



Northeast Fire Department Association

Operations
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Tactical Guidelines: Communications

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NEFDA President

I.

Purpose

The purpose is to establish specific terminology and process for radio communications between NEFDA Departments. It is understood that the clear understanding of all radio messages is imperative for safe and efficient incident operations. Further it is hoped that each NEFDA City will use these guidelines as an internal operations guideline to make these guidelines the standard for internal along with mutual aid responses.

II.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of every member of each department to know and understand the rationale, details, and intent of these procedures. It is the responsibility of each officer to comply with these and to ensure that all members under their command comply.

III.

Terminology

It is extremely important for members of each department to be consistent in the use of terminology used in radio communications. This is important for clear communications between departments, between fire companies and dispatchers. In order to ensure consistent and understandable communications, it is imperative that all members utilize the same terminology. In order to ensure this consistency, the following terminology and procedures are established:

- A. No "10 codes" or other code type messages may be utilized for any message. All transmissions are to be plain English.
- B. Unnecessary and superfluous words such as "show me" or "is going to be..." (as in "Medic 561 is going to be out at" or "show me out at ..."), are not to be used. These types of phrases are meaningless, use air time unnecessarily, and can cause misunderstanding in critical communications. Simply say what you mean to say, much like face to face conversation.
- C. Personnel are to use the following terms when appropriate:
 - 1. "Available" - This indicates that a unit has completed the previous unavailable status and is now available for a call or re-assignment.

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2. “Unavailable” – Used when a company cannot take a call due to mechanical issues, training, etc.
3. “In Quarters” - This indicates that the company has returned to quarters and is available.
4. “Clear” – This indicates (to differentiate from “Available”) that the unit is clear from an incident but not necessarily available for another response. If “clear” is used, “available or “unavailable” will have to be used in conjunction.
5. “Emergency Traffic” – This is utilized to clear communications channels prior to giving an emergency radio transmission.
6. “En-route” or “Responding” (with “address” given) – This is used to indicate that a unit is responding to an incident. Or when a medic unit is leaving the incident scene, transporting to the hospital.
7. “Hold” – If an on scene IC tells the dispatcher to hold a unit or units, the held units are staying committed to the scene. “Hold E565,” the dispatcher and units know that all other units are available (released).
8. “May Day” – This is utilized as a distress call by a lost or trapped firefighter. See NEFDA May Day procedures.
9. “On” or “On Scene (with address)” This is to be used when arriving at the location to which dispatched. It indicates that the company is on location at the incident and is not available for another assignment. It may also indicate that the company has arrived at any other destination to which it has reported to be traveling (e.g., arriving at the hospital when transporting a patient). (*Example: “Truck 561 is on at 200 West Northwest Highway”*).
10. “On the air” -- This indicates that the company is leaving quarters and is available for assignment via radio. Companies should make dispatch aware when they are out of there normal district.
11. “Received” - When the message is “information” only, units may acknowledge with “received”
12. The dispatch center of each NEFDA City shall be designated by the ‘City name followed by “alarm.” (*Example: “Grapevine Alarm”*)

D. Benchmarks

1. “All Clear”- This benchmark declares completion of the primary search or secondary search.
2. “No All Clear” – This benchmark is declared when no primary search will be performed due to conditions.
3. “Offense to Defense” - This benchmark reports the change of strategic operations from an interior (offensive) attack to an exterior (defensive) attack.
4. “Under Control” - This benchmark signals the forward progress of the fire has been stopped and the incident has been stabilized.
5. “Loss Stopped” - This benchmark reports the completion of loss prevention activities.
6. “PAR” (Personnel Accountability Report) - This benchmark is used to announce that a roll call of units will be performed. Refer to the NEFDA Personnel Accountability Guideline.
7. “Terminate Command” – The “formal command” has been terminated. At this point the IC should state “Terminate command” and give the unit number to be in charge of the scene.

**IV.
Procedures**

A. Checking en-route to an incident:

1. During single station responses, each company checking en route to an incident will give their unit number, address and type of call to which they are responding. (*Example: "Medic 561 to 1208 Dooley Rd, EMS"*).
2. When multiple stations are responding to a single incident, the "in district" company should check en route to the incident as described above. Units in other stations should check en route with unit number only.
3. A company given a response while on the air away from the station should acknowledge their response and also indicate the location from which they are responding. (*Example: "Engine 563 Responding to 3409 Mustang from Heritage and Timberline"*).
4. Companies that are closer than the dispatched unit should notify the dispatched company of their location and availability to respond with the initially dispatched officer having the authority to allow or disallow the request.

