



# **Radio Field Guide**

## **Communication Procedures & Guidelines**

for

## **Orange County Fire Services**

**Orange County Fire Coordinator Vini Tankasali**

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## **PURPOSE AND CONTENT**

The following guidelines provide a plan and directive for uniform procedures in radio communications for all fire agencies accessing the Orange County Fire Communication System. It should be understood that all frequencies are licensed by the FCC.

Providing specific guidelines for radio communications within our organizations will allow for clear and concise communication between the 911 Center staff and all fire service personnel.

The proper use of the radio is one of the more important adjustments necessary for the modern fire service. It is imperative for field personnel to remain calm and poised in the face of disaster in order to promote an atmosphere of control and stability.

This manual has been prepared to instruct and guide field personnel in the professional and appropriate use of the Orange County Fire Communication System. It is through the cooperation of the Orange County Fire Coordinator's Office and the Orange County Emergency Communication Center staff that this guide was made possible.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Orange County Emergency Dispatch Center is to maintain a system of coordinated emergency communications for the emergency services of Orange County by:

1. Receiving emergency requests for assistance from the citizens of Orange County and efficiently dispatching needed services.
2. Receiving requests for mutual aid and additional resources from fire departments within the mutual aid system and efficiently dispatching those resources.
3. Maintaining efficient, coordinated and continuous radio communications with fire department units operating at emergencies while monitoring multiple frequencies.
4. Maintaining an on-going status of available equipment within the county.

# RADIO USE REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

## FCC Requirements and Radio Regulations

Efficient communication is essential to effectively managing any fire/rescue incident. Two-way radios are recognized as the most efficient system for keeping all units informed as to the exact conditions that exist on the scene of an incident. Preliminary reports and status updates make it possible for officers to deploy their equipment most efficiently. The value of two-way radio communication in the management of resources and operations has been well established. The following general communications procedures must always be followed:

- All radio communications must comply with the rules and regulations of the Federal Communications Commission.
- All conversations shall be as brief as possible and all unnecessary repetition avoided.
- All radio conversations shall be business-like without personal greetings or pleasantries.
- All transmissions shall be courteous, but expressions of courtesy such as "thanks" and "please" shall be avoided in the interest of brevity. Indecent, obscene or profane language is strictly prohibited.
- Members shall use titles when identifying themselves, or addressing others. Avoid abbreviations such as "Cap". Never call a person by their first name no matter how well they are known. Formal procedures are recommended by the FCC for all radio communications.
- If an error has been made, simply say "correction" and re-word the message.
- All messages should be acknowledged as quickly as possible. Avoid the use of "OK",
- acknowledge messages with the phrase "Message Received" or simply "received"

## Appropriate Radio Procedures

It is important when using any radio that you use proper radio procedures. This is essential in ensuring that the person you are calling is prepared to hear or “copy” your message and they will receive and understand it completely.

- Be sure to select the proper channel.
- Be sure the volume is turned up.
- Be sure the channel is clear of other radio traffic.
- Always use your complete identifier (“Coldenham Rescue 208” not just “208”)
- Do not attempt to contact Fire Control during a dispatch.
- Press and hold the Push-to-Talk (PTT) button on the microphone for approximately two seconds before speaking to be sure your message is not cut off.
- Speak in a normal voice. Shouting or loud talking causes distorted sounds that are difficult to understand. Every effort should be made to keep your voice calm, regardless of the situation. If a person is out of breath, they should pause momentarily and regain their composure prior to transmitting.
- Speak clearly in a natural conversational rhythm.
- Speak at a steady slow to medium pace, do not rush.
- Speak directly in to the microphone, holding it 2-3 inches from your mouth.
- Try to avoid background noises. Sirens, air horns and other loud noises can seriously impair reception of messages.
- All messages should be clear, concise and to the point.
- Release the PTT button after your message has been transmitted.
- At no time is obscene or vulgar language appropriate.
- Remember, a message has no value if it is not clearly understood.
- Listen for a Fire Dispatcher to acknowledge your message.

## Phonetic Numbering and Alphabet

To avoid confusion or misunderstanding, numbers should always be transmitted digit by digit. This applies to all numbers, including street numbers.

For example: Address Transmitted as:

1340 State Route 94 - One, Three, Four, Zero State Route 94  
15 First Street - One, Five First Street

### The Phonetic Alphabet

A – Adam	N – Nancy
B – Boy	O – Ocean
C – Charlie	P – Paul
D – David	Q – Queen
E – Edward	R – Robert
F – Frank	S – Sam
G – George	T – Tom
H – Henry	U – Union
I – Ida	V – Victor
J – John	W – William
K – King	X – X-ray
L – Lincoln	Y – Young
M – Mary	Z - Zebra

Words that are not understood after repetition should be spelled out with the word spoken before and after the spelling.

For example: "Chelsea -- I spell C H E L S E A -- Chelsea".

If the spelling still cannot be understood, then the phonetic alphabet should be used to clarify spoken letters.

For example: "Chelsea -- **C**harles – **H**enry – **E**dward – **L**incoln – **S**am – **E**dward – **A**dam".

# ORANGE COUNTY FIRE SERVICES RADIO SYSTEM

The Orange County Fire Services Radio System was established to provide county wide radio coverage for all fire department operations. It has been designed to provide alerting as well as two-way radio communications throughout Orange County. In order to accomplish, the Orange County Fire Services Radio System has been subdivided into three primary subsystems.

## Countywide Alerting System

**The first system is the countywide alerting system.** This simulcast system operates on the high-band radio frequency of 154.205 MHz.

There are 10 transmitters located throughout the county.

