

BURLINGTON TWP. FIRE DEPARTMENT
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE #37

RADIO USE

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to provide standardized radio procedures for use by the Burlington Twp. Fire Department and with other Lapeer County Fire Departments.

Scope: It is the policy of the Burlington Twp. Fire Department and the Lapeer County Fire Association that radio traffic be governed through the use of standard terminology and a uniform set of procedures and guidelines. Following these basic radio procedures and guidelines will not only demonstrate professionalism but will also improve the method in which these messages are conveyed.

To standardize communications by all member departments, each Fire Chief is responsible for ensuring their personnel are properly trained in the use of department radios and the adopted method of communications.

Radio Procedures and Guidelines:

1. All personnel shall use official titles and authorized radio call signs in all radio transmissions. Keep all transmissions brief and to the point, avoiding lengthy descriptions and unnecessary messages.
2. Be accurate, brief, and clear. Rehearse a message in your mind before transmitting. Listen before transmitting to make certain the channel is clear so as not to interrupt or interfere with another unit.
3. Speak distinctly at a moderate speed using a conversational tone of voice with natural emphasis and rhythm. Do Not Shout! Ensure the microphone button is fully depressed or keyed and pause briefly before beginning to talk.
4. "Plain English" shall be used to conduct all radio traffic. The use of "ten-codes" shall not be used.
5. When calling Central Dispatch or another unit, begin with the call sign of the party being called, followed by your call sign. Example: "Central from 1501".
6. Personal information should not be transmitted over the radio. Items such as names, graphic details, possible causes, etc. should not be broadcast unless absolutely necessary for scene management.
7. Radio traffic of a personal nature such as using the radio system in lieu of a telephone or using the dispatch center as a message or relay point for personal traffic is strictly prohibited. Personal radio traffic of an emergency nature is exempted as long as the traffic is truly an emergency.

Responding:

1. Once Burlington Twp. Fire Department is dispatched to an incident, no more than two (2) officers from the department shall contact Central Dispatch to call en route. All others shall call en route on Burlington Admin.

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2. Once Burlington Township Medical First Responders are dispatched to an incident, no more than two MFR'S from the department shall contact Central Dispatch to call en route. All others shall call en route on Burlington Admin. All responding personnel shall respond to the station, unless you are a licensed MFR and are closer to the scene location. But to do so, you need to make radio contact with any other responding personnel to verify that someone is going to the hall to respond with the rescue unit.
3. All untrained Firefighters and unlicensed MFR's shall only call en route to an incident on Burlington Admin.
4. The only exception to these rules is after the second tone has gone off for the incident and no one has called en route to Central Dispatch.
5. Once dispatched to an initial alarm incident, each apparatus shall call en route and shall indicate the number of personnel on board. Prior to arrival the responding apparatus will request instructions from either the Incident Commander or Staging Officer if one is assigned. (This is important but should not take precedence over emergency scene traffic).

Arrival:

1. When arriving at the incident location the first unit shall call on scene, give an initial size up over the radio, and establish command with the street or business name used to identify that particular incident (Jefferson Road Command, Second Street Command, etc.). The size up should include a short report of what is observed on scene; i.e., "1501 is on scene, I have a single story wood frame structure with smoke showing from the rear".
2. After conducting a 360-degree size-up, an update report should be provided if is warranted, i.e., "1551 is on location of a 4-car PI with occupants trapped in three vehicles.
3. Upon command of the I.C. all units will switch to the fire incident channel assigned by Central Dispatch. I.C. will request a fire incident channel if one is not assigned by Central Dispatch.

Arrival for All MFR Runs:

1. When Burlington Twp. First Responder's arrive on scene and a licensed MFR knows they have enough help on scene they shall advise Central Dispatch by stating 'Ample On'. All other responding units will report in a Non-Emergency Response Mode (Slow Time).

Communications at Incident Scenes:

1. At any incident where communications between units will be frequent, the I.C. shall instruct all units at the scene to switch the radios to the appropriate incident channel. To keep other traffic from interfering with fire ground communications, it is suggested that all units turn the scan off. Central Dispatch will need to notify, on the appropriate incident channel, if other incidents for that department are received. On any incident or at any scene, multiple incident channels may be requested to alleviate overloading the fire ground incident channel (Incident channels may be needed for water supply or staging).

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2. When issuing orders, the Incident Commander or appropriate supervisor should indicate a specific task to be performed. Orders should tell personnel what they need to do, not how to do it. When a unit receives an order, it should reply with a brief restatement of the order to confirm understanding.
3. All units are reminded to keep radio traffic to a minimum throughout the incident. Communications should first be attempted face to face whenever practical.

Downgrading an Incident:

1. As the incident stabilizes or is determined to no longer be an emergency it may be downgraded. Downgrading refers to the cancellation, slowing down, or redirecting of responding units.

Additional Alarms:

1. An “Alarm” is defined as an initial and/or subsequent assignment of units or stations to an incident. Alarm assignments are classified as first alarm through fifth alarm. When the incident commander determines that additional help is needed, they shall request a 2nd alarm, 3rd alarm, etc. The responding department will only call in service one time for all their responding units (See Lapeer County Firefighters Association Radio Use During Multiple Alarm Incidents policy). This will reduce radio traffic, keeping the airways clear for necessary radio communications.

Clearing the Scene:

1. As a general rule, the Incident Commander should clear all units when the scene is secure. This prevents every piece of apparatus from tying up the frequency. An exception to this would be if an apparatus is remaining on scene, which would require the I.C. to clear all units except that remaining apparatus. If a department is assisting another and they are released by the Incident Commander prior to all units clearing, only the senior officer or one unit from the assisting department should advise Central Dispatch that all their units are clear of the incident.

Unnecessary Radio Traffic:

1. Radio traffic considered “unnecessary” includes any traffic that Central Dispatch is not required to record. Included in this would be notifying Central Dispatch that a piece of apparatus is being used for training, is in a parade, receiving normal maintenance, etc. Apparatus should not be considered out of service and reported to Central Dispatch unless it would make a change in the way that Central Dispatch has to dispatch, i.e., your Tender will be unavailable for three days due to repairs and should be done via telephone.