



Division 03

Communication and Information Management/Technology

Chapter 10 – Radio System Use and Station Alerting

October 2011

POLICY

This General Order shall establish procedures for the operational use of all radio channels, alerting units/stations via those radio channels, and the procedures for Public Safety Communications (PSC) to utilize when dispatching fire/EMS incidents.

DEFINITIONS

Alert – the primary means utilized by PSC to notify a station of a call for service by activating the station alerting system, pagers, station printers, and/or announcing the call over the radio.

Alert Tones – also referred to as “beeps,” an audible signal utilized by PSC to alert fire/EMS personnel of a pending dispatch of an emergency incident or other important announcement.

Digital Vehicle Repeater System – is a radio system component that provides repeater capability between portable subscribers and RF base station infrastructure, extending radio coverage of the network.

Failsoft – A failure of the radio trunking system, at which time all transmitters (channels) turn on and operate in a 'conventional' repeater mode.

North Side Operations – Any incident that occurs north of Pennsylvania Avenue.

South Side Operations – Any incident that occurs south of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Types of Alarms – types of alarms for dispatch purposes listed in this order are defined and listed in General Order 03-11, Standard Response Dispatch Procedure.

Talkgroup – A group of radios addressed as a single entity by the system and functionally equivalent to a conversational repeater channel. Prince George's County has 16 Talkgroups in each Zone.

Ex: Zone Talkgroup
8 C 2 pronounced 8 Charlie 2

Zone – An organized set of Talkgroups. Prince George's County zones will always be preceded by the number "8". Other COG (Council of Governments) jurisdictions will be preceded with specific numbers assigned by COG.

PROCEDURES

1. Zone and Talkgroup Assignments

PSC will assign all operational incident talkgroups when the incident is dispatched. **Personnel should pay close attention to the talkgroup assignment.**

The following talkgroup assignments will be utilized unless requested otherwise by an on-scene incident commander or directed by Public Safety Communications (PSC):

- **Alpha** - Primary response zone for **North Side** operations.



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND FIRE/EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDERS

- **Talkgroup 1 (8 Alpha 1)** – Primary dispatch talkgroup throughout all zones (except SE)
- **Talkgroup 2 (8 Alpha 2)** – Primary response talk group for Local Alarms, Motor Vehicle Accidents (without entrapment), BLS or ALS calls for service, throughout all zones (except SE)
- **Talkgroup 3 (8 Alpha 3)** - Primary response talk group within a specific incident group for all calls requiring the dispatch of a command officer and routinely monitored by PSC.
- **Talkgroups 4 & 5(8 Alpha 4, 8 Alpha 5)** – Alternate talkgroups within a specific incident group for use by the on scene commander in the event the incident requires additional assignments such as water supply, staging on multiple alarms, etc. This talk group is not routinely monitored by PSC.
- **Talkgroup 6 (8 Alpha 6)**- Announcement talk group within a specific incident group, for use by the Incident Commander, that has the need to voice a message over all the talk groups assigned to their incident group. The Incident Commander will not be able to receive any radio transmissions from the other talkgroups, only transmit.
- **Talkgroup 7 (8 Alpha 7)** - Primary response talk group within a specific incident group for all calls requiring the dispatch of a command officer and routinely monitored by PSC.
- **Talkgroups 8 & 9(8 Alpha 8, 8 Alpha 9)** – Alternate talkgroups within a specific incident group for use by the on scene commander in the event the incident requires additional assignments such as water supply, staging on multiple alarms, etc. This talk group is not routinely monitored by PSC.
- **Talkgroup 10 (8 Alpha 10)**- Announcement talk group within a specific incident group, for use by the Incident Commander, that has the need to voice a message over all the talk groups assigned to their incident group. The Incident Commander will not be able to receive any radio transmissions from the other talkgroups, only transmit.
- **Talkgroup 11 (8 Alpha 11)** - Auxiliary talk group for use by PSC for an assignment in the event there are no incident groups available and is an administrative talk group for unit to unit conversation.
- **Talkgroup 12 (8 Alpha 12)** - Auxiliary talk group for use by PSC for an assignment in the event there are no incident groups available and is an administrative talk group for unit to unit conversation.
- **Talkgroup 13 (8 Alpha 13)** - Used when coverage is nonexistent and the incident requires the use of a Digital Vehicle Repeater System. (DVRS) The decision to use this system should only be made by the command officer and only when all trunked radio communications is lost.
- **Talkgroup 14 (8 Alpha 14)** - Used when coverage is nonexistent and the incident requires the use of a Digital Vehicle Repeater System.



