

BASIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR EMERGENCY OPERATIONS



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Introduction

- ▣ Communications skills used during emergency operations are different than normal Amateur Radio operations
- ▣ Quick, accurate, minimal complications
- ▣ In an emergency, any given message can have huge and often unintended consequences
- ▣ An unclear message, or one that is modified, delayed, miss-delivered or never delivered at all can have disastrous results

Introduction

- ▣ A number of factors can affect your ability to do this:
 - Your own operating skills
 - Communication method used
 - Variety of noise problems
 - Skills of the receiving party
 - Cooperation of others
 - Adequate resources

Listening

- ▣ Listening is at least 50% of communication
- ▣ Listening also means avoiding unnecessary transmissions
- ▣ Local ambient noise and/or weak radio signal conditions may make it difficult to perform your emergency communication responsibilities
- ▣ Head phones help under these conditions



Microphone Techniques

- ▣ For optimum performance
 - Hold the mic close to your cheek
 - Just off to the side of your mouth
- ▣ Talk across, rather than into, the microphone
- ▣ Speak a little slower and pause longer between transmissions
- ▣ Voice operated transmissions (VOX) are not recommended for emergency communications

Brevity & Clarity

- ▣ Each communication should consist of only the information necessary to get the message across clearly and accurately
- ▣ If you are the author of a message, change the wording as necessary to make it as clear and short as practical
- ▣ If you are not the author, work with the author to achieve same



Brevity & Clarity

- ▣ If you can not locate the author, pass the message as stated with any errors or redundancies included.
- ▣ DO NOT CHANGE MESSAGES!
- ▣ Communicate one complete subject at a time



Plain Language

- ▣ All messages and communications during an emergency should be in plain language
- ▣ “Q” signals (except in CW communications) or “10 codes” and similar jargon should be avoided
- ▣ Avoid words or phrases that carry strong emotions

Phonetics

- ❑ Certain words in a message may not be immediately understood
- ❑ The best way to be sure it is correctly understood is to spell it
- ❑ Use the ITU Phonetic Alphabet unless the served agency requests that you use their standardized phonetic alphabet



Phonetics

- ▣ Numbers are always pronounced individually
 - The number “sixty” is pronounced as “six zero”
- ▣ Standard practice for unusual words
 - Say the word
 - Say “I spell”
 - Spell the word phonetically

Pro-words

- ▣ Pro-words are procedural terms with specific meanings
 - Called “pro-signs” when sent in Morse code or digital modes
- ▣ Over – Used to let a specific station know to respond
- ▣ Go ahead – Used to indicate that a station may send their message
- ▣ Clear – End of Contact

Pro-words

- ▣ Out – Leaving the air, will not be listening
- ▣ Stand by – A temporary interruption of the contact
- ▣ Roger – Indicates that a transmission has been received correctly and in full
- ▣ Break – Indicates that you have more to say after a brief pause or are starting another line/section of the message

Tactical Call Signs

- ▣ Tactical call signs can identify the station's location or its purpose during an event, regardless of who is operating the station
- ▣ It virtually eliminates confusion at shift changes or at stations with multiple operators
- ▣ Tactical call signs should be used for all emergency nets and public service events if there are more than just a few participants

Tactical Call Signs

- ▣ Tactical call signs are usually pre-assigned by the served agency
- ▣ However, if one does not already exist, the NCS may assign a tactical call sign as each location is “opened”
- ▣ “Net” or “Net Control” or “NCS” is a very common tactical call sign



Calling with Tactical Call Signs

- ▣ In a directed net “AID 3” calls the NCS
 - “Net, AID 3,”
 - “AID3”
 - busy net where the NCS is paying close attention
 - “Aid 3, emergency traffic”
 - “Aid 3, priority traffic”

Calling with Tactical Call Signs

- ▣ To pass traffic to a specific station
 - “AID 3, traffic for Firebase 5”
- ▣ NCS will then correctly direct the message
 - “Firebase 5, contact AID 3 for traffic”
- ▣ You have quickly connected to the proper station and have not used any extra words
- ▣ Note that no FCC call signs have been used - so far...

Station Identification

- ▣ The FCC requires that you identify
 - Ten-minute intervals during a conversation
 - End of the last transmission
- ▣ The easiest way is to give your FCC call sign as you complete each exchange
 - “Aid 3, <your call sign>”
- ▣ This does two things
 - Tells NCS that you consider the exchange complete
 - Fulfills all FCC identification requirements

Completing a Call

- ▣ If the Net Control Station believes the exchange is complete, and Aid 3 had forgotten to identify, then the NCS should say
 - “Aid 3, do you have further traffic?”
- ▣ At that point, Aid 3 should either continue with the traffic
- ▣ Clear by identifying
 - “Aid 3, <your call sign>”
- ▣ For this method to work properly, the NCS must allow each station the opportunity to identify at the close of an exchange

A Review of Habits to Avoid

- ▣ Thinking aloud on the air: “Ahhh, let me see. Hmm. Well, you know, if...”
- ▣ On-air arguments, criticism, or rambling commentaries
- ▣ Shouting into your microphone
- ▣ “Cute” phonetics
- ▣ Identifying every time you key or un-key the mic

A Review of Habits to Avoid

- ▣ Using “10” codes, Q-signals on phone, or anything other than “plain language”
- ▣ Speaking without planning your message in advance
- ▣ Talking just to pass the time

Activity

- ▣ Looking at the following exchange, think about how you might revise the language to make it more clear and concise



Activity

- ▣ “K1YZ at Ramapo Base, this is Bob, K2AB at Weston EOC calling.”
- ▣ “K2AB, this is K1YZ. Hi, Bob. This is Ramapo Base, Harry at the mic. Go ahead. K2AB from K1YZ.”
- ▣ “K1YZ, this is K2AB returning. Hi, Harry. I have a message for you. Oh, by the way, remember to call me later about the club’s Field Day meeting next month. Are you ready to copy the message? K1YZ, this is K2AB, over to you Harry.”

Activity

- ▣ This should be as simple as
 - “Ramapo Base from Weston EOC, Traffic”
 - “Ready To Copy, Over” or “Go Ahead”



Review

- ▣ Clear, concise communications save time, and reduce misunderstandings
- ▣ Avoid any non-essential transmissions
- ▣ Use tactical call signs to call other stations, and give your FCC call sign only at the end of the complete exchange, or every ten minutes during longer exchanges
- ▣ Plain language is more easily understood by a wider range of people than most codes and jargon

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QUESTIONS?

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