

GLOSSARY

The following terms are commonly used in both written and oral communications:

1. *Alarm*: An incident or event that requires a response by one or more fire companies or medical units. There are several types of alarms:
 - a. *Automatic alarm*: A request for emergency service from an alarm company or a security office on activation of a smoke or heat detector or of a fixed extinguishing system. The flow of water within a fixed system, the closure or opening of a valve, or the activation of a fire pump may also result in the transmission of an alarm signal.
 - b. *Box alarm*: The response assignment dispatched to a reported fire in a building or structure.
 - c. *Greater alarm*: Any alarm calling for a second alarm or heavier assignment of fire companies and personnel.
 - d. *Multiple alarm*: A request for additional assistance at an incident to which a box alarm assignment has been previously dispatched. Multiple alarms are designated as second alarm, third alarm, etc.
 - e. *Still alarm*: A minor incident such as an automobile or dumpster fire that requires only one company to be dispatched on the initial alarm.
2. *All clear*: A phrase used on completion of the primary search of a fire building indicating to all personnel that the search has been completed and that no victims were found.
3. *Assignment*: A predetermined designation of the units to respond to a given type of incident; the entire complement of apparatus assigned to any given incident; the assignment of a given unit.
4. *Automatic aid*: A programmed plan that responds the closest available company (s) to an incident event though the closest company(s) may be from a different political jurisdiction.
5. *Base station*: A fixed two-way radio station located either in the Dispatch office or the radio room at a fire station.
6. *Call*: An alarm for a fire or emergency.
7. *Callback*: A telephone number provided by 911 to contact a person who reports a fire or emergency.
8. *Command*: The radio identifier for the officer in charge of an incident. Also known as the incident commander or IC.
9. *Command post*: A designated location at an incident where the primary command functions are executed. The command post will be staffed by the incident commander, support personnel, and representatives from other agencies as required.
10. *County Fire*: The radio identifier for the Union County 9-1-1 emergency communications center.
11. *Detail*: The assignment of one or more personnel to temporary duty with another company or work group.
12. *Dispatch*: To order a fire company or medic unit to respond to a certain location, incident, or event.

13. *Dispatcher*: A fire alarm operator or telecommunicator.
14. *Disregard*: An order to one or more responding units that their services are not needed and that they should return to service.
15. *District*: A designated geographic area of service delivery normally covered by a single fire station. It may also refer to the entire area covered by a single fire department regardless of the number of stations.
16. *Emergency*: Term used to gain control of radio channel to report a possible emergency. All other radio users will refrain from using that channel until cleared to do so by the dispatcher. Radio users will confine all radio transmissions to a possible emergency in progress or a new incident. Radio traffic that includes status information (e.g., response, conditions, location, availability) will be authorized.
17. *Emergency traffic*: The act of clearing a radio channel of all nonessential communications.
18. *En route*: Indicates that an apparatus or other unit is responding to an incident.
19. *Exposure*: A building, vehicle, or other property that is endangered by fire in an adjacent building, a vehicle, or property.
20. *False alarm*. An alarm for which no fire or emergency existed or for which fire department response was unnecessary.
21. *Fill in*: The dispatch of another apparatus or medic unit to replace companies not available to answer their regular assignments.
22. *Fireground*: The operational area at a fire.
23. *First due*: The first company listed on an alarm assignment for a given location that is nearest in response time and travel distance.
24. *First in*: The first company or unit to arrive at an incident.
25. *Front line*: Apparatus and medic units normally staffed at all times.
26. *Fully involved*: A size-up report that indicates that the entire area of a building is so involved with heat, smoke, and flame that immediate access to the interior isn't possible until some measure of control has been achieved with hose streams.
27. *House lights*: Lights that may be controlled by the dispatcher to illuminate a fire station when it is to respond to an alarm.
28. *Incident*: A fire, medical call, or other emergency that requires one or more fire companies or medical units to be dispatched to render aid. See also Alarm.
29. *Incident command system*: A systematic plan for conducting operations during an incident.
30. *Initial alarm*: The first notification received by the department indicating that a fire or emergency exists.
31. *In service*: (1) A report indicating that an apparatus or ambulance is fully functional and available to respond to an assignment. (2) A radio message indicating that an apparatus or medic has completed its previous assignment and is available for the next call. (3) A radio message indicating that a company or medic unit has left its quarters and will be monitoring the radio for assignments.
32. *Location*: A specifically designated place to which fire apparatus or medical units are dispatched in answer to an alarm or request for assistance.
33. *Log*: A chronological record of events, such as the Dispatch Log.