- One on Mt. Beacon in Dutchess County
- One on Graham Mtn. near Otisville
- One in Montgomery
- One on Mt. Peter in the Town of Warwick
- One on Heater Hill in Westfall Pa
- One at the Orange County Emergency Services Center in the Town of Goshen
- One in Cold Spring in Putnam County
- One on Schunnemunk Mtn in Woodbury
- One at Maplebrook in Tuxedo
- One in Sparrowbush

The Orange County Emergency Dispatch Center has the capability of alerting the individual pagers of each of the Orange County Fire Departments as well as activating the individual sirens for those departments utilizing sirens throughout the county. The system is designed to provide adequate coverage of the county with sufficient overlap to maintain operations should any one of the towers become out of service due to radio failure.

## 7/800 MHz Digital Radio System

**The second system is the 7/800 MHz digital two-way radio system** for Orange County. It is comprised of 13 tower sites which simulcast transmissions of county talk-groups off all towers at the same time.

**Fire Response 1** - Primary channel for contacting Orange 911 Fire Dispatch.

**Fire Response 2** - Secondary channel for contacting Orange 911 Fire Dispatch. Assigned by Orange 911 during periods of high radio traffic.

**Command 3-6** - Command channels will be assigned for working incidents with multiple mutual aid departments requested. This would include 2<sup>nd</sup> alarm or higher fires, working fires when boxes are not used, prolonged brush fires, prolonged HAZ-MAT Incidents, Train fire/accidents, Plane fire/incidents, Battalion 8 water (in Orange County) and Hudson River plan activations. Incident commanders can also request a command channel for a prolonged incident with multiple mutual aid department involved. Once a command channel is assigned, the incident commander will be advised to switch over to the assigned channel and mutual aid departments will be advised as they are paged a command has been assigned. As mutual aid departments respond they will call out on Fire Response 1 then be advised to switch to the assigned command channel. The incident commander, incoming units, and Orange 911 Fire Dispatch will now remain on the assigned command channel until the incident is over. Incoming units will get instructions from the incident commander and call on scene and returning on the assigned command channels. The incident commander will also give and receive all communications to and from Orange 911 Fire Dispatch on the assigned command channel.

**Division Channels** - Broken down by Battalion. Battalions 1,2 and 3 Division 1. Battalions 4,5, and 6 Division 2. Battalions 7,8 and 9 Division 3. Division channels are used for truck to truck communications during responses for departments not having their own repeater or electing to use them. Departments must limit use to necessary communications during calls, be aware they are sharing with other departments, and they are simulcast countywide. Respective Division Tac Channels should be used for drills and training. Non fire related transmissions should be made on department specific radio systems.

**Interop Channels** - Interop 1,2,3, and 4. Used for on scene coordination of multiagency and/or multijurisdictional events.

**Special Events Channels** - Special Events 1-16. Used for preplanned events such as parades, air show, etc. within Orange County. Requests for Special Events channels are made through the 911 supervisor.

## **UHF Fireground 16-Channel Policy**

**The third system is the UHF Fireground 16-Channel Policy.** Orange County Fire agencies have established a UHF common channel policy for fire ground use. Fire agencies throughout the county have agreed to implement common names and channel numbers for specific frequencies on their UHF radios. This plan ensures more reliable communications at an incident scene involving multiple agency responders. The Orange County 16 channel UHF policy is as follows (see Appendix B for full policy and frequency details):

- 1) Fire Ground A
- 2) Emergency Fire Ground
- 3) Command A
- 4) Local Home Channel
- 5) potential RX link of OC911
- 6) Fire Police
- 7) Water Supply
- 8) Special Operations
- 9) City Command
- 10) City Fire Ground
- 11) UCALL40 (repeater pair)
- 12) UTAC41D (simplex)
- 13) UTAC42D (simplex)
- 14) UTAC43D (simplex)
- 15) Command B
- 16) Fire Ground B

### **Portable Radio Features**

- 1) Portable radios equipped with key pads that control radio functions should have a means for the user to disable the keypad to prevent inadvertent use.
- 2) All portable radios should be equipped with a carrier control timer that disables the transmitter after a predetermined time determined by the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ).

# INITIAL DISPATCH AND RESPONSE

## General Radio Communication Procedures

First and foremost, communications must be **PROFESSIONAL AND COURTEOUS**.

The use of vulgarity is totally **UNACCEPTABLE** and will not be tolerated for any reason.

Radio transmissions must be brief, to the point, and no longer than 10 seconds in length.

### Before transmitting on any channel:

- Check channel position and volume
- Listen for other radio traffic
- Hold down the transmit button for 2 seconds prior to beginning your message. This will eliminate cutting yourself off. This also allows scanning radios to move back to the main frequency.

### Plain Language

Do not use “10-codes” or “signals”. Speak clearly and be “concise” when talking on the radio.

**Avoid using “jargon” on the radio** – A helicopter is not a “bird”

An ambulance is not a “bus”

## Non- Emergency Radio Traffic

Non-Emergency radio traffic that is not directly related to an incident should be made through a land line to Orange County Fire Control (845) 615-0892.

## After the Initial Dispatch

Only the **FIRST** officer AND the **FIRST** apparatus are permitted to acknowledge the alarm. The dispatcher will provide available supplemental information, such as known hazards, potential life threats to citizens and known exposure problems.

**REPEAT YOUR MESSAGE IF YOU ARE NOT ACKNOWLEDGED**

## Calling Out to 911

On Fire Response 1 say: “Orange 911 – This is \_\_\_\_\_” (Use your appropriate identifier) and proceed with your message.

The unit being called is **ALWAYS** first, followed by your unit identifier

**ALWAYS** use your complete unit identifier

Agency – Type – Apparatus Number

Engine – “Coldenham Engine 204”

Tanker – “Greenville Tanker 701”

Rescue – “Chester Rescue 916”

Truck – “Goshen Truck 937”

Brush – “Salisbury Mills Brush 556”

### **One Chief / One Apparatus**

Only **one Chief** and **one Apparatus** should call out to the County. Any additional units that call out are not recorded on the call and are using radio time that may be needed for emergency traffic.

### **Time Limitations**

After the initial dispatch, if a unit or officer is not responding within **4 minutes**, the department’s alarm will be resounded.

