

RADIO PROCEDURES DURING NORMAL OPERATING CONDITIONS CALLING AND COMMUNICATING TECHNIQUES

The secret to working quickly and efficiently in an emergency net is to use standard procedures. The techniques presented herein are the most common. It doesn't take much analysis to see that standards and guidelines must be established and then utilized.

Before you key your mike, gather your thoughts about what you are going to say. Many people with radios have a tendency to talk and/or repeat too much. Say what you need to say without unnecessary repeats. Keep in mind that you must strive to get your message through the first time.

In general, there are five parts to Calling/Communications. The more serious or complex the situation, the more important these procedures become. The information contained herein **MUST** be practiced until it is second nature.

Practicing proper day-to-day radio procedures will make emergency radio procedures automatic and reduces confusion. Another way of saying this is that the secret to working quickly and efficiently in an emergency is to use common approved radio communication procedures and guidelines and practice, practice, practice.

1st, you **MUST** give the radio callsign of the station you are calling. This alerts that station that they are being called and that they should listen to determine who is calling.

2nd; say "THIS IS". The called station knows your tactical call follows. This is extremely important in cases where there is a lot of confusion or poor signal conditions.

3rd, give your radio callsign. Don't give your first name. Radio callsigns are important and first names are not, egos notwithstanding. Remember, we are licensed for radio to radio **NOT** person to person communications.

You **WILL** create confusion if you reverse the first three steps, especially during emergencies and when you are communicating with a dispatcher or people who do not know you. If your practice is the reverse of the "norm", you will not be able to change "on the fly" especially during the added stress brought on by an emergency situation.

4th, give your message. Speak clearly. Don't speak too fast especially if the message needs to be written down. Pause after logical phrases. Do not use the word "break" when you pause. It is confusing, wastes time and has other connotations. Merely unkey and pause. If the other station has questions, they should key up and make their request known. This also permits other stations to break in if they have emergency traffic.

5th, you can end your conversation with "CLEAR" however it isn't required.

EXCEPTIONS OR VARIATIONS

1. It is sometimes permissible to omit the radio callsign designator of the station you are calling, **BUT** only after communications have been established and no confusion will occur. Don't waste time, by using superfluous tactical callsign.

2. The term "THIS IS" is used to separate the FROM and TO callsigns. If, and only if, confusion will not result, omitting the "THIS IS" phrase is permissible.
3. If you are the calling station and you omit your own radio callsign, you can create confusion. In certain situations, such as quick replies between operators, it can be accomplished without confusion. You must NOT use this simplification where messages can be interpreted incorrectly.
4. Elimination of the words "OVER" and "OUT" is possible where it doesn't introduce problems. Unkeying after your message implies "OVER". To comply with FCC regulations, you must give your radio call sign when you first start to talk and when you finish your communication. Giving your radio callsign can imply an "OUT" ending. Should giving your callsign cause any confusion, do not hesitate to add the word "CLEAR".

RADIO PROCEDURES DURING EMERGENCIES

1. Identify yourself at the beginning of each transmission especially where confusion may result if omitted.
2. Identification is a requirement of the FCC. According to the FCC, radio users must give their callsign when they first start to talk and when they finish their communication.
3. Listen before transmitting. Be sure you are not on the air with someone else.
4. Know what you are going to say before you push the mike button; in other words, engage your brain before you put your mouth in gear.
5. Hold the transmit button down for at least a second before beginning your message to insure that the first part of your message is not cut off.
6. **TALK ACROSS THE FACE OF YOUR MICROPHONE.** This technique makes the communications more understandable. In other words, hold the face of the microphone almost at a right angle to your face.
7. Speak slowly, distinctly, clearly, and do not let your voice trail off at the end of words or sentences. Give each and every word equal force. For some this takes a lot of practice and conscious effort but do it.
8. Never acknowledge calls or instructions unless you understand the call or instructions perfectly. If you do not understand, recontact and "say again" the missed traffic.
9. When you have understood the message, acknowledge the receipt with the words "copy", "received" or "acknowledged." The word "copy" is preferred.
10. The word "break" is never used UNLESS there is an emergency. Give you callsign to gain access to a net.
11. Always acknowledge calls and instructions. Nothing is more disruptive to the smooth flow of communications than dead silence in response to a message. If you cannot copy or respond to the call immediately, then tell the caller to "repeat" or "stand by." Otherwise, acknowledge each call immediately.
12. Under stress, many operators have a tendency to talk too fast. **ACCURACY FIRST, SPEED SECOND.**

13. At times, radio conditions are poor and words must be overly exaggerated to be understandable. In general, speak very slowly and distinctly to carry through static and weak signals.

