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I.   PURPOSE

This policy will provide the basic information needed to effectively communicate via the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department's radio system.

II.   SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all sworn fire department personnel San Diego Fire-Rescue Department (SDFD) personnel.

III.   AUTHORITY

The fire chief authorizes the information within this policy.

IV.   POLICY

A.   Radio traffic

1.   Administrative traffic

a.   Administrative traffic is defined as radio traffic used to manage Department resources outside of active incidents, to include but not limited to move ups, out of service requests, etc.

b.   This traffic occurs on the Department's administrative channel.

2.   Incident traffic

a.   Incident traffic is defined as radio traffic that routinely occurs while managing, responding and operating during an incident.

b.   This occurs on the assigned command or tactical channels.

3.   Priority traffic

a.   Priority traffic is defined as radio traffic that is of an urgent but non-emergency nature, such as but not limited to:

1)   Initial report of an incident or fire incident not previously reported

2)   Report of a traffic accident involving a fire agency apparatus

b.   Priority traffic communicated on any channel takes precedence over administrative traffic.

c.   Priority traffic may also be used while on an incident to convey an important message that must take priority over other incident traffic but is not yet of an emergent nature.

Example: *"Metro, Engine 14, priority traffic"*

4.   Emergency traffic

a.   Will be utilized by any unit encountering a perilous situation and immediate action is needed.

b.   The individual or unit transmitting "Emergency Traffic" will receive the priority from Metro Zone Emergency Command and Data Center (ECDC), incident commander (IC), and all operating field units.

      c.   Situations may include preventing an injury, serious safety considerations, or a perilous situation.

      d.   Emergency traffic can be initiated by any personnel on or off the incident.

      e.   Radio traffic belongs to any unit giving the "Emergency Traffic" call.

      f.   ECDC will initiate a "warble" tone on the channel being utilized for emergency traffic to indicate the emergency status.

Example: "*Metro, Engine 25, emergency traffic*"

5.   Mayday traffic

      a.   Mayday traffic occurs when any firefighter is in immediate peril, is injured, lost, unaccounted for, trapped, or any other situation that could result in death or serious injury.

      b.   "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday" shall be transmitted over the radio.

      c.   Radio traffic immediately belongs to any unit giving the "Mayday" call.

      d.   The IC shall initiate "Mayday Protocols", a rapid recall, and accountability of all crews on the fire ground.

      e.   Mayday traffic can be initiated by any personnel on or off the incident.

      f.   ECDC will initiate a "warble" tone on the channel being utilized for mayday traffic to indicate the mayday status.

Example: "*Elm IC, Truck 10, Mayday, Mayday, Mayday*"

B.   <u>Department Requests for Law Enforcement Inside the City of San Diego</u>

1.   <u>Requesting San Diego Police (SDPD)</u>: This should be used for all requests where there is no direct threat to first responder personnel. Units will contact ECDC on the assigned radio channel or administrative channel. The nature of the request should be stated along with any pertinent information that may help SDPD prioritize the response.

      Examples:
      "*Metro, Engine 14 requesting PD for traffic control*"
       "*Metro, Engine 7 requesting PD for a violent person inside the Vons. Adult white male threatening employees and public, no weapons visible*"

2.   <u>Non-Code 3 Cover</u>: This request is used in the City of San Diego and is made when there is a perceived potential threat directly to first responders and SDPD is needed quickly but does not require a code-3 response. An example is the need for crowd control because the crowd is growing and/or becoming verbally abusive.

      Examples:
       "*Metro, Engine 14, requesting PD non-code 3 cover for crowd control…becoming aggressive*"
       "*Metro, Engine 40 request PD non-code cover, history of weapons at this address*"

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In this case SDPD will classify the request as a high priority and assign one or two of the closest units to respond non-code-3.

First responders are encouraged to provide any details that would assist SDPD in their response (weapons, description of threat).

3.   Cover-Now or Code-3 Cover: This request is made when first responder units feel immediately threatened. An example is someone from the crowd steps forward and becomes aggressive and personnel feel threatened with immediate harm.

> Examples:
> *"Metro, Engine 14 Cover-Now"*
> *"Metro Engine 201, Code-3 Cover, adult male threatening crew"*

ECDC will initiate a "warble" tone on the channel being used for emergency traffic during the cover now event.

