

# COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURES

## 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 hams 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 printed herein **MUST** be practiced until it is second nature.

**FIRST**, you **MUST** give the tactical call 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.

**SECOND**, say "THIS IS". The called station knows your tactical call follows. This is extremely important in cases where there is a lot of confusion.

**THIRD**, give your tactical call sign. Note that we say tactical call sign and not ham radio call sign. Tactical call signs are important and ham call signs are not, egos notwithstanding.

**FOURTH**, 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 another connotation in formal message handling. Merely un-key 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.

**FIFTH**, end your message with "OVER" or "OUT".

## **EXCEPTIONS OR VARIATIONS**

1. It is sometimes permissible to omit the call 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 call signs.
2. The term, "THIS IS" is used to separate the FROM and TO call signs. If, and only if, confusion will not result, omitting the "THIS IS" phrase permissible.
3. If you are the calling station and you omit your own tactical call sign, 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. Un-keying after your message implies "OVER". To comply with FCC regulations, you must give your FCC assigned call every ten minutes OR at the end of a series of exchange communications, whichever comes first. Giving your call sign implies an "OUT" ending. Should giving your call cause any confusion; do not hesitate to add the word "OUT" ending. In HF single-sideband radio, it IS necessary to say the word "OVER".

## **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. Stations must give complete station identification at least once in a 10-minute operating period, particularly when tactical calls are being used.
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 instructions perfectly. If you do not understand, ask for a repeat.
9. When you understood the message, acknowledge the receipt with the words “copy”, “received”, or “acknowledged”. The word “copy” is preferred and NEVER the word “QSL”.
10. The word “break” is never used UNLESS there is an emergency. Give your call letters 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 say again 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 clarifications.
15. There is no place for “Q” signals during official and emergency communications. They are too easily misunderstood, rarely save time, and often result in errors.
16. Do not act as a relay station unless Net Control, or another radio station asks for a relay – and you can fulfill the requirements with your station.
17. When transmitting number (house numbers, street and telephone numbers, etc.), always transmit number sequence as a series of individual numbers. Never say numbers in combinations.
18. If a proper name needs to be transmitted, always spell it out using the ICAO 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 nonessential 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. Amateur radio may be a hobby to enjoy, but 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 describe accurately your location at any time. This is particularly important if you are with a search team or other mobile units.
27. On VHF and UHF frequencies, particularly when on the fringes of communications 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 frequency. If you must leave the frequency, ask permission from the NCS. Report to the NCS when you return to the net. It is vital that the NCS knows 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 operator—whether public safety or amateur radio. Analyze your present operating methods and try to polish each element so your participation in radio communications is professional and worthwhile. Your Net Control Station operator may have the final authority, but good, clean operating methods and procedures almost make a net run without an NCS.