After the “resound”, if no officer or unit is responding in one minute (total elapsed time of **5 minutes**), the next closest department (per CAD) will be dispatched to the call.

Once an Officer or Unit advises they are responding, the Officer or Unit assumes responsibility for their department’s response. On a mutual aid call, Orange County 911 will verify that an apparatus is actually responding to the request. The term “assembling” will not be recognized as acknowledgement for response to a mutual aid call.

### **Box Numbers on Dispatch**

Department “box numbers” are given on initial dispatch of all structure related calls. This is to assist the responding department with determining which MAMA’s plan is in effect for that address.

### **Reporting an Incident to 911**

Dial 911 from your cell phone or landline to report any type of incident. This allows for proper and timely dispatching of necessary resources, instructions for handling of incident to be given, and reduces air time.

**Radio contact should only be used as a last resort**

# ON-SCENE COMMUNICATIONS

## Use of Term “Command”

The term “**Command**” is only used when addressing the Officer in Charge of an incident. Officers of mutual aid departments responding to a fire scene will be addressed by their proper title.

Being in charge of an LZ is **NOT** a Command position.

**There is only “ONE” Incident Commander.**

## Private Frequencies

Departments using private radio frequencies **MUST** make sure that at least one unit that is responding to, or on the scene of an incident, monitors Orange 911 on Fire Response 1 or Fire Response 2 (whichever is being used). This is imperative to ensure additional information can be obtained from or passed along to units in the field.

## Requesting Mutual Aid

Provide dispatch with the following:

- A Command Post location
- When applicable, provide a Command frequency, Operations frequency, Water Supply frequency, and any other frequencies specific to the incident.
- A contact person at the Command Post (Deputy Fire Coordinator, Mutual aid Chief officer)
- A contact phone number to the Command Post (for relaying information, Red Cross, Media, etc.)

**Consider using a Public Information Officer (PIO) on newsworthy events.**

## Status Checks

As required in NFPA 1500 (8.2.4.1), the dispatch center shall notify the incident commanders for structure fires at every 10-minute increment with the time that resources have been on the incident until the fire is knocked down or marked under control. The notifications are intended to ensure that the incident command is cognizant of how long units have been operating at the scene and also provide 911 dispatchers as well as incoming units with information as to the current conditions.

The incident commander is permitted to cancel the status checks at any time based off of incident conditions. Status checks can be initiated at the discretion of the incident commander for any other incident types.

An initial report and status check template has been provided for use and can be found in Appendix C.

## Requesting Utilities

Before you make a request for a utility, determine the following information. A complete description of the service needed is required:

Gas – is it O&R, Central Hudson, or NYSEG?

Electric – is it O&R, Central Hudson, or NYSEG?

- What is the pole number (or the nearest pole number)
- What is the situation?
  - are the wires still up or are they down on the ground?
  - is there a transformer on the pole? is the pole still standing? is the pole on the ground?
  - is power out in the area?

Phone – is it Frontier or Verizon?

Cable – is it Spectrum or Optimum?

**Collect this information BEFORE making your request.** This will prevent multiple radio transmissions back and forth. During high call volume times, consider using a landline to provide this information.

## **BACK IN SERVICE / CANCELATIONS**

### **Calling Back in Service**

There is no need to call back in service. Departments are placed back in service automatically when they call returning from an incident.

### **Call Times**

The Inform Browser web tool and Spotted Dog/Rover are available for Chief Officers of all Departments to access additional details/times for an incident directly. Additional times not found in Inform Browser will be provided upon request by landline to Fire Control /Dispatch.

### **Incorrect Jurisdiction**

If a department is dispatched to an incident that turns out to be in another department's jurisdiction, it is the responsibility of the dispatched agency to advise Orange County 911 of the correct department to dispatch, if known, and the correct address of the incident. The corrected address will be entered in to the CAD to verify the appropriate jurisdiction and that agency will be dispatched. The Officer in Charge of the correct jurisdiction of the call shall determine if response of both agencies is required.

### **Cancelled Calls**

When alarms are received or a request is made for a response and later canceled, the following will be implemented:

1. Once an incident is dispatched, the Officer in Charge will be notified of any additional calls advising that the alarm is false. It will be the discretion of the Officer in Charge if continued response is required.
2. If emergency units have not yet been dispatched, and notification is made that the call is a false alarm, the department will be paged and the first officer acknowledging the call will be notified. It will be the discretion of the Officer in Charge if continued response is required.

**911 DOES NOT CANCEL ANY CALL  
WE WILL ONLY ADVISE THE AGENCY OF THE REQUEST**

# SPECIAL SITUATIONS

## Helicopter / Medevac Requests

Any Police, Fire, or EMS personnel may request that a medevac be **placed on stand-by or launched**.

A determination to cancel an assigned Medevac should be made by the highest trained EMS provider on the scene. When a department is requested to set up a landing zone for an inbound Medevac, the location of the LZ being used should be relayed to the 911 Center as soon as possible.

**All Medevac requests should be made through the County 911 Center.**

This allows for coordinated use of resources, prevents duplicate requests for the same scene, and provides for better overall management of local assets.

## Landing Zones

The only information needed from IC to land a helicopter is the location of the Landing Zone.

**No need for a ground contact** - landing zone ground contact will be the name of the department requesting the helicopter. (ex. Greenville LZ)

**No need for communications frequency** - All helicopter radio communications will take place on UHF Special Operations Channel 8 (465.6375).

**Coordinates** – coordinates of the scene are given to the helicopter dispatcher as the preliminary landing zone location. This can always be changed later in the process if a different landing zone is selected.