In this case, SDPD will immediately assign units to respond code-3.

When able to do so first responders are encouraged to provide details that would assist PD in their response (weapons, description of threat). Company officers are to update ECDC with a report on conditions when safe to do so.

The closest battalion chief will be assigned to the call and the on-duty deputy chief of operations will be notified. The battalion chief will request additional resources and isolate the radio channels if necessary, to provide for the safety of first responder personnel. They will ensure ECDC is updated and follow up with any reporting.

C.   Department Requests for Law Enforcement Outside the City of San Diego

1.   For routine requests, the requesting unit will contact the communications center on the assigned radio channel or administrative channel, if not on an assigned incident. When requesting law enforcement, the reason must be given.

Example: *"Heartland, San Diego Engine 32 requesting law enforcement for traffic control"*

2.   When a unit wants law enforcement to expedite their response units should request an 'expedited response'. For example, the need for crowd control because the crowd is growing and a verbal description or request over the radio would only aggravate the situation.

Example: *"North Com, San Diego Engine 24 requesting expedited law enforcement"*

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3. A 'cover now' request should be made if units are in immediate danger. An example is a crowd becoming confrontational with first responders, or personnel threatened with immediate harm. In this case, law enforcement will respond immediately code-3.

Example: *"Heartland, San Diego Engine 10 cover now"*

First responders are encouraged to provide a description and details of the emergency (weapons, perpetrator description, etc.) to assist law enforcement in their response.

The supervising battalion chief will be assigned to the call and the on-duty deputy chief of operations will be notified by ECDC.

D. <u>Emergency "EMER" Button</u>

1. The emergency "EMER" button on the mobile radios, portable radios, and mobile device is for life threatening emergencies involving SDFD personnel. The emergency signal defaults and locks the radio to 7P EMG, 8P EMG, or 9P EMG depending on what zone or channel the radio is on.

2. Personnel activating the "EMER" button because of an actual emergency are encouraged to key the transmit button to assist ECDC in determining the type of situation they are in.

    a. Upon receipt of the signal, ECDC will transmit:

        "Unit with administrative traffic"(repeated three times)

    b. If the activating unit is able to talk they should advise ECDC of their status.
    c. If the initiating unit does not answer, ECDC will advise the IC of the "EMER" activation.
    d. If the activating unit is not on an incident, ECDC will send a police unit to the last automatic vehicle locator (AVL) location to investigate.

3. Personnel activating the "EMER" button accidently should notify ECDC to coordinate a reset.

    a. To reset the "EMER" system, the user must depress and hold the "EMER" button for one to two seconds until a single beep is heard.
    b. ECDC cannot reset the "EMER" button, the user must reset the button.

E. <u>Routine and Administrative Communications Procedures</u>

1. All units in the field will monitor the dispatch channel when out-of-quarters and available. This will provide back-up to the alerting devices for receiving responses.
2. Radio broadcasts should be made by transmitting the receiving unit's identifier first. The sending unit should be transmitted next, e.g. "Metro Command Center, this is Engine 5" or "Metro, Engine 8".

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3.   When units will be at the very extremes of or out of their first-in districts, but still in service, the officer will notify their respective BC for approval and ECDC will be notified.

F.   Radio Call Signs

1.   Radio identifiers are assigned or designated in the following manner:

a.   The captain is assigned the unit identifier
b.   The engineer is assigned by position
c.   The firefighters are assigned by surname
d.   This system shall be used for communicating within a crew during any incident or outside activities, such as pre-fire planning, inspecting, physical fitness and shopping.
e.   For example:

1)   Captain: "Engine 25"
2)   Engineer: "Engine 25 Engineer"
3)   Firefighter: "Engine 25 Smith"
4)   Firefighter: "Engine 25 Jones"

G.   Clear Text

1.   The National Incident Management System (NIMS) identifies plain language (clear text) as the accepted standard for radio communications.
2.   SDFD has adopted this standard format of radio communications except for the following situations:

a.   "11-44"   Deceased
b.   "5150"   Mental Disorder
c.   "Code 7"   Meals
d.   "Code 9"   Physical Fitness
e.   "Code T"   Terrorism

H.   International Phonetic Alphabet
a. Crews will use the International Phonetic Alphabet (also known as the International Civil Aviation Organization alphabet) to avoid confusion when transmitting letters over the radio.

