

## **Genesee County Association of Fire Chief's Recommended Operating Guidelines**

Effective: April 15, 1992

Revised: December 2020

Review: December 2023

### **SUBJECT: Radio Communications 92-1**

#### **SCOPE**

This guideline shall apply to all Genesee County fire departments (including the City of Flint) and the Genesee County Communications Center. It is understood that if the Communications Center alters this guideline for a single department, all departments shall be afforded the same alteration, if so desired. It is further understood that applicable sections of this ROG do not apply to the City of Fenton because they have their own dispatch center.

#### **PURPOSE**

The Genesee County Association of Fire Chief's recognizes that the manner in which radio communications are handled is often the measure of the efficiency of an organization and the attitude of the organization's individual membership.

The observance of some basic radio protocols and rules will expedite communications and improve the working relationship among all radio dispatch and alarm systems.

Application of the general protocols and rules outlined within this guideline will lead to a more professional performance.

#### **UNIT DESIGNATION**

All units will be identified by Department Name, Unit/Apparatus Type, and Unit Number.  
**Department numbers shall not be used.**

#### **Examples:**

Gaines Township Chief 1

Genesee Squad 16

Fenton Township Engine 11

Grand Blanc Township Ladder 25

Clio Tender 25

Burton Brush 2

#### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Radio usage during an emergency situation is not always a consistent flow of information. Before using the radio for any transmission, everyone shall make certain that the talk group they wish to transmit on is clear.

The operators should always use correct unit designation (department name, unit/apparatus type, and unit number) or tactical call sign to identify to whom they are directing their communication.

The use of ten (10) codes and department numbers are not authorized for fire communications, thus avoiding potential confusion with unit and personnel identification. Only clear text shall be used for all radio communications.

**There shall be no unit to unit, unit to base, or interdepartmental communications taking place on 25FIREM.**

### **GENERAL RADIO PROTOCOL**

- Command Officers responding to the scene shall check en-route, on-scene, and clear with the Communications Center on **25FIREM** or by using the MDT (if applicable).
- The FIRST officer responding to the station shall check en-route with the Communications Center on **25FIREM**. All other officers will check en-route to the station on the assigned fire ground.
- Responding apparatus shall check en-route, on-scene, and clear with the Communications Center on **25FIREM** or by using the MDT (if applicable).
- All fire ground communications will occur on the assigned fire ground.
- Once the incident scene is terminated, the assigned fire ground shall be released to the Communications Center. The Incident Commander shall notify the Communications Center of such on **25FIREM**. If any further interdepartmental communication is required it shall take place on their proprietary talk group.
- If the incident commander or any unit needs to contact the Communications Center they shall do so on **25FIREM**.
- If the Communications Center needs to initiate communications with incident commander they shall do so on the assigned fire ground.

Each department shall develop their own guideline for fire ground communications, radio programming, and individual use within the framework of this guideline.

### **COMMUNICATION CENTER RESPONSABILITIES, DISPATCH AND RADIO PROTOCOLS**

The primary emergency dispatch center is the Genesee County Communications Center (excluding the City of Fenton). **The Communications Center will dispatch all fire calls according to this section and all other sections of this recommended operating guideline. Additionally, all day to day operations shall be consistent and universal amongst all Genesee County fire departments (including the City of Flint).**

The Communications Center will dispatch the appropriate fire department to the emergency incident upon receiving a call through the 9-1-1 emergency phone system. The dispatcher will continue to monitor talk groups, receive communications as necessary, and relay information as required.

The appropriate fire department(s) will be dispatched using the county fire paging system.

- Name of fire department(s) being dispatched
- The type of incident
- The address or location of the incident
- The assigned fire ground or Coordinator talk group
- Additional information as needed

All communications related to an incident will remain on the assigned fire ground talk group, except that the incident commander will use the Fire Main, talk group (**25FIREM**) to initiate communications with Communications Center. Communications Center will use the assigned fire ground talk group to contact the incident commander.

All updates provided by the Communication Center shall be broadcasted on **25FIREM** and the assigned fire ground. The Communications Center shall monitor the fire ground talk groups on all life safety incidents. Additionally, the Communications Center shall document pertinent times and information into the CAD notes for all incidents. Examples of pertinent times (not all inclusive):

- En-route, on-scene, and clear times of personnel and apparatus.
- Benchmarks such as: fire under control, primary and secondary search complete, water supply established, and etc...
- Request and arrival of utility companies
- Fire investigator requested
- Patient extricated

In the event that a department responds outside of Genesee County the Communications Center shall verify with the requesting dispatch center what talk group is being used and request that a patch is established as applicable. The Communications Center shall contact the first responding command officer or unit responding and inquire on if a patch is required. Additionally, if a department from outside of Genesee County is responding into Genesee County the Communications Center shall notify the corresponding dispatch center of what fire ground is being used and determine if a patch is needed. *Administrative Note:* a patch may not be needed due to department radio template configurations.