Pre-determined landing zone sites are recommended. This saves time and radio traffic between units in the field and the 911 Center. Any number of “pre-determined” landing zone sites can be provided to the 911 Center to be added to the CAD information from a department. They will be labeled alphabetically A through Z. Departments need to supply the location site, latitude and longitude of the landing zone site, and any hazards that may be in the area. An example of a pre-determined landing zone is shown below:

Ex. Washingtonville Fire Department – LZ 49 B

Landing zone: 49B

Location: Brotherhood Winery, lot opposite the main entrance

Latitude: N 41 Degrees 25 Minutes 56 Seconds

Longitude: W -74 Degrees 9 Minutes 38 Seconds

Hazards: one light pole near the sidewalk on the west side of the lot

Landing Zone locations should be reviewed at least annually to assure no changes have occurred to the pre-determined site.

## **Hazardous Materials Incidents**

For technical assistance only, the OIC may request the Hazmat Duty Officer be notified

If the Hazmat Team is activated, OIC should provide Orange County 911 with a staging location for the team as soon as possible.

When the team is activated, the Hazmat Team 1<sup>st</sup> alarm MAMA's plan will be dispatched with appropriate resources. Notification will be made to the Battalion Coordinator, Division Coordinator, Asst Fire Coordinator, Fire Coordinator, Orange County Sheriff's Office, Mobile Life Support Services, EMS Coordinator and the Office of Emergency Management for any full Hazmat Team activations.

## **Receipt of Bomb Threat / Active Shooter**

Receipt of bomb threats and reports of an Active Shooters by the 911 Center will be handled in the following manner:

1. Once a bomb threat or a report of an Active Shooter is received by the Orange County 911 Center, the appropriate fire department will be dispatched.
2. All available manpower will be asked to respond to their station and stand by for further orders. The Duty Chief will be asked to landline fire control.
3. The Duty Officer will be given the information regarding the call along with any instructions that may have been received by the police department such as respond to the scene or continue to stand by in quarters.
4. The Battalion Fire Coordinator, the Division Coordinator, 36-15 and 36-01 will be notified when the FD responds.

**“BOMB or BOMB THREAT” & “ACTIVE SHOOTER”  
ARE NOT TO BE STATED OVER THE RADIO**

## **Radioactive Materials**

Initial response to radiological incidents will be the Orange County HAZMAT Team. They will provide personnel to do monitoring and assess the situation. Orange County HAZMAT will work with Emergency Management to make the proper contacts on the state and federal levels.

**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IS TO BE NOTIFIED ON ALL RADIOACTIVE INCIDENTS.**

# MISCELLANEOUS PROTOCOLS / PROCEDURES

## Fire Response to Medical Calls

Standard 911 protocol dispatches an ambulance to ALL medical calls and motor vehicle accidents, therefore there is no reason to contact fire control to verify that an ambulance has been dispatched.

It is not necessary to notify Fire Control that an ambulance has arrived on the scene. Ambulances notify EMS dispatch upon their arrival

## Notifications Policy for Fire Coordinator / Deputy Fire Coordinators

The Fire Coordinator, Assistant Fire Coordinator, Division Deputy Fire Coordinator(s) and the Battalion Deputy Fire Coordinator(s) are to be kept informed of happenings in the county and/or their respective Division/Battalion. Coordinators will be notified based on the following guidelines, it will be their decision to respond or not.

### Automatic Response

Notify the respective Battalion DFC for only Reported Structure Fires, MVA's with Entrapment or Serious Injuries, Technical Rescue or Haz-Mat incident, and any time 4 or more departments are dispatched..

### Mutual Aid Request

Notify the respective Battalion DFC (36-11 through 36-19)

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Alarm Incident

Notify the respective Battalion DFC (36-11 through 36-19)

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Alarm Incident or Equivalent (5 or more departments operating at scene)

Notify the respective Division DFC (36-2, 36-3, 36-4)

### 4<sup>th</sup> Alarm Incident or Equivalent (8 or more departments operating at scene)

Notify Fire Coordinator (36-1) and Assistant Fire Coordinator (36-15)

## Announcement Protocol

Announcements are made available to departments for specific events and issues. The permissible criteria and the Announcement Policy in its entirety can be found in Appendix A.

County text messaging and broadcast email is encouraged to be used for announcements to ensure all members receive the notification regardless of whether they are located within pager reception area at the time of the announcement.

**It is recommended that announcements be emailed to [911Supervisors@OrangeCountyGov.com](mailto:911Supervisors@OrangeCountyGov.com)**

## 911 CAD UPDATES / MODIFICATIONS

### Updating Box Alarms

Updates to Box Alarms must be provided in the Box Alarm spreadsheet template. Contact the 911 supervisor to request the current box alarm spreadsheet to update. Each department should review their MAMA's Boxes annually and provide Orange County 911 with any changes that may be needed.

### Updating Apparatus

**Adding:** Orange County 911 should be notified as soon as possible when apparatus is added to a department's inventory. All Orange County apparatus identifiers will be issued by the Fire Coordinator. Orange County 911 Supervisor for Fire Services or the Orange County Fire Coordinator should be contacted for the appropriate inventory forms for adding apparatus/equipment.

**Removing:** Orange County 911 should be notified of apparatus that are being placed out of service permanently or for an extended duration as these units should be removed from the Out of Service listing. Units listed out of service for longer than (4) weeks will be removed from the out of service listing. Appropriate Battalion Deputy Fire Coordinator and Fire Department Chief will be notified upon removal.

**Updating:** Orange County 911 should be notified as soon as possible when updates require a change to a department's inventory. Orange County 911 Supervisor for Fire Services should be contacted for the appropriate inventory forms for updating apparatus/equipment.

## **Changing Location of Apparatus**

Multi-station departments that elect to move a piece of apparatus from one station to another for an extended period of time should notify Orange County 911 of the change as soon as possible. The CAD system selects resources by distance from the scene. Movement of apparatus from one station to another could affect the response plans for neighboring departments.

## **Premise Information**

Any location within a fire district that has special circumstances that would need to be relayed to responding fire units can be added to the CAD system through “premise information”. This would apply to a home that has a resident on oxygen that may store several oxygen tanks in the garage, a home that has an invalid resident that may have trouble exiting in case of a fire, a private home that is a day care center during daytime hours with several children in the building. This type of information should be submitted to Orange County 911 in writing, giving the address, the special circumstances, a contact person and number at the location. The information will then be entered in the CAD system and will be given to responding units should there be an emergency at that location. Orange County 911 Supervisor for Fire Services should be contacted for the appropriate forms for adding/updating premise information.

