Carroll County Department of Fire & EMS Standard Operating Procedure

DOCUMENT DETAILS

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Authorized: Deputy Chief Paul Supko	**Revision Date: N/A**

Applicability: [X] Volunteer   [X] Career

I.   PURPOSE

This document covers policies and procedures that govern voice and data communications for the Carroll County Department of Fire & EMS. While used as a standard to save time and maximize efficiency, it is not intended to cover every situation encountered. This document will adhere to NFPA, NIMS and local standards.

II.   DEFINITIONS

Command Tone: A single tone alert, requested by the Incident Command from ECC, notifying all units that the Incident Commander is about to announce an incident-wide, priority message.

Command Officer: A duly elected, fire operations officer of a Carroll County volunteer company, holding the rank of Chief, Deputy Chief, or Assistant Chief. Department of Fire & EMS career officers from the rank of Battalion Chief and above.

Emergency Communications Center (ECC): Carroll County 911 Dispatch and Communications, operated under the Department of Public Safety is an integral part of Fire & EMS operations.

Order Model: Unit acknowledging the receipt of a direction given by another unit by repeating the message.

III. Policy

Fire & EMS personnel shall utilize professional and consistent radio communications practices while operating in Carroll County, Maryland.

A. Radio communication practices will be coordinated with the Carroll County Emergency Communications Center through the Deputy Chief of Operations.

    1. Fire & EMS members will operate according to established procedures.
    2. **Units shall use "sender TO receiver" format**, not "receiver FROM sender".
        Ex.: "Engine 71 to Carroll."
    3. **Order model -** Acknowledgement of Instructions – Units will repeat orders they are given to confirm receipt and accuracy.

B. Personnel will utilize professional etiquette when speaking on the radio.

    1. Prior to sending a message, the sender will listen and ensure that their transmission will not interrupt, or "step on", radio traffic.

    2. Messages must be short and concise while being adequately descriptive to effectively communicate.

    3. Transmissions will aim to be calm and collected, professionally worded, and clear as to be understood by the receiver, ECC, and other units.

    4. Escalating Radio Transmissions - It is the responsibility of the Incident Commander to intervene when units begin to escalate the tone, rate, and/or volume of their transmissions to maintain calm and deliberate operations on scene.

        a. Degradation of calm, professional radio traffic is contagious and results in the degradation of operations

    5. Members are reminded radio communications are guided under Federal Communications Commission rules and should familiarize themselves as such.

C. Common terminology will be utilized.

    1. **Unit Status** Terminology with coinciding Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) status code.

Term or Phrase	Definition	Example
"Available on the Air" MDT: AOR – Available on Radio	Indicates a unit is out of the station, in-service, and monitoring their radio.	"Medic 19 is AVAILABLE ON THE AIR."
"Responding with [Staffing Level]" MDT: E - Enroute	Unit is responding to an assigned incident. *Staffing level is determined by the number of operational personnel on board the unit.*	"Engine 131 Responding WITH FOUR."
"On Location" MDT: A – Arrived	Indicates a unit has arrived at an assigned incident.	"Engine 81 On Location."
"Staging" MDT: STG - Stage	Placement of apparatus or personnel for deployment per SOP concerning Unit Staging.	"Medic 29 is STAGING for police at [Location]." or "Engine-Tanker 24 is LEVEL 1 STAGING at [Location]."
"In Service" MDT: AOR or AOS - Available on Scene	Unit is able to respond to incidents. Unit is free of a location or assignment. *This is typically associated with pertinent information, when single unit*	"Tower 3 is IN SERVICE"
"In the Area" MDT: AC – Area Check	In the case of incidents where the location is not specific, the unit is in the general area of the dispatch. *The unit will update to "Arrived" if an incident location is determined.*	"Engine 141 is IN THE AREA."
"Enroute to the Hospital" or "Transporting" MDT: EH – Enroute Hospital	Unit is transporting or moving to the hospital on an EMS incident. *For transporting EMS units, Patient Priority and Destination are Required.*	"Medic 38 is ENROUTE TO [Hospital], Priority 3." or "Medic 38 is TRANSPORTING TO [Hospital], Priority 1."
"Arrived at the Hospital" MDT: AH – Arrived Hospital	Unit is at the hospital.	"Medic 79 is ARRIVED AT [Hospital]."
"Enroute to the Landing Zone" MDT: ELZ – Enroute Landing Zone	Unit is moving from the incident scene to the Landing Zone.	"Medic 109 is ENROUTE TO THE LANDING ZONE."