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND
FIRE/EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDERS

- (DVRS) The decision to use this system should only be made by the command officer and only when all trunked radio communications is lost.
- **Talkgroup 15 (8 Alpha 15)** - Used when coverage is nonexistent and there are no Digital Vehicle Repeater System. This is a simplex channel and should be monitored by the command post. This talkgroup can't be monitored by Public Safety Communications. This is to be used in the following circumstances:
 1. While operating inside a structure and the radio will not transmit
 2. NO COMMS will be displayed on the radio screen
 3. An audible tone will indicate the radio is unable to transmit
 - **Talkgroup 16 (8 Alpha 16)** – Normally patched with 8 Alpha 2
- **Bravo** - Primary response zone for Motor Vehicle Accident with report of entrapment and EMS to EMRC communications.
- **Talkgroup 3 (8 Bravo 3)** - Primary response talk group within a specific incident group for all calls requiring the dispatch of a command officer and routinely monitored by PSC.
 - **Talkgroup 4 (8 Bravo 4)** – Primary response talk group within a specific incident group for all calls requiring the dispatch of a command officer and routinely monitored by PSC.
- Talkgroups 5-8 **shall** be used in accordance with General Order 5-15
- **Talkgroup 5 (8 Bravo 5)** – Primary talkgroup to initiate hospital communications through EMRC.
 - **Talkgroup 6 (8 Bravo 6)** - Talkgroup utilized to communicate with hospitals through EMRC. (MED A)
 - **Talkgroup 7 (8 Bravo 7)** - Talkgroup utilized to communicate with hospitals through EMRC. (MED B)
 - **Talkgroup 8 (8 Bravo 8)** – Talkgroup utilized to communicate with hospitals through EMRC. (MED E)
- Talkgroups 9-14 **shall not** be used to communicate patient information or perform consultation with a base station.
- **Talkgroup 9 (8 Bravo 9)** - Talkgroup utilized to communicate with Prince George's Hospital Center directly.
 - **Talkgroup 10 (8 Bravo 10)** - Talkgroup utilized to communicate with Southern Maryland Hospital Center directly.
 - **Talkgroup 11 (8 Bravo 11)** - Talkgroup utilized to communicate with Doctor's Community Hospital directly.
 - **Talkgroup 12 (8 Bravo 12)** - Talkgroup utilized to communicate with Laurel Regional Hospital directly.
 - **Talkgroup 13 (8 Bravo 13)** - Talkgroup utilized to communicate Fort Washington Hospital directly.
 - **Talkgroup 14 (8 Bravo 14)** - Talkgroup utilized to communicate with Bowie Health Center directly.



- **Charlie-** Primary response zone for **South Side** operations
 - **Talkgroup 1 (8 Charlie 1)** – Primary dispatch talkgroup throughout all zones (except SE)
 - **Talkgroup 2 (8 Charlie 2)** – Primary response talk group for Local Alarms, Motor Vehicle Accidents (without entrapment), BLS or ALS calls for service, throughout all zones (except SE)
 - **Talkgroup 3 (8 Charlie 3)** - Primary response talk group within a specific incident group for all calls requiring the dispatch of a command officer and routinely monitored by PSC.
 - **Talkgroups 4 & 5(8 Charlie 4, 8 Charlie 5)** – Alternate talkgroups within a specific incident group for use by the on scene commander in the event the incident requires additional assignments such as water supply, staging on multiple alarms, etc. This talk group is not routinely monitored by PSC.
 - **Talkgroup 6 (8 Charlie 6)-** Announcement talk group within a specific incident group, for use by the Incident Commander, that has the need to voice a message over all the talk groups assigned to their incident group. The Incident Commander will not be able to receive any radio transmissions from the other talkgroups, only transmit.
 - **Talkgroup 7 (8 Charlie 7)** - Primary response talk group within a specific incident group for all calls requiring the dispatch of a command officer and routinely monitored by PSC.
 - **Talkgroups 8 & 9(8 Charlie 8, 8 Charlie 9)** – Alternate talkgroups within a specific incident group for use by the on scene commander in the event the incident requires additional assignments such as water supply, staging on multiple alarms, etc. This talk group is not routinely monitored by PSC.
 - **Talkgroup 10 (8 Charlie 10)-** Announcement talk group within a specific incident group, for use by the Incident Commander, that has the need to voice a message over all the talk groups assigned to their incident group. The Incident Commander will not be able to receive any radio transmissions from the other talkgroups, only transmit.
 - **Talkgroup 11 (8 Charlie 11)** - Auxiliary talk group for use by PSC for an assignment in the event there are no incident groups available and is an administrative talk group for unit to unit conversation.
 - **Talkgroup 12 (8 Charlie 12)** - Auxiliary talk group for use by PSC for an assignment in the event there are no incident groups available and is an administrative talk group for unit to unit conversation.
 - **Talkgroup 13 (8 Charlie 13)** - Used when coverage is nonexistent and the incident requires the use of a Digital Vehicle Repeater System. (DVRS) The decision to use this system should only be made by the command officer and only when all trunked radio communications is lost.
 - **Talkgroup 14 (8 Charlie 14)** - Used when coverage is nonexistent and the incident