## **Administrative Requests**

Any requests for recordings or call information should be made to the Orange County On-Duty Supervisor (845) 615-0879 as soon as possible following the incident. Most questions can be answered best while the staff that processed the call is still on duty.

## **Appendix A**

### **Announcement Policy**

All general announcements will be made over both Beacon and Graham Towers on High Band frequency. No announcements will be made prior to 7am or after 10pm unless specifically requested by a chief officer of the department.

All announcements are to be fire related in accordance with the following:

- 1. Daily announcements: Daily announcements will be made between 1800 hours and 1815 hours each evening as follows: (All local bases should make announcements before 1800 hours or after 1815 hours)**
  - a. Fire Apparatus / Vehicles out of service listing – A listing of apparatus/vehicles that have been reported to Fire Control, and listed in the fire computer and CAD as “out of service” and still remains out of service. NOTE: Units listed out of service for longer than (4) weeks will be removed from the out of service listing. Appropriate Battalion Deputy Fire Coordinator and Fire Department Chief will be notified upon removal.
  - b. All announcements will be made in accordance with FCC regulations and applicable internal procedures.
  - c. All requests for announcements must be received no later than 1730 hours on the date of the announcement, and must be called in by a chief officer. All announcements shall be emailed to [911Supervisors@orangecountygov.com](mailto:911Supervisors@orangecountygov.com), called in on the 7 digit fire control line, 845-615-0892, or via fax at 845-291-2309, no exceptions.
  - d. All announcements will be made only once, with the exception of funeral/death announcements. Example: An announcement for the same meeting/drill etc. will not be made twice in the same day or week. The announcement will be made at 1800 only unless the announcement is time sensitive.
  - e. Departments should consider the use of the County Text Messaging system, Email, websites, monthly meetings, bulletin boards etc. to notify their membership. County text messaging and broadcast email is encouraged to be used for announcements to ensure all members receive the notification regardless of whether they are located within pager reception area at the time of the announcement.
  - f. Announcements will be made only during periods of low volume radio traffic. If an emergency incident is on the air, announcement(s) will be postponed or cancelled at the discretion of the duty supervisor.

**2. The following are acceptable announcements that will be paged over the home alert frequency.**

- a. Unexpected apparatus out of service (time sensitive)
- b. Impromptu automatic response notifications (time sensitive)
- c. Drills/Trainings (made at 1800 hrs. unless time sensitive)
- d. Vehicles being placed in or out of service (time sensitive)
- e. Work Details (made at 1800 hrs. unless time sensitive)
- f. Funeral/Death notices (may be announced twice)
- g. Cancellation or change of drills and/or work details (made at 1800 hrs. unless time sensitive)
- h. Health and Safety related (made at 1800 hrs. unless time sensitive)
- i. Last Call announcements. Note: It is requested that “last call” announcements are sent in via email to [911Supervisors@orangecountygov.com](mailto:911Supervisors@orangecountygov.com), followed by a phone call to confirm receipt.

**3. The following announcements are prohibited from being paged from Orange 911 over the home alert frequency and will be sent out via text message only.**

- a. Meetings
- b. Any Social Event (fundraisers, parades, etc.)

**4. The following announcements will be sent out via text message only unless directed otherwise by a chief officer.**

- a. Road Closures
- b. Planned automatic responses

**5. Permitted announcements using the County All Call.**

- a. Severe Weather Warning announcements, including Tornado Watches/Flash Flood Warnings
- b. Orange County State of Emergency (On and Off)
- c. Closing of the Fire Training Center
- d. Cancellation of Training at the Fire Training Center
- e. Request from 36-01, 36-02, 36-03, 36-04, 36-15, or request from a 911 Supervisor.
- f. Funeral/Death announcements **ONLY** for current or past Chief of Department for an Orange County Fire Department.
- g. LODD of any Orange County Firefighter, Emergency Services Personnel, or Active Military Personnel.

**6. Permitted announcements using the Battalion All Call.**

- a. Passing of any current or past chief officer of any fire department of Orange County
- b. Passing of any prominent member of any department (only at the request/approval of the Battalion Fire Coordinator)
- c. Any Battalion wide drill
- d. Monthly battalion meetings (to be announced only once)

**ANNOUNCEMENT DEFINITIONS**

**“Main Channel”** Announcements – Announcements made immediately following the daily out of service listing (1800 Hours). Messages are broadcasted over the home alert frequency.

**“County All Call”** – Announcements made anytime with prior approval from the duty supervisor, fire coordinator, assistant fire coordinator, or division fire coordinators **ONLY**.

**“Battalion All Call”** – Announcements made and alert tones sounded for a specific Battalion (To be requested or submitted by the Battalion Coordinator)

**“Work Details”** – to be made at 1800 hours unless it is time sensitive, (time sensitive means the 6PM announcement would be too late to provide adequate notice)

**“Health & Safety”** – PTS Counseling, flu shots, physicals, etc. – made at 6PM unless time sensitive.

**Vehicle/Apparatus “In/Out of Service”** – time sensitive, completed at time of request

**“Immediate Automatic Response”** – time sensitive, to be completed at time of request

**“Fire Department Response Information”** – 1800 hours unless time sensitive. ie: Attn: Monroe FD, Station 2 is inaccessible, respond to Station 3 for all calls until further notice.

