



Northeast Fire Department Association

Operations

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Tactical Guidelines: Communications

Approved by:

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I.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish specific, standardized terminology and process for radio communications between NEFDA Departments. Clear and effective radio communications is imperative to safe and efficient incident operations. It is the intent of this document that each NEFDA City will incorporate the provisions of this policy into its set of internal operating guidelines to achieve the standardized, safe and efficient radio communications.

II.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of every NEFDA department member to know and understand these procedures. It is the responsibility of each officer to know and comply with these procedures. Further, it is the responsibility of each officer to ensure that all members under their command know and comply with these procedures as well. If a message is unclear, it is the responsibility of all personnel to seek clarity and make no assumptions.

III.

Terminology

It is vitally important for members of each department to be consistent in the use of terminology used in radio communications. This practice standardizes expectations in communications and is essential for clear radio communications between departments, fire companies and dispatchers. In order to ensure this consistency, the following terminology and procedures are to be followed:

- A. No "10 codes" or other code type messages may be utilized for any message. All transmissions are to be plain English.
- B. Personnel are to use the following terms when appropriate:
 - 1. "Available" - This indicates that a unit is now available for a call or re-assignment.
 - 2. "Unavailable" - Used when a company cannot take a call.
 - 3. "Clear" - This indicates (to differentiate from "Available") that the unit is clear from an incident location but not necessarily available for another response. If "clear" is used,

- “unavailable” will have to be used in conjunction. It is not necessary to use “clear, available” as these have the same meaning.
4. “Emergency traffic” – This is utilized to clear communications channels prior to giving an emergency radio transmission.
 5. “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, etc.
 6. “Hold” – If an on-scene Incident Commander (IC) tells the dispatcher to hold a unit or units, the held units are staying committed to the assigned scene. Example: “Hold E5,” This communicates to the unit and dispatch that unit E5 is not to clear the scene, but rather remain assigned to the call.
 7. “May Day” – This is utilized as a distress call by a lost or trapped firefighter.
 8. “On”, “On Scene (with address)” or “Out” - This is to be used to communicate when an individual or a unit has arrived at a location. This indicates that the individual or unit is at a location, or on-scene at the incident and is not available for another assignment. It may also indicate that the individual or unit has arrived at any other destination other than to which it has reported to be traveling (e.g., arriving at the hospital when transporting a patient). (Example: “E151 is on at 200 Airport Freeway”).
 9. “Received” or, “Message Received”- Shall be used to indicate that the receiver has received and understood the message. Receivers of messages are strongly encouraged to repeat back the message to the sender to ensure proper understanding.
 10. Fire Departments that are Blue Card certified utilize terms that may differ from some agencies. The terms listed below are for familiarization in case you respond to a city that utilizes Blue Card.
 - a. “On Deck” – a fire company that is standing by at a forward staging location just outside the immediate hazard zone fully bunked out with tools and ready to be deployed to a Division/Group. The On-deck company will fill RIT responsibilities unless otherwise instructed.
 - b. “Recycle” – a timely means of air replacement and rehydration of companies while maintaining their Division/Group assignment.
- C. The following benchmarks are considered standardized and are to be routinely used for safety and efficiency purposes. However, fire ground officers shall not be limited only to the following benchmark communications.
1. “Primary complete” – This benchmark reports the completion of the primary search for victims on scene.
 2. “Secondary Complete”- This benchmark reports the completion of the secondary search for victims on scene.
 3. “Ventilation complete” – The assignment of ventilation has been completed.
 4. “L-CAN” - This benchmark is used to request a status report and stands for “Location”, “Conditions”, “Actions” and “Needs”.

5. "RIT established" – This benchmark reports the RIT team is fully assembled and is ready for deployment.
6. "Water on fire" - This benchmark reports that the suppression team has found the seat of the fire and actively applying water to the fire.
7. "Knockdown" - This benchmark reports that the suppression team has knocked down the main body of the fire and should indicate the de-escalation of the fire from that point on.
8. "Offensive to Defensive" - This benchmark reports the change of strategic operations from an interior (offensive) attack to an exterior (defensive) attack.
9. "Under Control" - This benchmark reports the forward progress of the fire suppression and that the progression of the fire has been stopped.
10. "At patient" - This benchmark reports EMS personnel have made contact with a patient.
11. "Patient extricated" – This benchmark reports that the patient has been successfully extricated from an entrapment.
12. "Fire Out" or "Loss Stopped" - This benchmark reports the completion fire suppression and loss prevention activities.
13. "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.
14. "Terminate Command" – This benchmark reports "formal command" has been terminated. At this point the Incident Commander (IC) should state "Terminate command" and identify the unit number that will assume the responsibility of the incident.
15. The dispatch center of each NEFDA City shall be designated by the 'City name followed by "alarm." (*Example: "Grapevine Alarm"*)

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 and address. (*Example: "Medic 201 is en route to 1208 Dooley Rd."*)
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 unit dispatched to an incident while on the air away from the station should acknowledge their response and also indicate the location from which they are responding. (*Example: "Engine 153 is 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. The first unit arriving at the incident location, shall state their unit number and announce that they are on-scene followed by the address and give a brief initial report of the conditions found and the initial actions to be taken.
2. All subsequently arriving units shall give their unit number and state "on-scene".
3. If the address is different than the one to which dispatched, this should be noted to the dispatcher. *(Example: "Engine 291 is on -scene at 3413 Mustang. This will be the correct location rather than 3409")*.

C. Size-Up / Brief initial report (BIR):

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 communicated 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, when responding to another city:

1. Check en route with your city dispatcher for type of call, address and radio channel.
2. Then go directly to the assigned channel of the requesting city and notify them that you are en route, obtain additional information and assignments.
3. Remain on the assigned channel city channel until otherwise directed or cleared.
4. When released from the incident, report your status to your home city alarm office.

F. When requesting mutual aid from another city:

1. When the IC disregards a responding unit, contact them directly via the assigned radio channel rather than asking alarm.
2. When a mutual aid company is needed, request that the next appropriate unit be dispatched. Do not request a specific resource unless there is a specific and known need. The dispatcher should use CAD to get the recommended unit(s)

G. 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 (simple unit number)
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

H. Communications Order Model

1. Sender will give receiver unit ID then their unit ID *(Engine 472 from Engine 473)*.

2. Receiver will give their ID to indicate they are ready to receive (do not simply say “go ahead” (*Engine 472-go ahead*)).
 3. Sender will state message, order, etc. (*Engine 201 lay to the standpipe*).
 4. Receiver will give ID and acknowledge receipt of message. A brief restatement should be given. (*Example: Engine 201 laying to the standpipe*).
 5. Sender will only respond if a correction is needed because of wrong response of sender or wrong information initially related.
- I. Urgent / Emergency Traffic Procedures
1. “May-Day” will be used by lost or trapped firefighters as directed in the NEFDA May Day procedures.
 2. “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.
 3. 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.
- J. Evacuation Procedure
1. An emergency evacuation order will be initiated by an "Emergency Traffic" radio announcement followed by three five second blasts from an air horn or emergency tones from the alarm office.
 2. A PAR will be conducted immediately following a completed evacuation to confirm the safe exit of all companies.
- K. Regional Response Communications.
1. NEFDA units responding on State requests need to have interoperable communications capabilities as outlined by the Texas Statewide Interoperability Channel Plan.
 2. Units need to know how to operate daily radio equipment in simplex mode to allow for communications while utilizing equipment outside of repeater range.