"At the Landing Zone" MDT: ALZ – Arrived Landing Zone	Unit is at the Landing Zone location.	"Medic 139 is AT THE LANDING ZONE."
"Out of Service, [Reason]" MDT: UOS – Unavailable on Scene or UOR – Unavailable on Radio	Unit or company is not able to respond or operate. *This should be accompanied by a verbalized reason.*	"Medic 49 is OUT OF SERVICE, FOR DECON"
Unavailable on Radio Options: Out of Position, Decon, Restock, Staffing, Repairs, Detail, Training, Lack of Water.		

"In Quarters" MDT: AIQ – Available in Quarters	Unit is in the station and in service.	"Engine 61 is IN QUARTERS"
"In Quarters, Out of Service" or "Unavailable In Quarters" MDT: UIQ – Unavailable in Quarters	Unit is out of service in quarters and unable to respond.	Medic 69 in OUT OF SERVICE, IN QUARTERS for CLEAN-UP."
"Out of Service, In Quarters" or "Unavailable in Quarters" Options: Repairs, Training, Decon (EMS transport units ONLY), Clean-up, Detail.		

2. **Tactical Benchmark** Terminology

Term or Phrase	Definition
"Working Incident"	The term "Working Incident" indicates a situation that will require the commitment of all responding companies. This report advises Communications that the companies will be engaged in tactical activities and will be held at the scene for an extended period of time. When an incident Commander declares a Working Incident, the ECC will start the Incident Duration Timer, and shall prompt command when appropriate for the RID assignment, Fire Marshal, or Utility Companies.
"Water on the Fire"	Indicates that the attack line or lines are in operation and have begun extinguishment.
"Primary Negative"	Indicates the completion of the primary search and that no victims were located.

"Water Supply Established"	Indicates a continuous water supply to the fire attack engine is established off of a hydrant or rural water supply.
"Fire Under Control"	Transmitted when the main body of fire has been extinguished and all areas have been confirmed as having no fire extension (or when extension has been controlled) in an assigned unit's geographic / operational area.
"Utilities Controlled"	Indicates all utilities, e.g., gas, electric, have been shut off.

D. **Units and Personnel will abide by the following communication practices:**

Personnel shall utilize the following practices to support accountability, clear communication, and safety. Consistency in the interface of communications between units and ECC is critical to reliable interoperability, relying on established guidelines, especially in high volume or acuity modes of operations for ECC or personnel.

1. **Calling Enroute:**

   a. All units will verbally respond on A1 – Main. Suppression apparatus (including Utilities) will include their unit staffing, indicating the number of operationally cleared personnel on-board the unit.

2. **Talkgroups:**

   a. All incidents will be assigned a talkgroup for operations.

   b. No units will verbalize as responding on the talkgroup after switching to that talkgroup as a regular practice. (i.e. *"Truck 2 is on Alpha 7 with 4"*)

3. **Arriving On Scene:**

   a. All units will verbalize on the radio when they arrive on scene.

   b. ECC is only required to verbally acknowledge the first unit arriving on scene, or units without an MDT status showing "Arrived."

   c. All units will status arrived on the MDT.

      i. If radio traffic is heavy, it is appropriate to only utilize the MDT for status changes, unless a report is required.

      ii. If the unit does not have or if the MDT malfunctions or is disconnected from the server, the Unit OIC will verbalize on the radio to ECC that their MDT is down and revert to practices as if the unit had no MDT until the error is corrected.