34. *Loss stopped*: A tactical benchmark used to indicate that the fire is out and no longer causing damage.
35. *Malicious false alarm*: A false alarm of fire deliberately sounded to inconvenience the fire department and to cause a disturbance or excitement rather than one sounded by accident or error.
36. *Mayday*: Term used to gain control of radio channel to report an emergency. Radio users will confine all radio transmissions to an emergency in progress or a new incident. Radio traffic that includes status information (e.g., response, conditions, location, availability) will be authorized during this period.
37. *MARCS*: Multi-Agency Radio Communication System, a statewide 800 megahertz trunked radio system operated by the State of Ohio, Department of Administrative Services.
38. *Message*: A radio communication consisting of a contact call, response, text, and acknowledgement.
39. *Move up*: The movement of fire companies from their assigned stations to cover vacated stations so as to give coverage to districts stripped of normal protection.
40. *Mutual aid*: Two-way assistance by fire departments of two or more communities freely given under prearranged plans or contracts so that each will aid the other in time of emergency and also provide for joint or cooperative response to alarms near jurisdictional boundaries.
41. *Nothing showing*: A report given by the first-in unit at an incident indicating to the dispatcher and other responding companies that no smoke, fire, or other emergency situation is apparent.
42. *Out of service*: A report indicating that an apparatus or unit is not available to respond to an alarm. This report should be accompanied by a message indicating the estimated length of time that the unit will be unavailable.
43. *Patient*: Someone who is sick or injured and requires the assistance of the department. A patient may also be referred to as a victim, citizen, customer, individual, person, man, woman, or child.
44. *Progress report*: A periodic radio report required from an incident commander to update the dispatcher on the status of an incident.
45. *Quarters*: The fire station to which a given company or unit is assigned.
46. *Rear*: The side of a building or incident directly opposite the main street front or command position (Also referred to as the “C-side”).
47. *Rehab*: This term can refer to either the actual rehab vehicle or to a designated location at an incident. The purpose of rehab is to provide rest, refreshments, and medical evaluation to working personnel.
48. *Rekindle*: An instance where, due to re-ignition, the department is called back to a location where the fire was thought to have been extinguished.
49. *Repeater*: A radio that receives a signal from another radio and rebroadcasts the signal with greater signal strength. For example, a five-watt handheld radio doesn’t have the strength to transmit to all portions of a response area. However, a repeater can receive this weaker signal and rebroadcast it with a strength of 100 watts, sufficient to cover the entire district.