The Communications Center shall also provide 10-minute markers on all working structure fire incidents. These benchmarks shall start at the inception of the call being entered into the CAD system. These benchmarks are to be relayed and acknowledged by the incident commander on the assigned fire ground.

Fire department personnel shall “clear” their base station MDT and all apparatus MDTs when they have gathered appropriate information. This will also indicate to the Communications Center that department personnel are clear of the station. In the event that the base station

MDT is not functioning the department shall notify the Communications Center they are clear of the station on **25FIREM**.

If another call for service is received and a department is already on a call for service the Communications Center shall contact the incident commander on the assigned fire ground talk group and ask for dispatch instructions.

The Communications Center will provide, upon request of the incident commander, additional assistance in notification of various agencies as follows:

- Consumer's Energy and other utilities.
- The Genesee County Road Commission.
- The Department of Natural Resources.
- Michigan State Police, Fire Investigator.
- Police agencies.
- Emergency medical service agencies.
- Genesee County Office of Emergency Management.
- Other response agencies as required or requested.
- Mutual aid requests.

Provide countywide announcements at 1800 hours upon request and authorization of the department fire chief. Countywide announcements shall consist of the following information:

- Firefighter deaths;
- Countywide training announcements;
- Other information of a county-wide nature that time would not allow notification through normal departmental procedures.
- Countywide training announcements at a time other than 1800 will be done at the request of the training committee chairperson or vice-chairperson. (i.e. academy class cancelled due to severe weather).

Provide announcements of emergencies that are of a county-wide emergency or requirement, including:

- Severe thunderstorm warning;
- Tornado watch or warning;
- Flood watch or warning;
- Heavy snow warning;
- Activation of the county coordinator emergency system.

If during the weather warning time period more information becomes available, additional updates will be broadcast without reactivation of the countywide tones.

## CALLING MAYDAY

All crews working inside a structure shall be on the assigned fire ground.

A MAYDAY shall be declared by personnel for any sudden life-threatening occurrence that may injure, trap, disorient or distress emergency personnel during an emergency incident.

Witnesses to the event shall declare a MAYDAY, if one is not made by those directly involved. Specific examples that warrant a MAYDAY include:

- Fall through roof/floor
- Building collapse
- Activated pass alarm/low air alarm
- Caught in flashover or backdraft
- Lost with no line/direction out
- Trapped
- SCBA malfunction

To declare a MAYDAY the firefighter will activate their emergency alert button on their portable radio and transmit, "MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY". The person transmitting the MAYDAY will provide the following information:

- Location
- Unit number
- Name
- Assignment
- Resources needed

Personnel who become trapped or disoriented should execute all necessary self-rescue activities to assist in their own rescue (including activation of their PASS device (after radio transmission), tapping noise, flashlight, etc.)

Once a MAYDAY call is received the dispatcher at the Communications Center will sound the emergency alert tones and announce for all units on the fire ground to hold radio traffic that there is a MAYDAY on the fire ground, Unit with the MAYDAY you have the air.

Upon receipt of a MAYDAY, Command shall order all personnel to cease radio traffic on the assigned fire ground talk group. The fire ground talk group will be kept open to communication with the distressed personnel. Command will designate one person to monitor the fire ground talk group and monitor progress in locating the distressed personnel. Command shall request a second fire ground talk group for incident operations.

Once the distressed personnel are located and removed from danger, Command will order the emergency alert button reset and notify dispatch that the MAYDAY is cancelled.

If an emergency alert is transmitted or Communications Center notifies Command that an emergency alert has been transmitted they shall treat it as a MAYDAY, until proven otherwise.

### **EMERGENCY ALERT TONES**

The radio emergency alert tone is a warbled tone that is activated by the Communications Center. This tone should be an indication for all radio traffic to cease and for all personnel operating on the fire ground to prepare for emergency radio traffic and instructions.

### **EMERGENCY EVACUATION SIGNAL**

See ROG 91-2 Firefighter Safety. Sub-section Emergency Evacuation Signal.

### **RADIO PROCEDURE FOR SITE TRUNKING**

In the event radio's go into "site trunking" communications on Fire Ground talk groups may not be possible. All departments should have their radio's set to direct mode for the 8TAC channels.

To do this, while the radio is ON turn your channel selector to an 8TAC channel. Once selected press the small button on the side of your radio with two dots on it, this will be located above the push to talk button. Once pressed you should see a I+I symbol above the TAC channel. This should be done for any 8TAC channel being used in direct mode. Once the symbol is displayed those channels will be set in direct mode.

In all radios zone "F" will have all the 8CALL and 8TAC channels. With newer templates there are also 8TAC channels with direct mode already built in and will display with a D behind the descriptor. (Example: 8TAC91D).

