

— WRITING SAMPLE —

(Standard Operating Procedures)

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Radio Communications

This section defines procedures for radio communication during emergency response operations. These procedures minimize failures and interruptions, and ensure efficient communications, consistent emergency operations, and firefighter safety. This section assumes familiarity with the basics of RFR communications as covered in Chapter 7 *Radio Designations and Protocols*. This section applies to all members.

[ADD BOOKMARKS](#)

Calling and Responding to Dispatch

E-Comm Fire Dispatch is responsible for overall management of the communications system. For dispatch communications procedures, see [E-Comm Fire Dispatch SOP 5.5 *Radio Procedures for Apparatus*](#).

Status Buttons

All apparatus dispatched to an event will acknowledge receipt of the dispatch using the status buttons on their mobile radio or their mobile data terminal (MDT). Apparatus will also use status buttons to transmit all status changes. There's no need to also make a voice transmission over COM-2 or the telephone.

Use voice transmission on COM-2 *only* to receive or request additional information or resources.

Procedures for status buttons are given in [E-Comm Fire Dispatch SOP 5.6 *Status Buttons*](#).

Radio Traffic Priorities

E-Comm Fire Dispatch and partner fire departments recognize the following priorities for types of radio traffic on dispatch channels, as well as standard operating procedures for the communication involved. See [E-Comm Fire Dispatch SOP 5.2 *Radio Traffic Priorities*](#)

1. First priority—Mayday radio traffic (COM-2)
2. Second priority—Emergency radio traffic (COM-2)
3. Third priority—Push-to-Talk routine radio traffic
4. Fourth priority—Request-to-Talk routine radio traffic

5. Fifth priority—All other status buttons

Mayday

This is the highest level of radio priority, giving members instant access to the dispatchers. It should only be used when the safety of a firefighter or member of the public is immediately threatened. Broadcast a mayday to report being lost, trapped, delayed in escaping when on low air, disoriented, or injured and needing rescue. Also broadcast a mayday to report a missing firefighter. A mayday can be done two ways:

- Broadcasting "Mayday...mayday...mayday."
For procedure see [E-Comm Fire Dispatch SOP 5.2 Radio Traffic Priorities](#)
- Activating the Emergency button on the portable radio.

Emergency Button Activation

Push and hold the emergency button on the portable radio for two full seconds. The two-second timer prevents unintentional activation. The screen on the radio will display an emergency activation, RXEMER.

"Hot mike" timing – You have eight full seconds of automatic open microphone to identify yourself and relay pertinent information to Dispatch or the Incident Commander. This hot mike is automatically activated in a hands-free mode every 50 seconds until the console is reset by Dispatch. This "open mike" broadcasts only on the channel you're dialled to.

Dispatch – Activation causes an audible alarm at all four Dispatch consoles, regardless of what group they're listening to (Vancouver, Delta, etc). A red indicator also appears on the dispatchers' screens, telling them which department and which radio is activated. Dispatch immediately contacts the Incident Commander.

Warning: The emergency button cannot activate on a simplex channel.

The emergency button may also be used in conjunction with a mayday voice broadcast. This broadcast should include the four Ws: Who, What, Where, and Why. For example:
"Mayday, mayday, mayday. This is Richmond Engine 92 with two members trapped on the third floor, Alpha-Delta corner, low on air."

Crews not involved *must not transmit* until directed by Dispatch to resume normal Operations.

Emergency Radio Traffic

For procedure see [E-Comm Fire Dispatch SOP 5.2 Radio Traffic Priorities](#)

Tactical Channels

Dispatch assigns a tactical (TAC) channel to every dispatched event. Use TAC channels for communication on firegrounds, rescues, and alarm-system responses.

Not monitored – Tactical channels are not routinely monitored by Dispatch. All voice communication with Dispatch must happen on **COM-2**.

Multiple agency events – Dispatch also assigns a common tactical channel to events involving multiple agencies. Use these TAC channels for medical combined events, events involving fireboats or on the water, events involving multiple fire departments, and events on bridges or inside tunnels.

Channel assignment – For the allocation of tactical channels by Dispatch, see [E-Comm Fire Dispatch SOP 5.1 Tactical Channels](#)

“Richmond” Prefix – Do *not* use the 'Richmond' prefix on any *exclusively* assigned tactical channel (RFR only). Use the 'Richmond' prefix for all *common talk channels*, including:

- Channels assigned to events involving multiple fire departments.
- *YVR Link* - Communicating with the Incident Commander on the tactical 'patch' channel (combined channel) at Vancouver International Airport. A multi-agency response at the airport has many YVR agencies attending, such as ERS, Airport Operations, and Airfield Supervisor.
- In communication with BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) and RCMP on the 'combined events' channel.
- The channel assigned for medical calls or motor vehicle incidents. Although all our events are within our city limits, BCAS responders could be coming from out of town.
- In communication with BCAS, RCMP, Vancouver Fire & Rescue, and Delta Fire for events on the Arthur Lang Bridge, Knight Street Bridge, and Oak Street Bridge, and in the George Massey Tunnel.