4. **Requesting Additional Resources:**

   a. All requests for additional resources will be made by the Incident Commander.

   b. For requests prior to the arrival of the first unit OIC, requests will be made in the

following order of precedence:

      i.   1st Due Company Ranking Volunteer Chief Officer (if responding)

     ii.   DFEMS Ranking Command Officer (if responding)

   iii.   1st Due Engine Officer

c. Incident Commanders or crew leaders will make a request for a resource type not a particular crew or unit.

      i.   Improper Ex – *"Command to Carroll give me Rescue 20."*

     ii.   Proper Ex. - *"Command to Carroll, one additional rescue squad."*

   iii.   Proper Ex. - *"Command to Carroll, start a Rescue Squad with 'supplied air'."*

5. **Transport of Patients:**

a. All units will verbally transmit enroute to the hospital, stating the destination, priority and when applicable, the alert status.

      i.   *Medic 69 is enroute to CHC, Priority 1, Stroke Alert."*

b. The transport unit will status "At Hospital" (AH) when arriving at the receiving facility. No verbal message is necessary.

6. **Landing Zone Operations:**

a. Units will utilize the MDT to status "Enroute LZ" (ELZ) or verbalized if MDT is down when moving from the scene to the Landing Zone.

b. Units will status "Arrived LZ" (ALZ), or verbalized if MDT is down, when arriving at the Landing Zone.

7. **Returning to Service:**

a. When units are placed in service while still enroute to the scene, they will status as Available of Radio (AOR) utilizing the MDT, only.

      i.   ECC will verbally prompt any units who do not acknowledge the change via MDT to confirm they are returning to service.

b. When units are clearing an incident scene, they will utilize the MDT to status as AOR, unless a disposition is required.

      i.   A verbalized disposition is a primary form of recordation, concisely summarizing the situation found and actions taken to mitigate the incident.

     ii.   A disposition is not required on EMS incidents, unless there is a refusal of service or no patient found.

8. **Returning to Quarters:**

   a. Units will utilize the MDT to status in the station.

      i. Exception would be notification to ECC of circumstances not available via the MDT.

9. **Units without an MDT:**

   a. Units without an MDT or an MDT in error will utilize verbal communication via radio with ECC for status changes.

10. **Mutual Aid Responding Units:**

    a. Mutual Aid Units from neighboring Counties or jurisdictions will initially respond on A1 – Main.

       i. ECC will instruct neighboring Counties to have units respond on A1 – Main when requesting mutual aid resources.

       ii. When a mutual aid unit responds on A1 – Main, ECC will advise "[Unit], we have you responding. Operations for [Alarm type, Box Area] are on our [Talkgroup]. No verbal needed on [Talkgroup]".

          Ex. "Baltimore County Truck 404, responding. Operations are on our Alpha 7. No verbal necessary on Alpha 7."

    b. Mutual Aid (All) Units responding on a second or greater alarm, will respond on A1 – Main.

       i. ECC will instruct mutual aid units with the following, "[Unit], respond on the staging talkgroup [A9] staging location is 123 Main street. Operations for [Alarm Type, Box Area] are on our [Fireground Talkgroup].

       ii. ECC does not monitor staging talkgroups. Units will operate in accordance with the Incident Management System SOP or any SOP concerning unit staging.

          Ex. (From ECC) "Adams County Truck 1, respond on staging talkgroup A9. 2nd alarm staging is at 123 main street. Operations for Box Alarm 5-20 are on our Talkgroup A7.

III.   Procedure

A. Incident communications will follow established practices of operating on assigned Talkgroups.

   1. **Zone:** A bank of up to 16 Talkgroups within a radio matrix. The 1st and 16th talkgroups in a Carroll Fire & EMS Zone will be Main (dispatch talkgroup).

   2. **Talkgroup:** A virtual channel within a trunked radio system designated for specific user

groups to ensure organized and efficient communication in fire and EMS operations.