**“Training, Education and Drills”** – 1800 hours unless time sensitive.

**“Fire Prevention Detail”** – 1800 hours unless time sensitive

**Since not all situations can be covered by the above, if a request does not fit into one of the above categories, advise/contact the supervisor on duty who will use their best discretion as to whether to allow the announcement or not.**

## **Appendix B**

### **UHF 16 Channel Policy**

#### **UHF Channel 1- Fire Ground A**

Normal fire ground operations shall be carried out on this channel countywide (except for the three cities within the county). Fire ground operations shall be defined as firefighters and officers directly involved with operations at an incident. Examples of this would be interior and exterior fire operations, officer communications, and apparatus operators directly involved with on scene operations. Communications on this channel are to be done by portable radios only (4 Watt Maximum). This will prevent interference with other departments also operating at incidents in the county. **Fire Ground A is to be used for fire ground communications ONLY! No mobile radio communications should take place on this frequency.**

#### **UHF Channel 2- Emergency Fire Ground**

At an incident where a mayday is called and a firefighter is lost, missing, trapped, unconscious or seriously injured, all members not directly involved with the rescue operations of the firefighter(s) in trouble shall switch to this channel, **if ordered to do so by the Officer in Charge**, and continue their assigned operations. This will clear the fire ground channel for communications between the firefighter(s) in trouble, command overseeing the mayday operations, and the fast team. The firefighter(s) in trouble shall never be asked to switch channels.

#### **UHF Channel 3- Command A**

Command functions shall be carried out on this channel. This shall include incoming units requesting orders, support units not directly involved with fire ground operations (i.e. fire police, rehab, cascade units, etc.) when they need to contact command, and for sector leaders to contact command (i.e. water supply chief, staging chief, logistics chief, etc.) This channel may also be used at large incidents to allow the incident commander to communicate with different sector chiefs without tying up the fire ground channel. Portable to portable radio communications should be used whenever possible but when longer distance is needed, mobile radios (25 Watt maximum) may be used.

#### **UHF Channel 4- Local Home Channel**

To be determined by local department.

#### **UHF Channel 5- UHF RX Link of Orange County 911**

To be determined by local department.

#### **UHF Channel 6- Fire Police**

Fire police operations are to be conducted on this channel. Fire police to command transmissions shall be done on the designated command channel. Communications shall be done by portable radios (4 Watt maximum) to limit interference with other fire police units operating in the county. Mobile Radios (25 Watt Maximum) shall only be used when distance between units makes portable radio to portable radio communications impossible.

#### **UHF Channel 7- Water Supply**

Water supply operations for incidents shall be conducted on this channel. This shall include apparatus to apparatus water relays, tanker shuttle operations, fill site operations and communications from the above units to the water supply officer. Water supply officer to command communications shall be done on the appropriate command channel. Portable to portable radio communications should be used whenever possible but when longer distance is needed, mobile radios (25 Watt maximum) may be used.

#### **UHF Channel 8- Special Operations**

Special operations communications shall be conducted on this channel. This shall include medevac to landing zone communications as well as communications with helicopters operating at non-medical related calls within the county. This shall include large brush/wild-land fires, searches, flooding conditions, water rescues, and any other incident where fire department to helicopter communications are needed. All County Haz-Mat, Rope Rescue, and other Technical Rescue Teams will operate on this frequency.

#### **UHF Channel 9- City Command**

Command functions at incidents within Orange County's three cities shall be carried out on this channel. This shall include incoming units requesting orders, support units not directly involved with fire ground operations (i.e. fire police, rehab, cascade units, etc.) when they need to contact command, and for sector leaders to contact command (i.e. water supply chief, staging chief, logistics chief, etc.) This channel may also be used at large incidents to allow the incident commander to communicate with different sector chiefs without tying up the fire ground channel. Portable to portable radio communications should be used whenever possible but when longer distance is needed, mobile radios (25 Watt maximum) may be used.

#### **UHF Channel 10- City Fire Ground**

Normal fire ground operations shall be carried out on this channel at incidents within Orange County's three cities. Fire ground operations shall be defined as firefighters and officers directly involved with operations at an incident. Examples of this would be interior and exterior fire operations, officer communications, and apparatus operators directly involved with on scene operations. Communications on this channel are to be done by portable radios only (4 Watt Maximum). This will prevent interference with other departments also operating at incidents in the county. Mobile Radios (25 Watt Maximum) shall only be used on this channel by an incident commander to give urgent or mayday transmissions to ensure all firefighters operating at the incident hear his/her message.

### **UHF Channel 11- UCALL40 Repeater**

The calling channel shall be used to contact other emergency service organizations in the county for the purpose of requesting incident related information and assistance and for setting up tactical communications at major incidents. Examples of major incidents would include large scale plane or transportation incidents, large scale hazmat incidents, school evacuations or incidents, weather emergencies (i.e. hurricane, tornado, blizzard) that do major damage, etc. On scene communications shall be conducted on the designated U TAC channel.

### **UHF Channels 12-14 UTAC Channels**

On scene communications at a major incident shall be conducted on a designated U TAC channel. The incident commander will designate the appropriate use of the U TAC Channel (U TAC 41, 42 or 43) depending on the size and complexity of the incident. Use of these channels will allow the normal fire ground and command channels to be used for other incidents in the county without interference to the major incident. Since U TAC channels are national interoperability channels, these channels may be used across the state and country to talk to other departments when called under mutual aid to assist. Examples of this would be the ice storms upstate or the major forest fire in Ulster County.

### **UHF Channel 15- Command B**

Command functions shall be carried out on this channel when another incident in the immediate area may cause interference on Command A. This shall include incoming units requesting orders, support units not directly involved with fire ground operations (i.e. fire police, rehab, cascade units, etc.) when they need to contact command, and for sector leaders to contact command (i.e. water supply chief, staging chief, logistics chief, etc.) This channel may also be used at large incidents to allow the incident commander to communicate with different sector chiefs without tying up the fire ground channel. Portable to portable radio communications should be used whenever possible but when longer distance is needed, mobile radios (25 Watt maximum) may be used.