B. Arriving at location:

1. First unit arriving at the incident location must state their unit number, scene address and assignment. All subsequently arriving units shall give their unit number and state "on scene".
2. If the address is different than the one to which dispatched, this should be noted to the dispatcher. (*Example: "Engine 563 on at 3413 Mustang. This will be the correct location rather than 3409"*).

C. Size-Up:

1. Size up shall be per NEFDA Incident Management Guidelines.

D. Multiple Alarm Communications:

1. Multiple alarms or request for additional resources may be requested by any member on the department who is serving in the capacity of Incident Commander at the time.
2. When placing a multiple alarm on an incident a staging location and radio channel should be considered and related to Alarm. If implemented, companies will be dispatched to that staging location rather than the incident address. The Incident Commander should designate a staging officer.

E. Mutual Aid

1. When responding to another city:
 - a. Check en-route with your city dispatcher for type of call, address and radio channel.
 - b. Then go directly to the assigned channel of the requesting city and notify them that you are en-route, obtain additional information and assignments.
 - c. Remain on the assigned channel city channel until otherwise directed or cleared.
 - d. When released from the incident, report your status to your home city alarm office.
2. When requesting mutual aid from another city:
 - a. When the IC disregards a responding unit, contact them directly via the assigned radio channel rather than asking dispatcher.
 - b. When requesting mutual aid (IC procedure): When a mutual aid company is needed request that the next appropriate unit be dispatched. Do not ask for a specific city unless this is the needed unit. The dispatcher should use CAD to get the recommended unit(s)

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- The fire departments of NEFDA utilize a three digit numbering system by which individual units can be identified without using the “City” name with the unit number.

Bedford 15x	Colleyville 24x
Eules 55x	Grapevine 56x
Haltom City 47x	Hurst 20x
Keller 58x	North Richland Hills 22x
Richland Hills 29x	Roanoke 66x
Southlake 40x	Trophy Club 68x
Watauga 31x	Westlake 48x

F. Communications Order Model

- Sender will give receiver unit ID then their unit ID (*Engine 562 from Engine 563*).
- Receiver will give their ID to indicate they are ready to receive (do not simply say “go ahead” (*Engine 562-go ahead*)).
- Sender will state message, order, etc. (*Engine 562 lay to the standpipe*).
- Receiver will give ID and acknowledge receipt of message. A brief restatement should be given. (*Example: Engine 562 laying to the standpipe*).
- Sender will only respond if a correction is needed because of wrong response of sender or wrong information initially related.

G. Emergency Traffic Procedures

- “Emergency Traffic”
 - “Emergency Traffic” will be utilized by any unit encountering an immediately perilous situation and will receive the highest priority from dispatch, command, and ALL operating units.
 - All other members must suspend talking on the radio and standby for the emergency announcement. This suspension is in effect until the channel is released by the IC.
- “May-Day” will be used by lost or trapped firefighters as directed in the NEFDA May Day procedures.
- Evacuation Procedure
 - An emergency evacuation order will be initiated by an “Emergency Traffic” radio announcement followed by three five second blasts from an air horn.
 - A PAR will be conducted immediately following a completed evacuation to confirm the safe exit of all companies.

H. Regional Response Communications.

- NEFDA units responding on State requests need to have interoperable communications capabilities as outlined by the Texas Statewide Interoperability Channel Plan.
- Units need to know how to operate daily radio equipment in simplex mode to allow for communications using usual equipment outside of repeater range.

I. Response Patterns – The following response patterns are recommended.

- Still Alarm - Single Unit response.
- EMS Calls – When requesting mutual aid ambulances, the requesting agency will attempt to provide a unit to respond with the ambulance. If the requesting agency does not have a unit to send, they will notify the responding ambulance.
- 1 Alarm – The goal will be to provide the base manpower to begin and complete the incident safely and according to the NEFDA Incident Management Plan. For “normal” structure fires that number will be according to NFPA 1710 (14 personnel, 15 if an aerial is deployed).

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4. Greater Alarms (2 Alarm, etc) – Response patterns should dictate that the number of first alarm fire units are at least matched with each consecutive alarm.
5. High Rise Incidents – City response patterns for high rise incidents should model the NEFDA High Rise Fire Fighting Procedures, especially when mutual aid companies are being requested.
6. MVA (motor vehicle accident) – Minimum response will be a fire apparatus and medic unit. Consider additional fire apparatus as needed for protecting the scene.