3. **Radio Matrix:** Zones and Talkgroups are assigned according to operational needs.
    a. Talkgroups are normally assigned by ECC per the table below.
        i. First box/Structure Assignment: A7

           Second Box/Structure Assignment: B7

           Third Box/Structure Assignment: B11

           Fourth Box Structure Assignment: A11
        ii. Each Fireground Talkgroup has three (3) support talkgroups assigned to it.
            1) X0 –Tactical Operations
            2) X1 – Water Supply
            3) X2 – Staging
            4) X3 – Operations Support Channel
        iii. Incident Command has the prerogative to utilize the support channels for each fireground (X1-X3) according to the needs of the operations. This must be clearly communicated with ECC and all assigned units.
        iv. Talkgroups X1, X2 and X3 are not monitored by ECC and must be assigned to a command support member.
        v. Incident Command may request incident operations or a portion of incident operations be moved to another talkgroup.
            1) Ex. Rescue Alarm 3-1 is assigned to A3 – EMS1, but escalates to a complex incident. The Rescue Alarm 3-1 Incident Command requests that operations are moved to A7, A11 or B7 in order to separate radio traffic from other incidents on A3 – EMS1.
    b. When a box assignment is downgraded or canceled, and only a few units remain (ex., an engine and truck for smoke removal) on scene for an extended period, the incident commander will advise the ECC that they will switch their operations to **A2**. This will free up **A7** for the next incoming box assignment.

Zone A – Carroll Fire A	
Talkgroup (TG)	Use
A1 – Main	Dispatch
A2 – FTAC	Local, Brush, Misc. Alarms Operations
A3 – EMS1	Standard EMS Operations
A4 – CALL 801	EMRC Call Channel
A5 – MED 804	EMRC Consult
A6 – MED 808	EMRC Consult
A7 – FG10	**1st Operations Talkgroup**
A8 – FG11	Water Supply for 1st Fireground
A9 – FG12	Staging for 1st Fireground
A10 – FG13	Operational Support for 1st Fireground
A11 – FG20	**4th Operations Talkgroup**
A12 – FG21	Water Supply for 4th Fireground
A13 – FG22	Staging for 4th Fireground
A14 – FG23	Operational Support for 4th Fireground
A15 – FD TA	Talk-Around Channel
A16 – Main	Dispatch

Zone C – Carroll Fire Training	
Talkgroup (TG)	Use
1 - Main	Dispatch
2 – Fire Ops	Same as Carroll A2 - FTAC
3 – EMS1	Same as Carroll A3 - EMS1
4 – Training 1	CCPSTC or Assigned Training
5 – Training 2	

Zone B – Carroll Fire B	
Talkgroup (TG)	Use
B1 – Main	Dispatch
B2 – FTAC	**A2 – FTAC** (Same Channel in both Zones)
B3 – EMS2	Rescue & Aviation
B4 – ADMIN	Administrative Talk-Around Channel
B5 - EMPTY	
B6 - EMPTY	
B7 – FG30	**2nd Operations Talkgroup**
B8 – FG31	Water Supply for 2nd Fireground
B9 – FG32	Staging for 2nd Fireground
B10 – FG33	Operational Support for 2nd Fireground
B11 - FG40	**3rd Operations Talkgroup**
B12 – FG41	Water Supply for 3rd Fireground
B13 – FG42	Staging for 3rd Fireground
B14 – FG15	Operational Support for 3rd Fireground
B15 – FD TA	Talk-Around Channel
B16 - Main	Dispatch

Carroll Government	
Talkgroup (TG)	Use
1 – LGEMG	Local Govt Emergency Managment
2 – IAEMG	
3 – LGCORD	Local Government Coordination
4 – EMMGT	Emergency Management
5 – SPEV1	Special Events 1

6 – Training 3		6 – SPEV2	Special Events 2
7 – Blank		7 – SPEV3	Special Events 3
8 – Training TA	Talk-Around Channel	8 – FARM MUSM	Farm Museum TG
		9 – FP MAIN	Fire Police
		10 – PDCORD	Police Interoperability
		11 – Blank	
		12 – Blank	
		13 – RADIO MT	
		14 – REGROUP	
		15 – POP25	
		16 – FD TA	Talk-Around Channel

4. **Mutli-Agency Coordination and Responding to Mutual Aide:** DFEMS units will utilize the zones and talkgroups assigned to them when operating in mutual aide jurisdictions.

5. **State and Federal Interoperability:** DFEMS Personnel will familiarize themselves with State and Federal talkgroups that allow for interoperability on the state, regional, and national levels.

   a. State/Regional level zones include MD FIRST, CMARC FIRE, CMARC COMM,

      NCR MARITIME, and NCR 800 IOP

   b. Federal level zones include 700 IOP 50, -60, -70, -80, 800 IOP 90, 700 IOP REGL, DEPLOY, and USA WIDE.