14. If you are relaying a message for another person, be sure you repeat the message exactly, word for word as it is given to you. If it makes no sense to you, get an explanation before you put it on the air. If necessary, refer the message back to the originator for clarification.

15. There is no place for Ham radio "Q" signals or signals from any other radio service during official and emergency communications. They are too easily misunderstood, rarely save time, and often result in errors. Use signals from the Local Government Public-Safety Radio Service or "plain English" only.

16. Do not act as a relay station unless Dispatch, or another radio station, asks for a relay -- and you can fulfill the requirement with your station.

17. When transmitting numbers (house numbers, street & telephone numbers, etc.), always transmit number sequences as a series of individual numbers. Never say numbers in combinations.

18. If a proper name needs to be transmitted, try to spell it out using the recognized radio phonetic alphabet. Do not use cute or self-invented phonetics. There is no place for them in official and emergency communications. Avoid using the phrase "common spelling" to reduce confusion.

19. **ONLY TRANSMIT FACTS.** If your message is a question, deduction, educated guess, or hearsay, identify it as such. Do not clutter up the air with non-essential information. Be careful what you say on the air. There are many ears listening. Many facts will be taken out of context even when carefully identified.

20. If you do not understand the whole message given to you or if you missed a word out of the transmission, reply with "Say again." Do not say "please repeat" because it sounds too much like the word "received" when conditions are poor.

21. Chewing gum, eating, and other activities with items in the mouth tend to clutter up the clarity of your speech. Don't.

22. Avoid angry comments on the air at all costs. Obscene statements are not necessary and are out of place in all communications.

23. Sound alert. Nothing destroys confidence as much as a bored or weary sounding radio operator. If you are tired, get a relief operator.

24. During an incident, communications suffers enough confusion without wisecracks and jokes. When providing emergency communications you must remember that it is serious business and should be treated as such at all times.

25. Stay off the air unless you are sure you can be of assistance. It does no good to offer advice, assistance, comments or other input to a net unless you can truly provide clarification. It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt!

26. Always know your location. If you are mobile or portable and moving around, always keep a sharp lookout for landmarks. You must be able, if called upon, to accurately describe your

location at any time. This is particularly important if you with a search team or other mobile units.

27. When you are on the fringes of communications, (such as in a building or at end communications boundaries edge) look for a receiving "hot spot" site and use it. Don't walk around talking while in a communications fringe area. Repeaters have much more power than your handheld. Even if you have a good signal from a repeater, it does not mean you are good going into the repeater.

28. If you check into an emergency net, you must monitor on the net talkgroup. If you must leave the talkgroup, ask permission from the NCS (Net Control Station). Report to the NCS when you return to the net. It is vital that the NCS know the availability of each station on the net and it is up to YOU to keep the NCS advised. However, if the NCS is very busy and you must leave the net, do so without interrupting the net.

29. Net Control Stations frequently are very busy with work that is not on the air. If you call the NCS or dispatcher and do not get a reply, be patient and call again in a minute or two. If you have an emergency, say you have "Emergency traffic" after you identify yourself when you call the NCS. Be patient with the NCS and other stations.

30. A mobile radio (that is one that is mobile, portable, or airborne) has priority over any other type of radio station AND other forms of telecommunications. This is true in all radio services. Fixed station operators must recognize that a call from a mobile station takes precedence over telephone calls, personal conversations, and other activities. Respond promptly to any call from a mobile station -- even if it is to advise the caller to standby.

In conclusion, these few rules and suggestions are intended to help you become a better radio operator. Analyze your present operating methods and try to polish each element so your participation in radio communications is professional and worthwhile.