PURPOSE
To establish standard operating guidelines (SOGs) regarding safety procedures for the Incident Commander (IC), responders and dispatch center to take when; a responder emergency occurs or emergency traffic message is declared.

To establish procedures to enable responders to notify or be notified of an emergency condition or situation when they are assigned to an immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH) environment.

To establish procedures for emergency situations outside of an IDLH zone, and or an individual operating on an incident needing law enforcement or other assistance when faced with a physical threat to their safety or others on an incident scene.

SCOPE
Applicable to all: fire, rescue, EMS responders and assisting and cooperating agencies involved with emergency fire and rescue operations in Isle of Wight County, Virginia.

GUIDELINES
- Emergency Alert tone
- Emergency Traffic
- Signal (1)

Intent of the Responder Emergency Procedure Guidelines:
- The communications system shall provide a standard method to give priority to the transmission of emergency messages and notification of imminent hazards over that of routine communications to all levels of the incident command structure.
- To ensure that clear text voice communications is used for an emergency condition at an incident.
- When a responder has declared an emergency traffic message, that person shall use clear text voice communications to identify the type of emergency, change in conditions or tactical operation need. When an Emergency Traffic message is declared, all units except the Incident Commander, dispatch center and the responder requesting emergency traffic should observe radio silence until dispatch or IC has released emergency traffic mode. (Command and dispatch restricted communications mode)
DEFINITIONS:

- Responder: A person who has responsibility to respond to emergencies and deliver services such as firefighting, law enforcement, water rescue, emergency medical, emergency management, public health, red cross, community emergency responders, public works, and other incident assisting and cooperating public and private services.

- Emergency Condition: Any condition or situation that occurs at an incident, en-route or returning which may or has caused harm to responders or if not shared to on scene or arriving responders may cause harm to them or others.

- Emergency Traffic (ET): A voice transmission on the communications radio channel from the dispatch center or a field unit that is a designation to all units on that designated radio channel to clear all non-emergency radio communications traffic. This action allows the caller of the (ET) the highest priority for radio traffic for sending an emergency traffic voice message and or to request assistance as needed, involving life hazards or pending life threats to responders in any situation. (Command and dispatch center restricted communications mode)

- Priority Traffic: A voice transmission on the radio that is a designation to clear radio traffic if possible and provide the caller with radio access to announce an urgent request or change of conditions that does not involve immediate life hazard to responder. Priority traffic is related to civilian injuries and or other situations of an urgent nature needing assistance as needed from the dispatch center or the incident commander.

- Mayday: A voice transmission declaring an immediate life threatening situation to a responder in an IDLH zone. This is a designation to all units on that designated radio channel to clear all non-emergency radio communications traffic. This action allows the (MayDay/ET) caller the highest priority for sending an emergency voice message for help and/or to request assistance as needed. Declaring a Mayday or ET will alert incident command staff and dispatch center of an immediate life threat to unit, crew or individual in distress in an IDLH zone.

- Signal One (1): A voice transmission code or statement that means the caller needs immediate response of law enforcement and other assistance as requested. The code "Signal 1" is an emergency traffic code designated by the Commonwealth of Virginia radio interoperable plan. A Signal One (1) message is a designation to all units on that designated radio channel to clear all non-emergency radio traffic allowing the caller of (Signal 1/ ET) the highest priority for radio communications with the dispatch center.

- Safety Check: A voice transmission from the dispatch center used to verify that crew(S) or units assigned to an EMS incident are ok and safe and for other incidents as needed with the incident commander. Signal One: A specific voice message originating from the dispatch center to verify the safety of an individual, crew or unit of a mobile or portable radio from which an Emergency Button activation has been detected without any voice message requesting assistance. (i.e.- "Dispatch to E42, call communications Signal One")

- If no reply is heard from the mobile or portable radio or other forms of communications, the dispatch center will activate the Signal (1) procedure response to the last known location of the crew.
✓ The individual, crew or unit being notified of a “Signal One” message shall reply with a voice message validating the request for help or an accidental emergency button activation. If the Emergency Button (EB) was activated by mistake the individual, crew or unit must reply to the dispatch center, “Signal One Error”, (i.e.- E42 Signal One error) and reset the mobile or portable radio to normal function.
✓ Any terminology other than “Signal One Error” will be understood by dispatch center as a distress notification and a Signal One (1) response will be activated for a law enforcement to the location of the mobile or portable radio unless otherwise advised by the responder being alerted of a Signal One.

• IDLH Emergency Button Activation: Activation of the Emergency Button (EB) while on an IDLH incident will be handled as an Emergency Traffic alert and or MayDay alert until cleared by the incident commander or command staff. Notification of an Emergency Button (EB) activation will be made from the dispatch center to the incident commander of which the mobile or portable radio unit is assigned.

