

Union County Standard operating Guidelines
Communications

Communications, SOG 1.00

COMMUNICATIONS

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

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. 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 | Fireground (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.

Union County Standard operating Guidelines
Communications

4. 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,. 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. 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.
- 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 to 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. Channel 16 is a standard (non-trunked) simplex radio frequency designated “Car to Car”. This frequency will be utilized for Fireground Communications.
- j. Most Union County fire departments maintain an inventory of VHF radios for emergency backup, or communicating with non-MARCS-equipped mutual aid

Union County Standard operating Guidelines
Communications

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 |

5. 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.
- c. 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 or emergency.

6. General Communications

- a. Use plain speech or clear text when transmitting over a two-way radio.
- b. All references to time used in two-way radio communications will be expressed in the 24-hour time format.
- c. Use the accepted law enforcement phonetic alphabet to clearly identify each letter of the alphabet.

Union County Standard operating Guidelines
Communications

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." |

- d. 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.

Union County Standard operating Guidelines
Communications

- e. 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:
 - The type or nature of the incident.
 - The location (address)
 - The nearest cross street or landmark.
 - The units to respond.
 - The operations talk-group assigned to the incident.
 - The time of dispatch.

- f. The Dispatcher will assign each incident to an operations talk group at the time of initial dispatch.

- g. 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.

7. Radio Numbers

- a. Apparatus are identified with a prefix and a number that designates its principal function and jurisdiction.
 - 210 through 219 – Jerome Township
 - 260 through 269 – Pleasant Valley
 - 270 through 279 – Marysville
 - 280 through 289 – Union Township
 - 290 through 299 – Liberty Township – Raymond
 - 300 through 309 – Leesburg Township
 - 310 through 319 – Northern Union
 - 600 through 609 – Allen Township
 - 700 through 709 – Honda Emergency Services
 - 720 through 739 – Union County EMA
(Station 725 is the Union County EOC)

- b. 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).

- c. 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.

Union County Standard operating Guidelines
Communications