### **UHF Channel 16- Fire Ground B**

Normal fire ground operations shall be carried out on this channel countywide (except for the three cities within the county) when another incident in the immediate area may cause interference on Fire Ground A. Fire ground operations shall be defined as firefighters and officers directly involved with operations at an incident. Examples of this would be interior and exterior fire operations, officer communications, and apparatus operators directly involved with on scene operations. Communications on this channel are to be done by portable radios only (4 Watt Maximum). This will prevent interference with other departments also operating at incidents in the county. **Fire Ground B is to be used for fire ground communications ONLY! No mobile radio communications should take place on this frequency.**

## Appendix C

### Initial Report and Status Check Template

**Purpose:**

Upon arrival a proper size up is essential to the overall success of handling a critical incident. A vital component of this is a properly communicated initial report. Initial reports and status checks should be used to assist the responding companies with composing a mental image of the situation.

**INITIAL RADIO REPORT**

In its simplest form, the use of CAN's acronym can be used for most operations initial reports. The intent is to be simple, short and to the point

**C: Conditions** – Conditions upon arrival, size of building, type of occupancy (commercial, residential – single family/multi-family), and type of construction.

**A: Actions** – Initial actions which are being taken by units.

**N: Needs** – What initial resources are needed and being requested.

**Example of initial report:**

C: Conditions – Montgomery Car 1 is on scene with a working fire in a single family bi-level with fire on the 2nd floor.

A: Actions – Companies will be making an interior attack

N: Needs – Transmit my 2nd Alarm on Box 29-30 along with my tanker task force.

**10 MINUTE INTERVAL STATUS CHECKS**

The 10 minute status checks implemented as per NFPA 1500 were intended to be used as an awareness to Incident Commanders of the duration of the operation. The C.A.N template can be used during the 10 minute interval notification to provide an update that will again be useful for responding personnel.

**Example of C.A.N used for 10 Minute Interval Notification:**

Conditions: Greenwood Lake Command – I still have heavy fire on the 2nd floor with possible extension into the attic in a 2 story frame bi-level.

Actions: I have 2 lines stretched and in operation and stretching a 3rd. Truck companies are searching and opening the fire building.

Needs: Having water problems; Please send 3 more tankers and let me know status of fill site.

**Example of C.A.N used when Under Control:**

Conditions: All visible fire knocked down.

Actions: Checking for extension. Primary search is negative; secondary underway.

Needs: No other resources needed at this time

Followed by Under Control no more status checks required

**\*NOTE: 10 Minute Interval Notifications are intended to assist Incident Commanders with the overall incident management. The notifications can be cancelled by Incident Commanders at any time if they are deemed unnecessary.**

## **Appendix D**

### **Mayday / Urgent Policy**

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to provide a uniform countywide procedure for both MAYDAY situations and URGENT situations and to clearly define the differences between both.

**Intent:**

1. Establish operating guidelines to assist in the event of a MAYDAY or URGENT situation.
2. Establish a uniformed method for giving priority to emergency radio communication messages.
3. Provide a guideline to be used by all Orange County Fire Departments. These procedures may be modified by the Fire Department Incident Commander, or officers as emergency conditions dictate.

**Scope:**

This guide applies to all emergency fire personnel operating in Orange County, New York.

**Definitions:**

**MAYDAY:** MAYDAY is used to signal a LIFE THREAT to any FIREFIGHTER. This could involve any presently occurring or an imminent situation. This term is **not** used for a life threatening situation involving a civilian. If a member's life is in danger, you **MUST** transmit a MAYDAY. Some examples are **M**issing or lost member, **U**nconscious or severely injured member, **S**tructural collapse is imminent or has occurred, or member(s) is **T**rapped. The MAYDAY needs to be transmitted immediately.

**URGENT:** URGENT is used to signal a serious situation that has the potential to either endanger the safety of operating members, or significantly impact fire ground operations. Some items that could be considered as an URGENT are: Severe change in conditions, Loss of water, Injury to a member (non – life threatening), Danger of collapse, or Evacuate structure. Firefighters unsure of whether the situation dictates an URGENT or MAYDAY situation should transmit a MAYDAY.

**Evacuation Signal:** When an immediate evacuation of a structure is warranted, in addition to a radio transmission, the signal shall be 3 blasts of an air horn of one apparatus on scene with each blast being 2 seconds in duration. At the request of incident command this may be done by multiple apparatus for specific situations such as a large commercial structure.

**It is of extreme importance that all crews continue to operate at their pre-designated assignment.**

## **Standard Policy for a MAYDAY or URGENT Situation**

- The signal for a missing, lost member, unconscious or severely injured member, a structural collapse is imminent or has occurred, or trapped member(s) is **MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY**.
- The signal for a serious situation that has the potential to endanger operating members or fire ground operations is **URGENT, URGENT, URGENT**.
- The MAYDAY or URGENT transmission shall continue until acknowledged by the Incident Commander.
- Upon transmission of a MAYDAY or URGENT, all other radio traffic shall clear the channel until the MAYDAY or URGENT has been identified.
- The MAYDAY signal may be transmitted by any fire department personnel who become lost/injured/trapped or in imminent danger and in need of immediate assistance.
- Any personnel that are made aware of a missing/injured/trapped member or a structural collapse must declare a MAYDAY.
- Any personnel that observe or are made aware of a serious situation must declare an URGENT. Firefighters unsure of whether the situation dictates an URGENT or MAYDAY situation should transmit a MAYDAY.
- Individuals who transmit a MAYDAY should provide: Who you are, Why you called the MAYDAY, Where you are located, What you need to rectify the situation. The same applies to an URGENT situation.
- Upon acknowledgement of a MAYDAY, Command shall immediately deploy a FAST/RIT/Rescue team. repeat the MAYDAY situation, notify dispatch and activate the MAMA's MAYDAY plan.
- Dispatch will announce the MAYDAY situation and dispatch requested MAYDAY resources.
- Only the Incident Commander may cancel a MAYDAY once it has been given. Normal operations may then resume.

### **Transmitting a MAYDAY:**

The message should be transmitted in such a way that commands attention of all members. First say “MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY” followed by identifying WHO is transmitting the MAYDAY. At this time no other radio traffic shall be transmitted until the nature of the MAYDAY is identified.