Note: The EB button on existing VHF radio system is not activated for Fire Rescue. Above procedure begins upon switching to new 800 mhz Radio System.

EMERGENCY ALERT TONE

PURPOSE
To establish a radio communications plan that provides a standard method to alert responders of an emergency traffic message related to notification of imminent hazards, conditions, change of command orders or other emergent dispatch center needs.

SCOPE
Applicable to all fire, rescue, EMS responders and assisting and cooperating agencies involved with emergency fire and rescues operations in Isle of Wight County, Virginia.

GUIDELINES
• Emergency Alert (EA) tone is a single 5 second steady radio tone followed by an Emergency Traffic (ET) Radio Message.
• The Emergency Alert tone (EA) tone will be activated from the dispatch center upon request by the incident commander and will be followed by an emergency traffic voice message. All responders and firefighters operating at an emergency scene shall refrain from transmitting any radio messages upon hearing the emergency alert tone and remain alert and listen for the emergency message from the IC or dispatch center.
• Radio communications will be in a “Command Restricted” communication mode until released by the IC or notification from the dispatch center.
• The incident commander can request activation of the “Emergency Alert Tone” (EA) tone at any time as needed to gain the attention of all resources to issue
Emergency Traffic (ET) message or MAYDAY alert.
- The dispatch center should use the EA tone when situations exist that require immediate attention from units on scene or on an operating radio channel to issue an Emergency Traffic (ET) message or MAYDAY alert.

PROCEDURE AND IMPLEMENTATION & DISPATCH CENTER RESPONSIBILITIES ACTIVATION AND USE OF EMERGENCY ALERT TONE
The EA tone is reserved for alerting all units to limit their radio transmissions and listen for immediate emergency traffic announcement from the dispatch center or incident commander. The use of routine radio transmission should be limited to command and/or dispatch center communications and restricted to those involved in the emergency situation.

The dispatch center will sound an EA tone on the appropriate channel(s) as needed to clear all non-essential radio traffic (clear the air) followed by the “Emergency Traffic” message as instructed by the IC or as needed by the dispatch center.

EA tone can be activated upon request by incident commander or as directed to command staff to make emergency announcements such as Mayday, evacuation order and other potential life threatening events to responders.

When the dispatch center receives or hears an emergency traffic (ET) message on any radio channel or when the emergency button is activated and radio message is heard, the dispatcher shall record and document the emergency traffic voice message if possible and contact the incident commander, staff or other units on scene as needed immediately.

If unable to contact on-scene units, the emergency alert tone will be used to clear the radio channel and provide emergency traffic message with acknowledgement from on-scene unit. Acknowledgment of the Emergency Traffic (ET) message to the dispatch center should be made by the IC and or command staff.

1. Examples of use for Emergency Alert tone:
   - EA tone is to be used to alert responders of an emergency traffic radio message of the highest priority. It can and should be used in conjunction with the IC’s decision to evacuate a structure or any unsafe area and controlling radio transmissions during a MayDay event.
   - Critical situations on the incident scene when the IC needs to announce changes in operational modes, or life safety actions for responders.
   - Control of the radio channels by the dispatch center when emergency traffic message must be broadcasted or setting command restricted mode of radio communications in effect.
   - EA use to alert responders when command and dispatch center restricted radio mode is released.

2. Examples of normal command and control radio communications processes not needing activation of the EA tone process: These situations should and
can be managed by effective radio discipline controlled by the IC and assigned command positions.
  • Controlled withdrawal of fire attack crews from an IDLH zone.
  • PAR check request.
  • Routine changing of operating radio channels.

EMERGENCY TRAFFIC

PURPOSE
To establish a standard operating guideline for declaring an emergency traffic (ET) radio communication.

The communications system shall provide a standard method to give priority to the transmission of emergency traffic messages and notification of imminent hazards over that of routine communications to all levels of the incident command structure.

SCOPE
Applicable to all fire, rescue, EMS responders and assisting and cooperating agencies involved with emergency fire and rescue operations in Isle of Wight County, Virginia.

GUIDELINES
The Emergency Traffic message (ET) declaration should be used by; dispatch center, IC or responder, unit, crews when they have emergency affecting responder safety or other urgent need for immediate communications, it gives that person priority to the radio channel over all other radio traffic. The radio message of Emergency Traffic (ET) is an alert to all other non-affected units, crews or responders to clear the radio channel of radio use until advised otherwise.

PROCEDURES AND IMPLEMENTATION
The Emergency Traffic (ET) radio message is to be used when an emergency situation is of an imminent need and related to responder safety, with direct access to Incident Commander (IC) or to dispatch center. The dispatch center/IC or command supervisor shall instruct the responder/unit to proceed with their ET radio communications.