- requires the use of a Digital Vehicle Repeater System. (DVRS) The decision to use this system should only be made by the command officer and only when all trunked radio communications is lost.
- **Talkgroup 15 (8 Charlie 15)** - Used when coverage is nonexistent and there are no Digital Vehicle Repeater System. This is a simplex channel and should be monitored by the command post. This talkgroup can't be monitored by Public Safety Communications. This is to be used in the following circumstances:
 1. While operating inside a structure and the radio will not transmit
 2. NO COMMS will be displayed on the radio screen
 3. An audible tone will indicate the radio is unable to transmit
 - **Talkgroup 16 (8 Charlie 16)** – Normally patched with 8 Charlie 2
- **Delta** - Primary response zone for special operation assignments to include but not limited to metro tunnel, water rescue, hazmat and explosive devices
- **Talkgroup 1 (8 Delta 1)** – Primary dispatch talkgroup throughout all zones (except SE)
 - **Talkgroup 2 (8 Delta 2)** – Primary response talk group for Local Alarms, Motor Vehicle Accidents (without entrapment), BLS or ALS calls for service, throughout all zones (except SE)
 - **Talkgroup 3 (8 Delta 3)** - Primary response talk group within a specific incident group for all calls requiring the dispatch of a command officer and routinely monitored by PSC.
 - **Talkgroups 4 & 5(8 Delta 4, 8 Delta 5)** – Alternate talkgroups within a specific incident group for use by the on scene commander in the event the incident requires additional assignments such as water supply, staging on multiple alarms, etc. This talk group is not routinely monitored by PSC.
 - **Talkgroup 6 (8 Delta 6)**- Announcement talk group within a specific incident group, for use by the Incident Commander, that has the need to voice a message over all the talk groups assigned to their incident group. The Incident Commander will not be able to receive any radio transmissions from the other talkgroups, only transmit.
 - **Talkgroup 7 (8 Delta 7)** - Primary response talk group within a specific incident group for all calls requiring the dispatch of a command officer and routinely monitored by PSC.
 - **Talkgroups 8 & 9(8 Delta 8, 8 Delta 9)** – Alternate talkgroups within a specific incident group for use by the on scene commander in the event the incident requires additional assignments such as water supply, staging on multiple alarms, etc. This talk group is not routinely monitored by PSC.
 - **Talkgroup 10 (8 Delta 10)**- Announcement talk group within a specific incident group, for use by the Incident Commander, that has the need to voice a message over



- all the talk groups assigned to their incident group. The Incident Commander will not be able to receive any radio transmissions from the other talkgroups, only transmit.
- **Talkgroup 11 (8 Delta 11)** - Auxiliary talk group for use by the Office of the Fire Marshal
 - **Talkgroup 12 (8 Delta 12)** - Auxiliary talk group for use by the Office of the Fire Marshal
 - **Talkgroup 13 (8 Delta 13)** - Used when coverage is nonexistent and the incident requires the use of a Digital Vehicle Repeater System. (DVRS) The decision to use this system should only be made by the command officer and only when all trunked radio communications is lost.
 - **Talkgroup 14 (8 Delta 14)** - Used when coverage is nonexistent and the incident requires the use of a Digital Vehicle Repeater System. (DVRS) The decision to use this system should only be made by the command officer and only when all trunked radio communications is lost.
 - **Talkgroup 15 (8 Delta 15)** - Used when coverage is nonexistent and there are no Digital Vehicle Repeater System. This is a simplex channel and should be monitored by the command post. This talkgroup can't be monitored by Public Safety Communications. This is to be used in the following circumstances:
 1. While operating inside a structure and the radio will not transmit
 2. NO COMMS will be displayed on the radio screen
 3. An audible tone will indicate the radio is unable to transmit
- **Talkgroup 16 (8 Delta 16)** – Normally patched with 8 Delta 2
- **Echo** - Primary hospital to hospital communications.
 - This shall only be used by hospitals. All notifications and consults shall be completed in accordance with General Order 5-15.
 - **Foxtrot** - Primary administrative communications zone
 - **Talkgroup 3 (8 Foxtrot 3)** – Auxiliary talkgroup used to communicate with Code Enforcement/Prevention
 - **Talkgroup 4 (8 Foxtrot 4)** – Auxiliary talkgroup used to communicate with Apparatus Maintenance
 - **Talkgroup 5 (8 Foxtrot 5)** – Auxiliary talkgroup used to communicate with Operations Center
 - **Talkgroup 6 (8 Foxtrot 6)** - Auxiliary talkgroup used for Battalion 1 administrative purposes
 - **Talkgroup 7 (8 Foxtrot 7)** - Auxiliary talkgroup used for Battalion 2 administrative purposes
 - **Talkgroup 8 (8 Foxtrot 8)** – Auxiliary talkgroup used for Battalion 3 administrative purposes
 - **Talkgroup 9 (8 Foxtrot 9)** - Auxiliary talkgroup used for Battalion 4 administrative purposes
 - **Talkgroup 10 (8 Foxtrot 10)** - Auxiliary talkgroup used for