50. *Reserve*: Apparatus or medic units not on frontline duty but available in case a frontline unit is undergoing repairs. It is also available to be staffed by off-duty personnel when necessary.
51. *Respond*: To answer an alarm in accordance with a prearranged assignment or on the instruction of the dispatcher. To proceed to the scene of an incident or other event.
52. *Responding*: A term indicating that orders to proceed to an alarm have been received and the apparatus or medical unit is on its way.
53. *Response*: The act of responding to an alarm. Also, the entire complement of personnel and apparatus assigned to an alarm.
54. *Response time*: An interval of time measured from the receipt of a request for emergency service until the first unit or apparatus arrives at the scene of an incident.
55. *Roster*: A list of fire department personnel and their duty assignments. Also, a list of apparatus and motor vehicles owned by the department.
56. *Run*: A fire or medical alarm.
57. *Run card*: A card showing the fire company assignments for a given location, including multiple-alarm assignments.
58. *Shift*: A working tour. Also refers to a group of workers on a given shift.
59. *Signal*: A radio message referring to the strength of a radio transmission and the listener's ability to hear and understand the message.
60. *Signal "O"*: A radio message to indicate that the last fire department company or unit has left the scene.
61. *Situation contained*: The tactical benchmark used to indicate that the progress of a fire has been stopped, and that no additional resources will be required.
62. *Staging*: A designated location(s) at the incident where apparatus, equipment, and personnel are assembled for deployment. The person in charge of a staging area will coordinate his activities with the incident commander and will use the term *Staging* as his radio identifier. When more than one staging area is used at an incident, a geographic identifier will be used, such as *Forward Staging*.
63. *Station*: A building or quarters that houses on-duty personnel, apparatus, and medic units.
64. *Suppression*: The total work of extinguishing a fire, beginning with its discovery.
65. *Territory*: A geographic area served by a single fire station or the entire area served by a department. See also District.
66. *Tied up*: A fire company or medical unit engaged for a period of time and unable to respond to other incidents.
67. *Time of arrival*: The time as indicated on the radio log that the first unit arrived at an incident. Also, the time that other responding companies arrived.
68. *Tour of duty*: Any given on-duty period worked by an individual or group of employees.
69. *Turn-out time*: The interval of time as measured from the receipt of an alarm until a fire company or medical unit reports en route or notifies the dispatcher that it is responding.
70. *Under control*: A fire is sufficiently surrounded and quenched so that it no longer threatens destruction of additional property.

71. *Wash down*: the cleansing or removal of gasoline, diesel fuel, or other petroleum products from a roadway following a motor vehicle accident. Originally meant to wash the product down into a ditch or storm sewer. Now the product has to be collected due to environmental regulations.
72. *Water supply*: In incident command, the officer assigned to provide an adequate supply of water to meet the fire flow demand at a given incident.

Communications, SOG 1.02

RADIO PROCEDURES

1. Scope

This standard establishes guidelines for the use of two-way radio communications equipment. It was promulgated to promote the most efficient and effective use of the radio communications systems.

2. General

- a. Fire departments in Union County utilize two radio communication systems. A VHF high-band simplex radio system is used for dispatching, while Ohio's Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) is used for operational and fireground communication.

3. VHF Radio System

- a. The Union County 9-1-1 communication center, located at 221 West 5th Street in Marysville controls a transmitter located on the radio tower at State Route 4 & Kaiser Road.
- b. Several Union County fire stations are equipped with base VHF transmitters that may be utilized for emergency dispatching purposes, if necessary.
- c. Most Union County fire departments maintain an inventory of VHF radios for emergency backup, or communicating with non-MARCS-equipped mutual aid departments. These radios contain at least eight channels or frequencies, which have been designated as follows:

Channel	Frequency	CTCSS	Use
1	154.250	162.2	Dispatch
2	154.325	127.3	Fireground 2
3	154.175	127.3	Fireground 3
4	154.235	162.2	Fireground 4/EWS alert freq.
5	154.28	CSQ	Fireground 5 (Statewide Mutual Aid)
6	153.83	CSQ	Fireground 6
7	154.265	CSQ	Fireground 7
8	155.805	CSQ	State EMA

- d. Additional frequencies may be programmed to suit the specific needs of each individual fire department.
- e. Some fire departments may use channels 7 & 8 for mutual aid frequencies with departments from outside Union County.

4. Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS)

- a. MARCS is a statewide 800-megahertz digital trunked radio system operated by the State of Ohio.