### **Transmitting a URGENT:**

As with a MAYDAY situation, the message should be transmitted in such a way that commands attention of all members. First say “URGENT, URGENT, URGENT” followed by identifying WHO is transmitting the URGENT. At this time no other radio traffic shall be transmitted until the nature of the URGENT is identified.

### **After the MAYDAY is transmitted:**

If a MAYDAY is transmitted and command doesn't acknowledge it, then the MAYDAY should be acknowledged by anyone hearing it and relayed to command. Once the MAYDAY is acknowledged, the member shall announce WHY they are transmitting the MAYDAY, WHERE they are located and WHAT they need. Command shall repeat the MAYDAY situation on the fire ground channel and notify the dispatch center of the MAYDAY situation. Dispatch shall transmit, on the countywide communications channel, that a MAYDAY situation is in progress, repeat what the MAYDAY situation is and implement the MAMA'S MAYDAY plan if requested. The FAST/RIT/Rescue team shall be deployed and a Roll Call/PAR shall be conducted to determine if all members are accounted for. If the 911 center hears a MAYDAY transmitted that is not acknowledged, dispatch will transmit the situation on the countywide communications channel and request radio silence.

**It is of extreme importance that all crews continue to operate at their pre-designated assignment.**

### **After the URGENT is transmitted:**

If an URGENT is transmitted and command doesn't acknowledge it, then the URGENT should be acknowledged by anyone hearing it and relayed to command. Once the URGENT is acknowledged, the member shall announce WHY they are transmitting the URGENT, WHERE they are located and WHAT the problem is and what they need. Command shall repeat the URGENT situation on the fire ground channel. Incident command could consider having the county transmit a message over the county communications channel for all incoming units to be made aware of the situation.

## **MAYDAY Communications**

In most MAYDAY instances, changing channels is not recommended, however it may be instituted at the discretion of command. In the event that the incident commander deems it necessary to establish the emergency fire ground channel, all members not directly involved with the rescue operations of the firefighter(s) in distress shall switch to the Emergency Fire Ground channel and continue their assigned operations. The firefighter(s) in distress shall never be asked to switch channels and the FAST/RIT/Rescue team will be on the same channel as the distressed firefighter(s).

### **Examples of a MAYDAY transmission:**

**Note: Members shall utilize their department guideline/SOP as to their position/assignment/identifier or name when transmitting a MAYDAY.**

Engine 234 Officer: *"MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, Engine 234 Officer to Command, MAYDAY."*

Command: *"Command to Engine 234 Officer, go ahead with your MAYDAY."*

Engine 234 Officer: *"MAYDAY, Engine 234 Officer to Command, we have a member who fell through the first floor into the basement and is trapped on the 3 side of the building, Need the Rescue team with ropes."*

Command: *"Copied, Engine 234 officer MAYDAY, has a member who fell thru the first floor into the basement and is trapped on the 3 side of the building, Need the Rescue team with ropes."*

Same situation as previous example with the member calling it:

Firefighter Jones: *"MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, FF Jones to Command, MAYDAY."*

Command: *"Command to FF Jones, Go ahead with your MAYDAY."*

Firefighter Jones: *"Command, I have fallen through the first floor into the basement on the 3 side of the building and need the Rescue team with ropes."*

Command: *"Command to FF Jones, Copy you are located in the basement on the 3 side and need Rescue team with ropes."*

**It is of extreme importance that all crews continue to operate at their pre-designated assignment.**

### **Examples of a URGENT transmission:**

**Note: Members shall utilize their department guideline/SOP as to their position/assignment/identifier or name when transmitting a URGENT.**

Engine 234 Chauffeur: *“URGENT,URGENT,URGENT, Engine 234 Chauffeur to Command, URGENT.”*

Command: *“Command to Engine 234 Chauffeur, go ahead with your URGENT.”*

Engine 234 Chauffeur: *“Engine 234 Chauffeur URGENT, I have lost my water supply, Hydrant line was run over by a vehicle, need to shut down hydrant and replace broken supply hose.”*

Command: *“Command to Engine 234 Chauffeur, copy that you have a loss of water supply caused by a broken supply hose and you are shutting down hydrant and making replacement.”*

### **MAYDAY Dispatch Procedure**

In the event of a MAYDAY situation, the dispatcher will perform the following:

- Ask for Radio Silence, except for emergency traffic, on the county communications channel to allow for command to make requests for assistance.
- Dispatch shall transmit, on the countywide communications channel, that a MAYDAY situation is in progress and repeat what the MAYDAY situation is.
- At the request of the Incident Commander, activate the departments MAYDAY box or the Orange County MAYDAY Box.

### **Orange County MAYDAY Box**

The Orange County default MAYDAY BOX assignment shall consist of the following:

- Dispatch an additional FAST/RIT/Rescue team to the scene.
- Dispatch the next box alarm. If the department doesn't have a pre-planned MAYDAY MAMA's box, dispatch the nearest 2 Engines.
- Dispatch an ALS Ambulance to the scene.
- Put a Helicopter on standby.
- Dispatch an EMS Coordinator and additional Fire Coordinator to the scene.

**Other consideration for Incident Commanders should be given to the following needs:**

- Collapse/Technical Rescue Team
- Additional Alarms
- Additional Equipment (ie: Ladders, Rescues, etc.)
- Specialized Equipment (ie: Backhoes, Loaders, Crane, Tow Truck, Vacuum Truck, Quads/4 wheelers etc.)
- HAZMAT
- Rehab
- Law enforcement or additional EMS

**Remember a MAYDAY isn't always in a structure. It could be a brush fire, wildland search, apparatus accident, overhaul etc.**

**After conclusion of the MAYDAY**

Make sure the victim(s) that are rescued are identified and **ALL** Rescue personnel are accounted for. Transmit that MAYDAY has concluded and resume normal operations.