B. **Incident Duration Reminders (IDR)**

   It is important for the Incident Commander to track elapsed incident time. This informs their use of work cycles, determining the need for additional resources, and evaluating the impact of fire on structural components.

   1. ECC must provide incident duration reminders at intervals of 15 minutes after dispatch and throughout the incident.

   2. IDR are indicated for Box Alarms, Working Rescues, HazMat operations, Advance Technical Rescue operations, and Cardiac Arrests.

   3. ECC may delay an IDR in order to avoid interference with incident operations but must provide the IDR as close to the designated time as possible.

   4. When the IDR is delayed, ECC will provide the actual elapsed time post-dispatch.

   5. Only the Incident Commander can stop the IDR cycle and only after at least one cycle.

C. Personnel Accountability Report

A formal "PAR Check" to account for each individual on the fire ground should be conducted periodically or after a significant event throughout the incident until the incident is declared "under control."

The formal PAR check intends to validate the IC's account of where personnel are operating at measured intervals.

1. The frequency of formal PAR checks is determined by several factors, including but not limited to:
   a. Building critical factors
   b. Level of risk
   c. Status of critical incident benchmarks
   d. Status of incident stabilization
   e. Time
2. In addition, a PAR check must be initiated under the following conditions:
   a. When the IC has ordered an evacuation of all personnel
   b. When changing from offensive operations to defensive operations
   c. Sudden structural collapse
   d. Sudden change in events such as flashover, backdraft, trench collapse, hazmat release, etc.
3. Formal PAR Check Procedure:
   a. The IC shall make a general announcement to all units on the fireground to standby for a "PAR check." The IC should pause to allow crews to account for members.
   b. All personnel will notify their company officer of their condition and location (in the event the crew is working in teams of two in different areas).
   c. FADO's operating independently outside of the IDLH will not be included in the PAR Report.
   d. The unit's entry report, must match the PAR report.
   e. The Company Officer, Division or Group Manager will communicate their **unit accountability**, **number of personnel**, **and exact location** directly to the IC when summonsed.
   f. After all units have reported back, the IC should document the time on the command board/tactical worksheet and make a benchmark notification to the ECC.
      i. *Ex. Command – "Command to all units operating on the fire ground, 123 Main Street, standby for a PAR check. (After waiting a reasonable amount of time)*
      Command – "Command to E61"
      Unti Supervisor – "Engine 61 is PAR with 3; operating on the first floor."
4. Persons or crews unaccounted for will not stop the PAR check from continuing

        a. This is because more than one crew or person may be unaccounted for.

        b. If any personnel cannot be accounted for, the company officer, will report the missing person's status as "unknown" and give the last known location.

        c. The company officer will then initiate search procedures within their assigned area.

        d. **Under no circumstances shall the roll call take precedence over common sense, quick resolutions to account for those who were unaccounted for.**

5. Missing or Unaccounted Personnel:

        a. When the PAR check has been completed and personnel are still missing or unaccounted for, the IC shall declare a MAYDAY.

        b. Command shall deploy the rapid intervention team (if in-place) or assign companies capable of affecting an immediate rescue, and/or those who are operating in close proximity to the last known location(s) of the firefighter(s).

        c. MAYDAY procedures will remain in effect until the MAYDAY operations are complete. The IC will report the results of the MAYDAY operation and return to normal fire ground operations.

        d. **All other B/D/G's operating at the incident shall maintain their current positions and assignments unless otherwise directed by Command.**

D. **Priority Traffic Reports**

1. Priority traffic is urgent information needed to be conveyed to Incident Command.
2. Priority Traffic Reports must be transmitted as soon as the information is obtained.
3. Circumstances requiring a Priority Traffic Report include:

        a. Unable to complete a critical assigned task/tactical objective.

        b. Urgent need to be reinforced or backed-up to complete an assigned task/tactical objective.

        c. Victim(s) encountered.

        d. Compartmentalized fires not easily controlled by the locating unit.

        e. Fire discovered below operating units, threatening their ability to remain or operate.

        f. A roof report that includes: attic fire, unsafe roof structure, collapse.

        g. Sudden, significant events (flashover, backdraft, collapse)

        h. Deteriorating conditions requiring the evacuation of personnel.