- b. The MARCS radios used by Union County fire departments are programmed with the following talk-groups:

Zone	Talk-Group	Use
1	1	Dispatch 1
1	2	Operations (Ops) 2
1	3	Operations (Ops) 3
1	4	Operations (Ops) 4
1	5	Admin 5
1	6	Admin 6
1	7	Union County EMS
1	8	Emergency Management Agency (EMA)
1	9	Union Fire & Police (F&P)
1	10	Sheriff
1	11	Sheriff 2
1	12	Marysville Police Department (MPD)
1	13	MPD 2
1	14	Richwood Police Department (RPD)
1	15	Plain City Police Department (PCPD)
1	16	Car to Car

- c. MARCS radios are equipped with additional “Zones” that are programmed with various statewide multi-agency talk groups. These talk groups may be utilized for interagency communication in the event of a large-scale emergency or disaster operation.

5. Talk Group Assignments

- a. “Dispatch” traffic is defined as one-way communication that is broadcast by a 9-1-1 center to alert responders of an emergency call. “Fireground” traffic is two-way communication that occurs between an Incident Commander and personnel that are operating in a hazardous environment such as a structure fire, hazardous material incident hot-zone, confined space, etc. All other incident-related communication is normally considered to be “Operations” traffic. Examples include communication between the dispatcher, responding units, the incident commander, or any other personnel not operating in a hazardous area.
- b. Dispatch 1 is designated as the countywide dispatch channel & talk group. The VHF frequency is electronically “simulcast” with corresponding MARCS talk group, in order to facilitate cross-system communication & dispatching. When acknowledging traffic on Dispatch 1, the Dispatcher must be sure to repeat the company calling and the traffic, rather than using a generic reply such as “You’re clear.” As a general rule, all departments & personnel in the county will monitor Dispatch 1 when they are not tied up and are available for emergency response.
- c. MARCS Talk Groups 2, 3 & 4 are utilized for Operations traffic between MARCS-equipped companies, agencies and personnel.
- d. MARCS Talk Groups 5 & 6 are designated as “Admin” and may be utilized to supplement communication between ICS functions at large-scale incidents, support training operations, or facilitate routine intra-

agency communication. Admin talk groups are not monitored or utilized by 9-1-1 dispatchers.

- e. MARCS talk group 7 is designated as “Union EMS”, and is used by emergency medical companies to contact Memorial Hospital of Union County to give patient reports or obtain medical control if needed.
- f. MARCS talk group 8 is designated for use by the Union County Emergency Management agency. This talk group may also be used to facilitate inter-agency communication and coordination at large-scale incidents, at the discretion of the EMA Director.
- g. MARCS talk group 9 is designated “Union Fire & Police “ (F&P), and is designed to facilitate communication between fire department companies and law enforcement units that are responding to the same incident.
- h. MARCS talk groups 10 to 15 are designated for use by Union County law enforcement agencies. Fire Department personnel should not utilize these talk-groups unless requested or authorized to do so by an appropriate law enforcement officer.
- i. In Fire Department MARCS radios, Channel 16 is a standard (non-trunked) simplex radio frequency and is designated “Car to Car”. Communications on this frequency travel directly from radio to radio, do not pass through the MARCS infrastructure, and are limited to the range of the radio. **The “Car to Car” frequency will be utilized for Fireground Communications.**

6. Emergency/Distress

- a. MARCS radios are equipped with an emergency distress alarm. Depressing the emergency button, followed by the PTT button, activates this feature and alerts the dispatcher.
- b. When a distress alarm is received, the dispatcher will attempt to contact the company and advise them to “Check your display.” If the activation of the distress alarm was inadvertent, the unit will advise that it was a false alarm and reset the radio. If the dispatcher receives no reply or an inappropriate response, the closest law enforcement unit, engine company and chief officer will be dispatched to the distressed company’s last known location on emergency.

7. Terminology

- a. Use plain speech or clear text when transmitting over a two-way radio. Union County fire departments do not use any system of 10 codes or CB lingo. Although the department does not use numerical codes, a distinctive vocabulary of words, phrases, and terms has been developed for use in radio conversations. These terms simplify and clarify radio conversation as well as contribute to brevity. (See Part 6 – Clear Text, below.)
- b. County fire departments also use the 24-hour clock rather than the traditional 12-hour clock. The 24-hour clock is often referred to as the military clock. All references to time used in two-way radio communications will be expressed in the 24-hour time format. For example, 9:00 A.M. is expressed as 0900 hours (pronounced “zero nine

hundred hours”). 9:00 P.M. is expressed as 2100 hours (twenty-one hundred hours).