Letter	Code Word	Letter	Code Word	Letter	Code Word
A	Alpha	J	Juliet	S	Sierra
B	Bravo	K	Kilo	T	Tango
C	Charlie	L	Lima	U	Uniform
D	Delta	M	Mike	V	Victor

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E	Echo	N	November	W	Whiskey
F	Foxtrot	O	Oscar	X	X-ray
G	Golf	P	Papa	Y	Yankee
H	Hotel	Q	Quebec	Z	Zulu
I	India	R	Romeo		

I.   Limit Radio Transmission

All personnel are reminded to limit radio transmission to pertinent information. This action will increase the likelihood that a unit in need will be able to reach ECDC in a timely manner.

J.   Routine Unit-to-Unit Communications

1.   Companies not assigned to a response and wishing to communicate unit-to-unit or within a battalion shall use their battalion training channel.
2.   Units may use the admin channel to request other units switch to the respective battalion training channel.

K.   Tactical Radio Communications

1.   Tactical radio communications should be made on the tactical channels.
2.   Personnel should avoid extensive unit-to-unit traffic on the command channel or administrative channel.

L.   Incident Communications Procedures

1.   Radio transmission of alarms procedures:

a.   ECDC will assign a command channel and tactical channel for all incidents at the beginning of the dispatch message.
b.   Responding units shall operate on the assigned command channel until assigned.
c.   Incident command shall monitor command, tactical, emergency and direct channels when personnel are working in an IDLH.

M.   First-In Unit Radio Procedures

1.   The first-in unit will advise ECDC they are "at scene," complete a brief initial radio report, state initial actions taken, establish IC and designate an incident specific name for their command on the command channel.

Example: "*Metro, Engine 14 at scene, nothing showing, investigating, assuming 'Cajon IC'*"

2.   ECDC will repeat the initial radio report in a concise format and repeat all requests for action and additional resources.

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3. Incident command designation shall be a single word when possible. Example: If the incident is on Rancho Bernardo Road, "Bernardo IC" would be more appropriate than "Rancho Bernardo IC".

4. Incidents will be re-named by ECDC if the command designation chosen by the IC conflicts with another command designation actively in use.

5. In all communications between the IC and ECDC, the IC will use the incident's command designation and not their unit number.

6. The IC will give a more complete report on conditions as soon as possible to ECDC, including estimated incident duration in order for ECDC to adjust district coverage. ECDC personnel will repeat all pertinent information for other responding units.

N. <u>After IC is established</u>

1. Arriving units will advise their "at scene" status to the IC on the command channel.

2. Units should refrain from requesting an assignment while still responding and only request assignment on the command channel once at scene.

3. Arriving and staged units will remain on the command channel until given an assignment, at which time they will switch to the tactical (tac) channel.

4. On two unit responses, including but not limited to medical aids, vegetation initial attack, etc., units should not stage. Consequently, units will remain on command while responding but automatically switch to tactical once on scene.

5. Other arriving units will advise their "at scene" status to the IC, await assignment on the command channel, and stage according to policy.

6. All units will check their mobile device status upon arrival. If the automatic "at scene" is not indicated, officers shall manually change to "at scene" status.

7. Units without a mobile device will advise ECDC "at scene" on the command channel.

8. The IC will monitor the command channel, tactical channel(s) and emergency channel throughout the incident.

9. After a chief officer has assumed command, the IC may use an additional radio to monitor the direct channel for radio traffic from units that may have lost the ability to use the 800MHz trunking system.

10. The direct channel may be designated as the primary tactical channel in known or discovered situations where the 800MHz system is unreliable for usage.

11. Staging, logistics, and other support functions shall remain on the command channel unless directed to a tactical channel by the IC.

12. The IC may create an expanded command/tactical communications structure. The IC will then communicate with branches, divisions or groups on the command channel and task level units will remain on the assigned tactical channel.

13. Incident command or the first arriving unit will cancel units on the command channel and will not request ECDC to cancel units.