Police-Fire-Ambulance (PFA) channels

RFR resources are routinely dispatched to Motor Vehicle Incidents (MVI) and other events needing police attendance. RFR can at times be required to secure a scene until appropriate police units can attend and initiate a police investigation. To facilitate communication between RFR and VPD Supervisors, the Incident Commander can request a joint Police-Fire-Ambulance (PFA) common talk group on the Wide-Area Radio Network.

When the Incident Commander asks to establish a PFA channel, Dispatch contacts RCMP-43 to find an available channel.

Use the 'Richmond' prefix for communicating on the PFA channels.

Communication En Route

If any responding unit gets pertinent information, relayed it to other responding units via Dispatch.

Officers may request additional information from Dispatch to help with the initial size-up and attack plan, such as facts about occupancy, water supply, and dangerous goods.

All responding officers should stay aware of the situation by monitoring the radio, as well as noting assignments being made at the scene.

While en route, Chief Officers should avoid giving commands to those already at the scene. Likewise, the Incident Commander at the scene should not give tasks to units before they arrive.

Incident Command

Once within viewing distance of the emergency scene, the first arriving unit is responsible for calling for additional assistance if conditions warrant.

When no specific instructions are received, subsequent arriving companies should automatically place themselves to best advantage as outlined in the Level I Staging procedure.

Initial report – The officer in charge of the first arriving unit must assume command and immediately transmit an initial report to Dispatch. Include in the initial report:

- unit identification
- description of building, occupancy, emergency scene
- summary of fire or emergency conditions
- plan of action
- establishment of command

Example:

Engine 1: "Dispatch – Engine 1 on the scene. We have a single story wood frame dwelling, nothing showing, we are going in to check it out. Engine 1 is Command."

Dispatch: "Roger Engine 1. Engine 1 is Command."

At this point, the first-in officer becomes the Incident Commander and assumes the radio identity "Command." This indicates to all responding apparatus that someone has assumed command. All subsequent radio communications with Dispatch should be between Command and Dispatch.

If more than one event is occurring at the same time, Dispatch should identify the different "Commands." This may include the location, building name, etc. For example: "Park Towers Command" or "Bridgeport Command."

Fire and smoke conditions can be reported by the standard terms: "Nothing showing," "Smoke showing," or "Fully involved." More elaborate descriptions can be given later.

Once in stage position Level 1, units should report this to Dispatch, along with their location (north/south/east/west). This ensures that the Incident Commander knows a crew is in Level 1 Staging before issuing an order.

Example: Engine 2: "Dispatch – Richmond Engine 2."
 Dispatch: "Go ahead Richmond Engine 2."
 Engine 2: "Richmond Engine 2 staged west on Ryan Road."
 Dispatch: "Roger Richmond Engine 2. Staged west on Ryan Road."

If the receiver does not understand the message, additional information and clarification must be requested. The Incident Commander must receive acknowledgement from the crew or unit, who must repeat the order to ensure it has been received and understood.

Example: Command: "Richmond Engine 2 – Command."
 Engine 2: "Go ahead Command."
 Command: "Engine 2 – Assume fire attack sector, main floor."
 Engine 2: "Roger Command – Engine 2 assuming fire attack sector, main floor."

It is absolutely *essential* that all radio messages be acknowledged by repetition. If such acknowledgment is not received, assume that the message *did not* get through.

Mutual Aid Communications – see Chapter 8 Mutual Aid.

Progress Reports

Officers and crew should provide brief progress reports to Sector Officers advising their progress in accomplishing tasks, face-to-face if possible. Reports should include the following:

- position
- conditions
- progress
- needs

If sectors are established, radio communications are between the Incident Commander and the Sector Officer. Within sectors, communication will be face-to-face between the Crew Officer and the Sector Officer. Radios may be used for urgent transmissions.

Example: Command: "Engine 2 – Command."
 Engine 2: "Go ahead Command."
 Command: "Engine 2 – give me a progress report."
 Engine 2: "Engine 2 nearing completion of overhaul on second floor."
 Command: "Roger Engine 2. Report back to me when overhaul is complete."
 Engine 2: "Roger Command. Engine 2 will report when overhaul is complete."

Sector Officers should provide a brief progress report to Command advising whether the assigned task is complete or not.

When the task is complete, the Sector Officer must report readiness for reassignment and the Incident Commander must issue new orders.

Standards For Emergency Scene Communication

Communicating Effectively

Brevity, clarity, and use of standard terms must be ensured in all radio communications. This will ensure that any fire or emergency is handled in an orderly, efficient manner, and will have a positive outcome. Improper communication or lack of communication can negatively affect the entire operation and pose a threat to the safety of personnel.