Battalion 5 administrative purposes

- **Talkgroup 11 (8 Foxtrot 11)** - Auxiliary talkgroup used for Battalion 6 administrative purposes
- **Talkgroup 12 (8 Foxtrot 12)** - Auxiliary talkgroup used for Battalion 7 administrative purposes
- **Talkgroup 13 (8 Foxtrot 13)** - Auxiliary talkgroup used for FETA administrative purposes
- **Talkgroup 14 (8 Foxtrot 14)** - Auxiliary talkgroup used for administrative purposes by the Fire Chief

- **Golf** – Reserved talkgroup for emergency overflow when Alpha zone is used to full capacity
- **Hotel** – Reserved talkgroup for emergency overflow when Charlie zone is used to full capacity
- **Special Event (SE)** – Primary zone for special events in Prince George’s County. This zone may not be used without specific direction from PSC.
 - Talkgroups will be assigned as needed

2. Incident Alerting

Stations and units will be alerted for incidents in accordance with the following standardized guidelines.

Dispatch

Talkgroup 1 in all zones (with exception of SE) is designated as the primary dispatch channel. All incidents will be dispatched via the radio on Talkgroup 1. All fire/EMS units and stations will monitor Talkgroup 1 as identified below, unless otherwise directed by PSC.

NORTH – 8 Alpha 1
 SOUTH – 8 Charlie 1

Fire/EMS incidents will be announced as follows:

➤ **Ambulance, Medic and Rescue Local Alarms**

These call types will be preceded by a single alert tone and announced once on Talkgroup

Once the dispatched unit(s) respond, the call will be dispatched a second time on the assigned channel.

➤ **Local Alarms**

These call types will be preceded by a single alert tone and announced once on Talkgroup 1.

➤ **Street Alarms**

These call types will be preceded by two alert tones and announced on Talkgroup 1.

Approximately 45 seconds after the initial dispatch, the call will be announced a second time on Talkgroup 1 and repeated once on the PSC designated incident scene operational talkgroup as outlined above.

➤ **Box Alarms**

These call types will be preceded by three alert tones and announced on Talkgroup 1.

Approximately 45 seconds after the initial dispatch, the call will be announced a second time on Talkgroup 1 and repeated once on the PSC designated incident scene



operational talkgroup as outlined above.

➤ **Special Types of Alarms**

These call types will be preceded by one, two or three alert tones as designated by PSC for the severity and type of incident and announced on Talkgroup 1

Approximately 45 seconds after the initial dispatch, the call will be announced a second time on Talkgroup 1 and repeated once on the PSC designated incident scene operational talkgroup as warranted and outlined above.

➤ **Task Force and Multiple Alarms**

These call types will be preceded by two (Task Force Alarm) or three (Multiple Alarm) alert tones and announced on Talkgroup 1. Units dispatched for these call types will be assigned to and shall respond on the assigned talkgroup and report to the incident staging area unless otherwise directed by PSC or the incident commander. Approximately 45 seconds after the initial dispatch, the call will be announced a second time on Talkgroup 1.

➤ **Mutual Aid**

Mutual Aid calls for service will be dispatched in accordance with General Order 3-11. PSC will assign the talkgroup to utilize. Mutual Aid responses to other COG jurisdictions and jurisdictions utilizing 700/800 MHz radios may require changing the Zone, as well as the Talkgroup.

Personnel should pay close attention to the Zone and Talkgroup assigned by PSC.

