predicted, but repairs and maintenance are usually scheduled outage events. For repairs and maintenance, the Radio Shop must notify the Communications Center and forward the information to the Battalion Chiefs at the Fire Department immediately.

SECTION 2

When the Fire Department is aware that routine maintenance is being conducted and radio problems are possible, the Battalion Chiefs shall notify all Company Officers by telephone and/or text message, that all radio communications will be conducted on the back-up radio frequency. The back-up communication system is separate from the City’s normal communication system.

SECTION 3

Anytime that the radio and/or telephone system is not working correctly, the Company Officer must keep the unit’s assigned back-up device in their possession at all times. If the City’s telephone system is not working, the Battalion Chief will notify the Company Officer by cellular of the correct conventional channel or back-up channel to use. back-up unit batteries shall be maintained like the portable radio batteries. Ensure that they are properly charged and discharged on a regular basis.

SECTION 4

If the radio system fails while working at an incident, the Incident Commander must assign someone to run information to all Company Officers that are on the scene. The Incident Commander must notify all units of the correct conventional and/or back-up channel that will be used on the scene. The Incident Commander will keep the Communications Center updated with the appropriate information by cellular telephone.

SECTION 5

Any time the radio fails, one Senior Fire Officer will respond to Communications with a portable radio and cellular telephone. The Officer should report to the Senior Dispatcher

to provide assistance with communications and documentation. This position will be assigned by one of the on-duty Battalion Chiefs.

SECTION 6

The Communications Center is provided with an auxiliary power station. If problems occur at Communications, they may contact Battalion 1 for personnel and generator assistance. This may be imperative to maintain effective Communications for our operational units.

SECTION 7

Any time problems occur with the radio system, the radio technicians must be notified to make immediate repairs. The Fire Chief, Police Chief, and City Manager must be notified if the system is expected to be out of service for a significant period of time. All hospitals and ambulance services must be notified by the Battalion Chiefs and advised of the situation.

SECTION 8

As soon as the radio system has been repaired, the Communications Center shall advise all units that the system is back on line. If there are limitations to the system, the dispatcher must advise these over the air.

SECTION 9

All units not engaged in response work shall return to their quarters and closely monitor the “ring down” line. This action will help ensure that calls are received when we are experiencing radio problems and outages.

(Signature on File)

Larry H. Williams, Jr.

Fire Chief

DOTHAN FIRE DEPARTMENT