The ET declaration will alert all units and crews to refrain from making routine radio communications until the emergency traffic message or event is cleared. When the dispatch center declares emergency traffic only; that means the radio channels are in a command and dispatch center restricted mode until cleared by the dispatch center. Upon completion or when the emergency has been abated or all affected members have been made aware of the hazardous condition or emergency, the incident commander and or the dispatch center shall make announcement of termination of the ET and permit routine radio traffic to resume.

Examples of using the Emergency traffic (ET) declaration, as when an emergency is imminent or has already happened but not limited to:
  • A responder/unit or crew in distress, injured or ill or needing immediate assistance (IDLH distress call should use MAYDAY procedures).
• Collapse of structural building elements; roof, wall, floor, or pending indicators of collapses.
• Rapidly changing fire conditions
• Water supply interruption which puts responder in a precarious situation
• Any circumstance that can seriously injure a responder or has injured a responder outside of IDLH
• A collapse potential that needs to be investigated
• Immediate evacuation of the building necessary for any of the above or for any circumstance
• Incident Commander deems necessary
• Requesting additional alarm(s)
• Declaring collapse zone exclusion areas

SIGNAL ONE

PURPOSE
To provide a standard operating guideline that establishes a process for responders to request law enforcement assistance on scene pertaining to the safety and protection of responders.

SCOPE
Applicable to all fire, rescue, EMS responders and assisting and cooperating agencies involved with emergency fire and rescue operations in Isle of Wight County, Virginia. A Signal One (1) request is a special code for voice message established by the Commonwealth of Virginia interoperable radio communications plan for all public safety answering services (dispatch center) in Virginia and is applicable for all emergency services agencies and personnel within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

DEFINITIONS
Fire and EMS responders who find themselves on scene of a situation requiring an immediate law enforcement presence should utilize the Signal 1 code in their radio transmission to indicate they are in a dangerous/hostile situation. The Signal One (1) voice message is an approved Virginia statewide code (terminology) used to request a police response without alerting an aggressor who poses a threat to responders.

Life Threatening Situation: A situation where the lives of fire and rescue personnel are in immediate danger and there is a need for an immediate police response.

Signal 1: A code for broadcasting an alert to the dispatcher that personnel need the police for a life-threatening situation. The term “Signal 1” will be used to allow fire and rescue personnel the ability to rapidly notify the dispatch center of a responder life-threatening situation. This term will alert any dispatch center in Virginia that a top priority law enforcement response is required.

PROCEDURES AND ACTIVATION OF SIGNAL ONE (1) REQUEST:
Responders sometimes find themselves in a situation where their lives are in danger. During these times, they need the ability to rapidly alert the dispatch center of their situation.
Responder and civilian safety is paramount in situations like these. If in a situation in which you cannot show that you are holding the microphone and radio transmission cannot be made, personnel shall activate the emergency button (EB) (orange on the new radios). This will automatically open the portable radio microphone for 10 seconds which allows for verbal communications without touching the microphone.

Responder(s) crew(s) of any unit that is in a life-threatening situation should:

- Announce their unit number to dispatch center, then state “Signal 1”.
- Give a brief statement of the situation, if possible. “Subject with a gun.” A brief statement of the situation will help ensure appropriate resources are dispatched by law enforcement.
- If you are unable to give a brief situation, your unit number and “Signal 1” will be sufficient.
- If you are in a location other than the exact location dispatched, you should also advise your exact location.
- Responder requesting Signal 1 should switch to an alternate radio channel as assigned by the dispatch center if able to do so.

Emergency Button Activation Procedures:

- Activating the EB on portable radio will allow for 10 seconds of open microphone air time. Responder requesting help can use that open microphone access to describe the situation without touching the microphone and/or calling attention to others on the scene.

Example of Signal 1 Request:

- Transmit unit radio designation: example “Medic 62”
- Medic 62; Announce “Signal 1”
- Medic 62; Announce location, situation, and other pertinent information if possible
- Dispatch center reply: Medic 62, we confirm Signal 1

Upon confirmation of a Signal 1, the dispatch center will alert appropriate resources according to the Signal 1 response guidelines.

A “Signal 1” is the highest priority call for law enforcement response for responder assistance. It is equal to a law enforcement “Signal 1” officer-in-trouble event. The goal of this policy is to help the responders with immediate law enforcement assistance. However, overuse of this special statewide code will result in its ineffectiveness. Signal 1 announcement is for a situation that is a life-threatening situation to a responder(s).

*Virginia Statewide PSA 911 Center Standards*