

Operating Guideline # 1002

Incident Communications

November 20, 2022



PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Operating Guideline (OG) is to initiate, maintain and control effective incident communications.

ISSUE/RATIONALE:

Effective incident communications provide the very practical connection between and among the 3 management levels of the organization; the strategic, tactical and the task levels. Incident communications are the information “carrier” that the team uses to connect, commit resources, and to create effective, coordinated action.

To be effective, the incident commander must orchestrate an ongoing combination of the standard communications activities among the set of participants who are all actively involved with the incident and operate at different levels. Each level operates with its own needs, capabilities and challenges.

GUIDELINE:

1. Keep communications simple: use plain language. Use plain text or plain language (common English), as opposed to 10 code signals and other naming methods. This has advantages when our agency works with other agencies to effect better interoperability and better sharing of incident information. The following chart denotes common terms for use on the radio.

Word or Phrase	Meaning
ACKNOWLEDGE	Let me know that you have received and understood this message.
AFFIRMATIVE	Yes, or permission granted.
BREAK	Indicates the separation between portions of the message. (To be used where there is no clear distinction between the text and other portions of the message.)
CAR	Chief's Car (Car 1, Car 2, Car 3)
CHANNEL	Change to channel ... before proceeding.
CLEAR / ALL-CLEAR	All people are out of the vehicle or structure.
CONFIRM	Have I received the following ... or Did you receive the message?
CORRECTION	An error has been made in this transmission (message indicated). The correct version is....
DISREGARD	Consider this transmission as not sent.
EXPOSURES	Structures threatened by fire.
GO AHEAD	Proceed with your message.
HOW DO YOU READ?	What is the readability of my transmission?
I SAY AGAIN	Self-explanatory (use instead of "I REPEAT").
INCIDENT SAFETY OFFICER	Officer that solely focuses on firefighter safety at working fires and incidents.

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MAIN	MLFD Main channel used for apparatus and Command to communicate with Dispatch.
MAYDAY	The spoken word for distress communications. When said three times the only persons speaking are the IC and the member who stated the MAYDAY. Used for life safety communications ie. Firefighter down, collapse of the building, Out of air on SCBA, need for EMS.
MONITOR	Listen on (frequency).
NEGATIVE	No, or that is not correct, or I do not agree.
OUT	Conversation is ended and no response is expected.
OVER	My transmission is ended and I expect a response from you.
PAN PAN	The spoken word for urgency communications, Marine.
PUMPER	Water carrying fire apparatus with a fire pump.
READ BACK	Repeat all, or the specified part of this message back to me exactly as received (do not use the word "REPEAT").
RESCUE	Multipurpose fire vehicle used to carry resources for rescue.
ROGER	I have received all of your last transmission.
ROGER NUMBER	I have received your message Number ____.
SAY AGAIN	Self-explanatory. (Do not use the word "REPEAT".)
SCENE SECURE	Indicates that OPP have made the scene safe.
STAND BY	I must pause for a few seconds or minutes, please wait and I will call you.
SEELONCE	An international expression to indicate that silence has been imposed on the frequency due to a distress situation.
STAGING	A location that fire engines and other equipment congregate at in the vicinity of an incident, but out of the way. Can also refer to a support camp for large incidents. When access to an incident is difficult, equipment may "stage" waiting for the path in to be clear.
STRIKE TEAM	Group of like firefighting equipment. Term used in wildland firefighting primarily.
TACTICAL	This is a channel dedicated to the tactical goals at scene.
THAT IS CORRECT	Self-explanatory.
TANKER	Water carrying fire apparatus
UNIFIED COMMAND	A team of multiple agencies commanding due to multiple threat types or multiple agencies. Mass casualty events.
URGENT X 3 Times	Important information, rapidly changing fire conditions on the fireground
UTILITIES	Hydro, Water, Sewer, Propane suppliers.
VALUES at RISK	Natural resources & man made developments that have measurable worth and are at risk by fire.

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VERIFY	Check coding, check text with originator and send correct version.
WATER SUPPLY	Tankers, Portable Pump Operators, and any resources dedicated to getting water to the pumper use this term to describe their operational group. Usually a separate channel is dedicated to this group.
WILCO	Your instructions received, understood and will be complied with.
WILDLAND #	Wildland 4,5,9 are our ATV units capable of 12 month service for off road applications in remote areas.
WORDS TWICE	(a) As a request: Communication is difficult, please send each word, or group of words, twice. (b) As information: Since communication is difficult, I will send each word or group of words, twice.

2. Face-to-face communication is the most effective form of communication. It should be the preferred form of communication on the task and tactical levels of the incident site. Face-to-face communications should be used whenever possible in the following circumstances:
 - a. Company officers communicating with their crew members.
 - b. Company officers communicating with other officers in their sector.
 - c. Tactical level bosses communicating with units assigned to their geographic location.

RESPONSIBILITY:

It is the responsibility of all firefighting staff to comply with the provisions of this Operating Guideline.

REFERENCES:

- The Highway Traffic Act
- Blue Card Command Standard Operating Procedures
- Ontario Traffic Manual April 2022 Appendix A: Unplanned Events

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