Good communication also depends on discipline, especially in complex situations. The communication system loses effectiveness if important messages cannot get through because of overloading, unnecessary conversation, or long reports.

Standard communication procedures begin with the initial dispatch and continue throughout operations on the scene until the incident is concluded. The Incident Commander must be especially aware of the proper use of radio equipment and procedures.

All members will follow these general standards:

- Messages must be brief, precise, and necessary.
- Speak slowly and distinctly.
- Mentally compose your message before transmitting.
- To acknowledge a received message, briefly repeat the message.
- When giving an order, say what to do, not how to do it.
- For complex or lengthy messages, use face-to-face communication whenever feasible.

Terms

A standard system of terms provides a benchmark for Command. All terms must be brief, clear, and easily understood by all. Standard use of terms helps to define the operation and announce to all when a task or operation is complete.

Examples:

“Primary Search complete” – indicates that the initial search has been completed.

“Under Control” – indicates that the forward progress of the fire has been stopped and the fire can be extinguished with the present resources on the scene.

“Secondary Search complete” – indicates that the secondary search has been completed.

“Code red” — used to positively ensure that an urgent radio message gets through to everyone operating at the scene. Upon hearing the term “code red,” stay off the air and treat the accompanying message as a priority. For example, if a decision is made to withdraw RFR personnel from a building due to a possible structural collapse, a “code red” must be transmitted to all operating sectors. If a code red is accompanied by an order to sound the evacuation alarm, all pump operations must place electronic sirens in the wail position until ordered to stop by Command. Sector Officers must ensure the safe withdrawal of their sectors and account for all personnel assigned to them.

Example: "Attention all personnel, this is Command. Code red withdrawal. We are evacuating the building. Sector Officers report back to me when your sectors have withdrawn to the staging area."

Continue standard communication procedures until the emergency incident is terminated.

Bridge and Tunnel Response – Multiple Fire Departments

Blocked traffic lanes can block access to a bridge or tunnel. With responses by multiple fire departments on either side, it's much more likely that at least one department will be able to get through. For fire or rescue events on bridges or in tunnels that join other municipalities, E-Comm Fire Dispatch will dispatch fire departments in both municipalities. Dispatch will coordinate communication between the two departments, and assign a common fire TAC channel (TAC 14).

Responding crews monitor TAC 14 en route and establish contact with the other fire departments to determine their status. The following scenario of radio calls during a tunnel event illustrates the method of contact and the language to be used:

Delta Fire, this is Richmond Ladder 6 responding to George Massey Tunnel, over.

Richmond Ladder 6, Delta Engine 1 approaching the Highway 17 overpass. There is no traffic coming from the southbound tube, over.

Delta Engine 1, Richmond Ladder 6 is on scene of car fire at north mouth of southbound tube. Stand by while we investigate, over.

Delta Engine 1 will stand by, over.

Richmond Rescue 7, Richmond Ladder 6, over.

Richmond Rescue 7, go ahead Richmond Ladder 6, over.

Richmond Rescue 7, check out the tube beyond this car fire to see if it's clear, over.

Richmond Rescue 7 will check the tube south of the car fire, over.

Richmond Ladder 6, Richmond Rescue 7, over.

Richmond Ladder 6, go ahead Richmond Rescue 7, over.

Richmond Rescue 7 has travelled the tube and found it clear into Delta, over.

Roger Richmond Rescue 7, the tube is clear.

Delta Engine 1, Richmond Ladder 6, over.

We can handle this, Delta. You can clear, over.

Delta Engine 1 copies you, Richmond. Delta Engine 1 clear, going to Dispatch 1, over.

Use TAC 14 for the entire incident, even when the other fire department clears.

The bridges are Arthur Lang, Oak Street, and Knight Street, involving Vancouver Fire & Rescue Service. Tunnels are the George Massey Tunnel and the Highway 91 Cloverleaf to Annacis Island, involving Delta Fire.

References

- Procedures for Emergency Button Use for Jaguar Radios, Bulletin No. 2006-10
- Radio Communications with Delta and Vancouver Fire at Incidents on Bridges and Tunnels, Bulletin No. 2004-37
- RFR Training Manual – Incident Command System - Introduction
- E-Comm Fire Dispatch SOP 5.1 Tactical Channels
- E-Comm Fire Dispatch SOP 5.2 Radio Traffic Priorities
- E-Comm Fire Dispatch SOP 5.3 Emergency Button Activation
- E-Comm Fire Dispatch SOP 5.5 Radio Procedures for Apparatus
- E-Comm Fire Dispatch SOP 5.6 Status Buttons
- E-Comm Fire Dispatch SOP 5.8 PFA Channels
- E-Comm Fire Dispatch SOP 8.6 Bridge and Tunnel Response

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