

Radio Discipline on the Fireline

BASICS

1. Do **not** use radios for communicating when face-to-face dialogue is a better and available choice.
2. Avoid excessive calling and unofficial transmissions.
3. Listen.
 - ◆ Too often we are not listening but making mental notes of what we would like to say in response.

FORMULATING THE MESSAGE PRIOR TO TRANSMISSION

1. Think first, then speak.
2. Use location identifiers or functional titles.
 - ◆ Location examples - Division B, Drop Point 2, Staging Area, Helibase
 - ◆ Functional titles - Taskforce Leader, Medic, Operations
3. Keep your messages short and simple.
 - ◆ Try not to pack 5 seconds worth of information into 30 seconds.
 - ◆ Do **not** use big words when a short one will do.
 - ◆ Leave out unnecessary words.
 - ~ **Bad:** “Ah, Taskforce Smith, this is FOBS Jones. Ah...yeah...ah, roger that...ah...ah...geographical location that we’re...ah...supposed to be moving towards...to ah...rendezvous...ah, that is...ah...met up with the...ah...other crew. Over.”
 - ~ **Good:** “Taskforce Smith this is FOBS Jones. Copy. Out.”
4. Use the phonetic alphabet.
 - ◆ Enunciation tends to be lost on the radio and individual letters can be miss-communicated over the radio.
5. Use plain English aka “Clear Text.”
 - ◆ Avoid using codes.
6. Use standard expressions (procedure words or pro-words) to reduce the amount of time transmitting on frequencies and to reduce confusion.

Expression

Go ahead
Copy
Say again
Standby

Affirmative
Negative
Over
Out
Do you copy
En route
Unreadable

Meaning

Pass your message.
Message received and understood.
Retransmit message.
Message acknowledged but I am unable to reply or deal with it at this time.
Yes.
No.
Information passed waiting for reply.
Transmission finished.
Do you understand, please acknowledge.
Resources heading to incident.
Used when signal received is unclear or not understood.
Don’t pay attention to the last radio traffic
Message is too long for one transmission.
More to follow.

PHONETIC ALPHABET		
<i>Character</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>
0	Zero	ZE-RO
1	One	WUN
2	Two	TOO
3	Three	TREE
4	Four	FOW-ER
5	Five	FIFE
6	Six	SIX
7	Seven	SEV-EN
8	Eight	AIT
9	Nine	NIN-ER
A	Alpha	ALFAH
B	Bravo	BRAHVOH
C	Charlie	CHARLEE
D	Delta	DELLTAH
E	Echo	ECKOH
F	Foxtrot	FOKSTROT
G	Golf	GOLF
H	Hotel	HOHTELL
I	India	INDEE AH
J	Juliet	JEWLEE ETT
K	Kilo	KEYLOH
L	Lima	LEEMAH
M	Mike	MIKE
N	November	NOVEMBER
O	Oscar	OSSCAH
P	Papa	PAHPAH
Q	Quebec	KEHBECK
R	Romeo	ROWME OH
S	Sierra	SEEAIRAH
T	Tango	TANGGO
U	Uniform	YOUNEE FORM
V	Victor	VIKTAH
W	Whiskey	WISSKEY
X	X-ray	ECKSRAY
Y	Yankee	YANGKEY
Z	Zulu	ZOOLOO

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TRANSMITTING YOUR MESSAGE

1. Answer all calls without delay.
2. Listen before you transmit to make sure no one else is transmitting.
3. When ready to transmit, push the transmission key and wait a couple seconds before speaking. When finishing transmitting, wait before releasing the key.
4. Keep a distance of about 5 cm between the microphone and your lips, and shield your microphone from background noises.
5. Use good speech technique. Think R.S.V.P.
 - ◆ **R**hythm - Speak in short sentences with a natural rhythm.
 - ◆ **S**peed - Speak slightly slower than normal conversation.
 - ~ Speak at a rate of 150 words/minute.
 - ~ Speak even slower when someone needs to write down information.
 - ◆ **V**olume - Use normal speaking volume.
 - ~ Shouting causes distortion and makes you hard to understand.
 - ◆ **P**itch - Speak in a pitch slightly higher than normal conversation.
 - ~ Remain calm. People respond to the intensity of your voice.
 - ~ People don't always remember what you said, but they always remember HOW you said it.
6. Divide long messages into sensible phrases, pausing every now and then.
 - ◆ Ensure that the person on the other end is copying your transmission.
 - ◆ Allow others to break in with more important information.
7. Do **not** read everything back.
 - ◆ Use "Say again" for the transmission you did **not** copy.
 - ◆ Use "Copy, over" and stand by for the next transmission if you understand the transmission.



BUILDING OUR FUTURE THROUGH INNOVATION

As budgets get tighter, the BLM Fire Training Unit is looking at ways to more efficiently and effectively train its workforce. Part of this effort includes the collection of innovative training ideas and practices from the field that can be used across the nation.

This newsletter focused on radio discipline. Are you doing something on your unit to develop efficient and effective radio operators?

- Do you record radio conversations and analyze them with a technical proficiency checklist that you've developed?
- Have you developed standard operating radio phraseology that you use during wildland fire operations?
- How do you train your crew members about radio discipline?
- Do you have an idea for a BLM radio communication training tool that could be developed and would like to be a part of bringing the concept to fruition?

We'd like to hear from you and see your products regarding radio communication as well as other areas of BLM fire training. For more information about *Building Our Future Through Innovation* or to submit your ideas and sample products, contact Pam McDonald at Pam_McDonald@nifc.blm.gov or 208-387-5318.