In the event radio's go into "site trunking" on scene communications take place in direct mode on 8TAC91, 8TAC92, 8TAC93, or 8TAC94. In the event communication is needed with the 911 center attempts should be made in the following order:

1. Fire Main
2. 8TAC91 (NOT in direct mode)
3. 25COM
4. Cell Phone

### **RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE BASE STATION RADIO OPERATION FOR INDIVIDUAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS**

It is to be understood that base radio operations are not mandatory. Furthermore, base radio operators are not trained to the level of emergency telecommunicators. Thus, this does not alleviate the Communications Center from monitoring fire grounds on life safety incidents.

Base station radio operators, when in service, shall “sign on the air” on **25FIREM**. Base station radio operators, when out of service, shall “sign off the air” on **25FIREM**.

During weather related incidents the department base radio operator will monitor **25FIREM** and receive additional calls and relay them to units in the field.

All mutual aid units, when responding to a mutual aid request, may only communicate with their base radios on their proprietary talk group. They shall only communicate with the base radio of the department they are to assist on the assigned fire ground talk group.

## **FIRE PAGING AND TALK GROUP USAGE**

The 800 MHz talk groups **shall** be used as follows:

Fire main (**25FIREM**) will be used for:

- Dispatching fire departments;
- Communications between the Communications Center and fire officers, apparatus and department base radios;
- No unit to unit communications will take place on this talk group.

Fire ground talk groups (**25FG2 - 25FG13**) will be assigned to an incident by Communications Center at the time of dispatch and will be used for:

- Fire ground communications.
- Unit to unit communication.
- All ambulances responding to a fire incident or EMS incidents in conjunction with a fire department will be instructed by the Communications Center to monitor the assigned fire ground talk group to allow communications between the EMS unit and the incident commander.

Department proprietary talk groups (**i.e. 25F21 – Atlas Twp**)

- Proprietary talk groups are encrypted talk groups.
- A department’s proprietary talk group used by the assigned department for interdepartmental communications as they determine. This will include all non-emergency communications between fire officers, apparatus and department base radios.
- The departments proprietary talk group will be used for all single department responses to weather related incidents, including but not limited to trees down, wires down and arcing wires. Fire ground talk groups will not be assigned for weather related incidents unless mutual aid is involved.

Encrypted talk group (**25FIRE1**) is designed to pass sensitive information to the Communications Center. (i.e. cell phone numbers, fatal fire or fatal accident information, and etc...). This talk group may also be used to pass non-emergent or an extended transmission to

the Communications Center if a fire ground talk group has not been assigned and the user does not wish to tie up 25FIREM.

Encrypted talk group **(25FIRE2)** may be assigned by the Communications Center for sensitive operations that require all communications to be encrypted. (i.e. fire department is assisting law enforcement with civil unrest or protests).

County special event talk groups **(25SPEV1 thru 25SPEV6)** will be assigned for use by the Communications Center.

Scene specific analog talk groups **(8TAC91 thru 8TAC94)** may be used for fire ground operations in the direct mode as needed.

Coordinator talk groups **(25COD1 and 25COD2)** will be used:

- Used by the Genesee County Coordination Team to communicate with the Communications Center.

Emergency Management talk groups **(25EMER1 and 25EMER2)** will be assigned for use by the Communications Center.

EMS talk groups **(25EMS1 and 25EMS2)**:

- 25EMS1 will be used by the Communications Center for direct dispatching of EMS units and personnel.
- 25EMS2 will be used for ambulance to ambulance communications, ambulance to Genesee County Sheriff Paramedics communications, or any other EMS related unit to unit communications. This talk group may also be used by the Communications Center as a backup to 25EMS1.

The County Common talk group **(25COM)** will be used for:

- Communications between agencies as assigned by the Communications Center
- The talk group will be in every radio on the Genesee County 800 MHz system.

The Statewide Communications talk group **(STATW3)** may be used by any user to communicate with the Communications Center from anywhere in the State of Michigan. (This channel may not be immediately monitored)

Private calls are discouraged due to the resulting trunking system inefficiency. Use of cell phones is preferred over a private call to keep a channel from being tied up on the private call.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF RADIO AMATEUR CIVIL EMERGENCY SERVICE (RACES)**

The Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) will provide backup radio communications should all other radio communication systems fail. RACES will operate under the direct supervision of Incident Command Staff Officers and Fire Coordinators. All RACES personnel operating on an incident scene will be assigned to a fire officer or fire coordinator and will work



under their direction. RACES personnel not assigned shall report to the incident staging area and remain there until assigned by a fire officer or fire coordinator.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

Enforcement of this guideline will be the direct responsibility of the and the officers and firefighters of the member departments within Genesee County.