



**City of Winchester  
Fire and Rescue Department  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**



<b>Section:</b> Radio Communications	<b>SOP:</b> 6.1
<b>Subject:</b> Plain Language Radio Communications	<b>Effective:</b> September 7, 2016
<b>Revised:</b>	
 Allen W. Baldwin, Fire Chief	

**SCOPE**

To establish response procedures for plain language radio communications.

**PURPOSE**

Establishing a foundation of communication fundamentals is the first step towards developing on-scene communications that are clear, concise, and disciplined. These fundamentals enable and support all communication models and procedures that build upon that foundation.

**RESPONSIBILITY**

It shall be the responsibility of all personnel that operate on the Winchester Fire and Rescue Department (WFRD) and Winchester Emergency Communications Center (ECC) radio communication system to understand and use this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for all radio communications.

**RADIO COMMUNICATIONS**

Messages shall be short and complete (*i.e. Medic 1 is en-route to the hospital priority 3*). WFRD and ECC will use the National Fire Academy (NFA) “4C” communication model to insure the overall efficient use and quality of our department’s radio communications for the overall safety of all first responders. The 4 “C’s” are: CONNECT, CONVEY, CLARIFY, and CONFIRM.

**CONNECT**

Before a sender can effectively transmit their desired message, he or she must *connect* with the receiver. Instead of leading off the transmission with the sender’s designator, the sender leads off with the recipient’s designator.

Example: “Headquarters **FROM** Engine 1”.

## **CONVEY**

Once connected with the receiver, the sender can convey the message. A sub-element of conveyance is the need to “convey with conciseness.”

Example

Cork Street Command: “Engine 5 from Command”

Engine 5 Officer: “Engine 5”

Cork St. Command: “Take your line to Division 2”

## **CLARIFY**

Clarify confirms not only that the message was received, but also that it was understood. It means to repeat the directive establishing 100% certainty that the message received is the same as the message conveyed.

Example:

Cork Street Command: “Engine 4 from Command”

Engine 4 Officer: “Engine 4”

Cork Street Command: “Take your line to Division 2”

Engine 4 Officer: “Engine 4 copy. Take our line to Division 2”

## **CONFIRM**

The fourth “C” requires the sender to *confirm* that the message *clarified* is the one that was *conveyed*. Here is an example with all 4-C’s in practice.

Example:

Cork Street Command: “Engine 4 from Command” Connect

Engine 4 Officer: “Engine 4” Connect

Cork Street Command: “Take your line to division 2” Convey

Engine 4 Officer: “Engine 4 copy. Take our line to division 2” Clarify

Cork Street Command: “Affirmative Engine 4” Confirm

## **GENERAL PRACTICE**

As we have standardized our emergency incident scene activities through the development of policies and procedures, we need to do so with respect to our

communications used in managing those incidents. Several critical steps need to be immediately undertaken to raise the bar of our radio communications style.

## 1. “Parroting”

The concept of parroting is when one who overhears another’s words repeats them for the sake of repetition only. We most often face this challenge with our dispatchers, and more often than not it is because our personnel, consciously or unconsciously, mention “*Headquarters*” in a transmission that the dispatch center has no need to be a part of.

Example:

Engine 4:     *“Headquarters, Engine 4 is dropping a line at the corner of George St. and Whittier Ave. Have Engine 5 split lay to the hydrant at 322 Whittier Ave.”*

ECC:           *“Headquarters copies. Headquarters to Engine 5, Engine 4 is dropping a line at the corner of George St. and Whittier Ave. You need to split lay to the hydrant at 322 Whittier Ave.”*

Engine 5:     *“Engine 5 copies”*

Notice how a vast majority of the radio traffic could have been eliminated simply by Engine 4’s officer conveying a message directly to Engine 5’s officer.

Engine 4:     *“Engine 5 from Engine 4, we are dropping our line at the corner of George St. and Whittier Ave. Split lay to the hydrant at 322 Whittier Ave.”*

Engine 5:     *“Engine 5 copies. Pick up your split lay at George St. and Whittier Ave. for the hydrant at 322 Whittier Ave.”*

While we have improved in this regard, constant reminders from command-level officers along with basic radio communications training at the recruit firefighter level must occur to reinforce this practice.

## 2. Proper Word Choice

Proper word choice is essential to avoid miscommunication of the intent of the message. The adopted the phonetic alphabet as used by the military and aviation industry shall be utilized to describe items such as the sides of buildings, such as Alphas, Bravos, Charlie, and Delta, see phonetic chart below.

Similarly, we must strive to use the words we mean to use. For example, “*withdraw*” and “*evacuate*” mean two very different things. However, they get used interchangeably at times, and this creates varying expectations of the desired behavior. Command level officers must continue to reinforce the concept of saying only what you mean, and meaning only what you say.

## WORD ASSOCIATIONS

When transmitting a letter of the alphabet; Fire and Rescue and ECC should use the following word associations in compliance with NIMS nomenclature.

A – ALPHA	H – HOTEL	O – OSCAR	V – VICTOR
B – BRAVO	I – INDIA	P – PAPA	W – WHISKEY
C – CHARLIE	J – JULIET	Q – QUEBEC	X – X-RAY
D – DELTA	K – KILO	R – ROMEO	Y – YANKEE
E – ECHO	L – LIMA	S – SIERRA	Z – ZULU
F – FOXTROT	M – MIKE	T – TANGO	
G – GOLF	N – NOVEMBER	U – UNIFORM	

Phrase / Word	Definition
<b>Location Based Terminology</b>	
Dispatch(ed)	Unit dispatched to an event
Enroute/Responding	Unit acknowledges dispatch and is responding to event
On-Scene	Unit is at the scene
Divert	Used when unit changes response to another event
Available	In-Service
Out-of-service	Out-of-Service
In Quarters	Available in Quarters
Enroute to Hospital	Transporting patient to a hospital
At Hospital	Arrived at destination hospital
<b>Fire Scene Terminology</b>	
<b>Search Findings</b>	
Search is Negative	Primary or Secondary search is completed with no victims located
<b>Fire Conditions</b>	
Fire Showing	Fire is visible upon arrival
Fully Involved	100% fire involvement
Extending	Fire spread to another occupancy, floor, portion of the bldg
Extension	Used to describe interior fire transmission to another area or object
Bulk of Fire is Knocked	Notification that majority of fire conditions have been extinguished
<b>Smoke Conditions</b>	
Smoke Showing	Smoke is visible upon arrival
Zero-Visibility	Interior condition indicating smoke to the floor
<b>Operational Modes</b>	
Offensive	Most often indicating interior operations
Defensive	Exterior attack – exposure protection
Transitional	Transition from one mode to another
Under-Control	Used to describe status of the event – fire may not be out completely
Withdraw or Orderly Retreat	Used to reassemble crews to the exterior and organize an attack
Evacuate	Immediate life-threatening evacuation
<b>Communications Transmissions</b>	
Copy	Understood
Disregard	Never mind
Affirmative	Yes
Negative	No
Say Again	Repeat traffic
Stand-By	Wait and say nothing until called
<b>Urgent Radio Transmission Terminology</b>	
MAYDAY	Firefighter lost, trapped, or missing firefighter
Emergency Traffic	Non-Fireground, Non-Police event, emergency notification
Priority Traffic	Request to transmit urgent traffic
Signal - 1 (Urgent)	Imminent danger due to hostile event
Signal – 2 (Non Urgent)	Police needed and may respond non-emergency
Signal - 4	Need to convey sensitive information