3. Status Messaging

The intent of the Status Messaging is to reduce radio traffic between all emergency

responders and Public Safety Communications. In addition, Status Messaging can assist with improved response time for Fire/EMS units. In an effort to meet these goals, units **shall** utilize the Status Messaging system procedures as follows:

❖ **EMS Radios**

- Select “Sts” on radio
- Select appropriate status (w/## indicates the number of people that may operate on an incident, i.e. Red Helmets are not counted)
 - RESPONDING
 - STAGING
 - ON SCENE
 - AT PATIENT
 - TRANS PGH
 - TRANS SMH
 - TRANS DRS
 - TRANS WAV
 - TRANS LRH
 - TRANS FTW
 - TRANS BHC
 - TRANS AAMC
 - TRANS OTHER
 - TRNSPRT CMPLT
 - AVAIL/ON AIR
 - IN QUARTERS

Voice transmission should only be used in lieu of Status Messaging in the following instances:

- EMS Transport Units shall voice the appropriate disposition code when clearing a call in accordance with General Order 05-01 (Emergency Medical Service Operations)
- When a voice transmission is the only method to effectively communicate the message (i.e. size up)
- When transporting to a hospital other than those provided on the STS menu
- When Status Messaging is not



operating properly

❖ Fire Unit Radios

- Select “Sts” on radio
- Select appropriate status (w/## indicates the number of people that may operate on an incident, i.e. Red Helmets are not counted)
 - RESP WITH 1
 - RESP WITH 2
 - RESP WITH 3
 - RESP WITH 4
 - RESP WITH 5
 - RESP WITH 6
 - RESP WITH 7
 - RESP WITH 8
 - RESP WITH 9
 - STAGING
 - ON SCENE
 - AT PATIENT
 - TRANSPORTING
 - TRNSPRT CMPLT
 - AVAIL/ON AIR
 - IN QUARTERS

The last unit clearing a call shall be responsible for providing a disposition for the call. For example, an engine clearing a call for alarm bells would provide a brief disposition of the call (i.e. “Engine 885 is in service; Malfunctioning alarm”). For multi-unit responses, the unit in command must provide this disposition for the call and the remaining units may clear the call by using the Status Messaging feature (On Air/Available button).

Voice transmission should only be used in lieu of Status Messaging in the following instances:

- When a voice transmission is the only method to effectively communicate the message (i.e. size up)
- When Status Messaging is not

operating properly

3. Radio Malfunction/Failure

Broken/Malfunctioning Mobile and Portable Radios

If the Mobile/Portable Radio experiences a malfunction, where it will not operate as designed, or is physically broken, personnel shall:

- Contact the Mobile Technology Center at 301-306-5660 during normal business hours.
- After normal business hours
 - Mobile Radio
 - Due to the enhanced coverage offered by our 700 MHz radio system infrastructure, and the number of portable radios on emergency medical services (EMS) and suppression apparatus, it is acceptable for units to operate for a period with portable radios
 - Mobile Radio repairs will be made during normal business hours.
 - Portable Radio
 - The Duty Chief shall be contacted, via the chain of command.
 - A replacement portable will be issued
 - The defective portable will be secured by the Duty Chief
 - Prior to utilizing the radio, the PSC Supervisor shall be contacted, so the identifier can be changed in the CAD



- The caller should be prepared to provide the replacement radio's identification number, and the appropriate apparatus assignment and riding position.

Unit officers are responsible for monitoring and transmitting on the appropriate assigned talkgroup.

Station officers are responsible for reporting problems with any station alerting equipment and/or device. The following actions should be taken:

Failsoft

Failsoft will occur at least twice a year, in order to ensure it is functioning properly. PSC will initiate Failsoft at a time they deem appropriate. A scheduled Failsoft will never occur while a major incident is in progress.

During a Failsoft, the following will occur:

- Mobile and portable radios will have a red screen
- All transmissions will revert back to primary talkgroups
 - Talkgroups 4,5,6,8,9,10 will revert back to the primary talkgroup within that group.
 - i.e. talkgroups 4 and 5 will transmit on talkgroup 3
- There is no need for personnel to alter any other radio procedures

- Station alerting system – notify PSC Supervisor
- Station printers – notify PSC Supervisor and Information Management
- Station radio – notify PSC Supervisor
- Lost or stolen radio- notify both your work place Supervisor and PSC Supervisor immediately

REFERENCES

N/A

FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

Users Manual for Portable Radios

Users Manual for Mobile Radios

4. Responsibilities

PSC will configure the computer aided dispatch (CAD) system to automatically alert the station(s) via the station alerting system, alphanumeric pagers, and CAD printer.

All personnel are responsible for their actions on the radio system. The system is monitored by PSC, who has the ability to see what zone and talkgroup any mobile or portable radio is operating within. Personnel may only operate within assigned zones and talkgroups.