4. All Priority Traffic Reports are to be directed to the Incident Commander by stating, "[Unit] to Command – Priority Traffic."

        a. The Incident Commander must acknowledge the transmission of a Priority Traffic Report.

        b. If the Incident Commander does not acknowledge the transmission of a Priority Traffic Report, ECC must ensure that the Incident Commander acknowledges the message.

5. Evacuation Command (Covered in 4.1.4 Withdrawal & Evacuation)

a. If a unit or Incident Commander call for a structure to be evacuated, ECC will immediately sound the Evacuation Tone and state, *"Carroll to all units operating on Box Alarm XX-XX, EVACUATE THE STRUCTURE, EVACUATE THE STRUCTURE."*

    i. This will also be broadcast over A1-Main.

E. **Priority Safety Message**

1. A Priority Safety Message is given to all personnel operating on a scene by the Incident Commander.

    a. Reasons include unsafe or uninhabitable spaces, life-safety hazards (i.e. powerlines), active or impending structural collapse, or sudden, significant events affecting the safety of operating personnel.

2. To transmit a Priority Safety Message, the Incident Commander will request a Command Tone from ECC. After the tone, the Incident Commander will clearly and concisely announce the Priority Safety Message.

    a. Units are not to individually acknowledge the Priority Safety Message unless specifically requested to be so by the Incident Commander.

F. **Command Restricted Talkgroup**

1. A talkgroup may be restricted by the Incident Commander during significant events to prioritize critical communications.

2. The Incident Commander will request that ECC "restricts the talkgroup" and what the restriction is related to. The ECC will immediately acknowledge and announce that the talkgroup has been restricted after a single-tone Announcement Tone.

    Ex. "Command to Carroll. Restrict the talkgroup to units operating on the Engine 12 MAYDAY." "Carroll to All Units operating on Box 1-1, the talkgroup is restricted per Command, to units operating on the MAYDAY."

3. When a talkgroup is restricted:

    a. Only priority transmissions and communications from directly involved personnel are permitted.

    b. Non-essential radio traffic must cease until the restriction is lifted.

    c. Units not directly involved should:

        i. Defer routine messages until the restriction is lifted.

        ii. Use alternate talkgroups as directed by Command or ECC.

    d. Failure to comply may result in communication delays and operational disruptions.

        i. ECC will briefly address any traffic in violation of the restriction.

            Ex. "Carroll to [Unit], the talkgroup has been restricted by Command. Hold your traffic."

4. When the cause for the restriction has been mitigated, the Incident Commander will

request ECC to lift the restriction.

    a. The Incident Commander will provide a brief report stating why the restriction is being cleared.

        Ex. "Command to Carroll, all units operating at 456 Main St. Have exited the structure with PAR. Clear the restricted talkgroup."

    b. ECC will sound a single-tone Announcement Tone and advise all units.

        Ex. "Carroll to units operating on Box Alarm 1-1, the talkgroup is no longer restricted."

    c. Only the Incident Commander may lift the restricted talkgroup.

G. Mobile Data Terminals (MDT)

1. Fire Mobile (Computer Aided Dispatch Program) and the computer shall be **restarted once a day to receive any updates.**
2. Immediately upon start of shift, the oncoming crew shall ensure that the MDT's are working and display Available In Quarters ("AIQ").

    a. MDT Errors will be reported appropriately within the Chain of Command to be addressed as soon as possible.

3. Units equipped with an MDT will utilize the MDT for all status changes as detailed in this SOP, Section III. §D.
4. The requests and remarks submitted via the MDT Chat function are considered a part of a legal document and can be legally discovered at the request of records.

IV.   RECISION

This Standard Operating Procedure rescinds all directives regarding Communications Policy or similar content previously issued for personnel of the Carroll County Department of Fire & EMS.

V.   RELATED STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES / DOCUMENTS

Incident Management Policy 4.1.1

VI.   ATTACHMENTS

None.