- c. Use the accepted law enforcement phonetic alphabet to clearly identify each letter of the alphabet:

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

8. Sending and Receiving Messages

- a. Message format:

- i. Identify yourself, and direct the addressee by utilizing the language “calling”. Example: “Engine 4 calling Command.”
- ii. Wait for the unit being called to acknowledge, and then keep the message brief and to the point.
Example: “Engine 4, Command”
“Command, go ahead Engine 4.”
“Engine 4, Command the primary search is complete.”
- iii. Use procedural words and phrases whenever possible.
- iv. Use phonetic spelling when using words or terms that might be difficult to understand or may be spelled in a variety of ways.

- b. Eliminating most common errors:

- i. The most common error committed by a user of a two-way radio is short keying. This is caused when a radio operator attempts to transmit a message before the radio has time to engage. This practice chops off the first part of the message.
- ii. To correct the problem, the user should press the transmit button on the microphone and delay his message for two to three seconds. This allows the transmitter time to engage. Once the transmitter engages, the entire message can be successfully transmitted and received.
- iii. An error similar to short keying results when the radio operator fails to transmit the prefix or suffix of his assigned radio identifier when reporting en route or on location when responding to an assignment.
- iv. The error is magnified when more than one unit operates out of the same station. For example, Engine 3, Ladder 3, and Medic 3 are all housed at Station 3. Failure to transmit the entire radio identifier not only causes confusion, it can also result in a costly error by someone thinking he has heard a particular unit report en route or on scene.

9. Clear Text

Words or Phrases:

Application:

Affirmative	Yes
Call by phone	Self-explanatory
Clear	Understood
Disregard	Cancel present assignment and return to service
Emergency	Term used to gain control of radio channel to report a possible emergency. All other radio users will refrain from using that channel until cleared by the dispatcher. Radio users will confine all radio transmissions to a possible emergency in progress or a new incident. Radio traffic that includes status information (e.g., response, conditions, location, availability) will be authorized
Mayday	Term used to gain control of radio channel to report an emergency. Radio users will confine all radio transmissions to an emergency in progress or a new incident. Radio traffic that includes status information (e.g., response, conditions, location, availability) will be authorized during this period
En route	Responding to a destination without lights and siren
In quarters	Indicates that a unit is in a station
In service	On the radio, available for a call
Negative	No
On scene	Has arrived at the scene of an incident
Out of service	Indicates a unit is unavailable to respond to a call.
Repeat	Self-explanatory
Report	Provide a status update on the progress of an incident
Resume normal traffic	Radio channel is cleared for normal use
Return to	Self-explanatory
Respond, responding	Indicates a unit should proceed to/is proceeding to an incident with lights and siren
Stand by	Stop transmitting
Unreadable	Radio signal is unclear. In most cases, try to add the specific trouble. Example: "Unreadable, background noise."

Communications, SOG 1.04

RADIO NUMBERS

1. Scope

This standard establishes guidelines for the assignment of radio identifiers to apparatus and personnel equipped with two-way radios.

2. General

a. It is useful when apparatus can be identified by function, jurisdiction, and station assignment. This may be accomplished by using a prefix followed by a number.

i. Function: Apparatus are identified with a prefix that designates its principal function, such as engine, ladder, squad, medic, rescue, grass fighter, chief, etc.

ii. A number identification is used to indicate the jurisdiction.

Number series have been assigned to Union County departments as follows:

1. 210 through 219 – Jerome Township
2. 260 through 269 – Pleasant Valley
3. 270 through 279 – Marysville
4. 280 through 289 – Union Township
5. 290 through 299 – Liberty Township – Raymond
6. 300 through 309 – Leesburg Township
7. 310 through 319 – Northern Union
8. 600 through 609 – Allen Township
9. 700 through 709 – Honda Emergency Services
10. 720 through 739 – Union County EMA
(Station 725 is the Union County EOC)

3. Portables

a. Most fire apparatus and medics have been assigned one or more hand-held two-way radios. Use the term “portable” following the apparatus identifier whenever transmitting, (e.g., “Engine 3 Portable to Command).

b. All command officers and fire prevention personnel have also been assigned portable radios. When an inspector or other individual uses his portable radio, he will simply use his assigned radio number.

Communications, SOG 1.06

DISPATCHING ALARMS

1. Scope

This standard establishes guidelines for dispatch and communications personnel to follow when receiving requests for service and dispatching emergency units. It was promulgated to ensure that appropriate response assignments are dispatched.

2. Receiving an Alarm

- a. Prior to dispatching fire companies to an alarm, the dispatcher must obtain sufficient information to properly dispatch the alarm. At minimum, this information includes the traditional variables of who, what, when, and where. Other clarification may be required.
- b. The dispatcher should ask the person reporting an incident the following questions:
 - i. What is your name and telephone number?
 - ii. What is the nature of your emergency?
 - iii. What is the exact address or location of the emergency?
 - iv. As the dispatcher records this information, he will note the correct time that the call was received.
- c. If the request for service is received via 911, the dispatcher should compare the information given by the caller with the information displayed on his computer screen. The dispatcher should note any discrepancies and question the caller further to make sure that the information given is correct.
- d. The dispatcher should then enter the address of the incident into his computer to obtain the correct box number, cross street, and other pertinent information. If the computer is inoperable, this information may be located manually in the Master Street Index.

3. Pre-Dispatch Alert

- a. Dispatchers shall, as quickly as possible, transmit a Pre-Dispatch Alert message. The purpose of a pre-dispatch alert is to allow companies to prepare for response prior to the actual dispatch, thereby reducing overall response times.
- b. Pre-dispatch alerts are transmitted before complete information is obtained, with the reporting party still on the line. The only information necessary for a pre-dispatch alert is the basic nature of the call and department with jurisdiction.
- c. Pre-dispatch alerts are normally broadcast as follows:
 - i. Transmit alert tone of department with jurisdiction.
 - ii. "Attention Station '#,' stand by for a structure fire assignment," or "Attention Station '#,' structure fire at 123 Main, stand by for the assignment."
 - iii. Continue to obtain complete information from the caller, determine the proper units for the assignment and dispatch accordingly.

4. Dispatching the Proper Units

- a. Every incident shall be broadcast on “Dispatch 1”, the countywide dispatch channel/talk group. The following information shall be broadcast and repeated at least once:
 - i. The type or nature of the incident.
 - ii. The location (address)
 - iii. The nearest cross street or landmark.
 - iv. The units to respond.
 - v. The operations talk-group assigned to the incident.
 - vi. The time of dispatch.
- b. This information is to be recorded in the 911 transaction, which shall also contain a chronology of events pertinent to the incident. The dispatcher shall review the transaction on conclusion of each incident and shall correct any discrepancies.
- c. The Dispatcher will assign each incident to an operations talk group at the time of initial dispatch, subject to the following guidelines: The Dispatcher may assign several single-company incidents (i.e. EMS runs) to a shared Operations talk group. Each multi-company incident (i.e. structure fire, crash, etc.) should be assigned to its own Ops talk group whenever possible. In the event that incidents outnumber available talk groups, the Dispatcher will assign and manage talk groups in the most efficient manner possible.
- d. All companies will mark “Responding” on Dispatch 1. When acknowledging the responding company, the dispatcher will repeat the assigned talk group. The responding company will then switch to and remain on the assigned talk group for the duration of the incident.
- e. County Fire will handle all communications for that emergency, record pertinent information and times for all units responding and will transmit (by Fax) same to all involved fire departments at the end of the incident.