



## Radio Communications Procedures

The below information is provided to all BCoFR staff and all local agencies regarding Bedford County Fire & Rescue (BCoFR) radio communications procedures.

The following procedures are effective August 1, 2017. These procedures shall apply to and be followed by all persons using our Regional Radio System.

1. Dispatch will assign every call to an Ops channel at the time of dispatch. All units will make all radio transmissions related to each call on the assigned Ops channel – not on the dispatch channel (Channel 1), starting with units marking enroute. This will let incident commanders and others know which apparatus is responding.
  - a. Multiple calls may be assigned to the same Ops channel depending on system needs.
  - b. If a responding unit needs directions or similar information they shall switch to the dispatch channel and ask for that information so as to not tie up the Ops channel.
2. The following protocol has been adopted by BCoFR and shall be used by all radio users:
  - a. At the beginning of every transmission sequence, state who you are calling and then who you are.
  - b. When calling BEDFORD or another unit/person, after saying the above, wait for acknowledgement before giving your message.
    - i. In an emergency just start talking and say what needs to be said.
3. All radio emergency buttons are active. Please refer to BCoFR SOG F/R-27 “Dispatch Procedures for BCoFR Emergency Signal Activation” for specific information regarding the use of these emergency buttons.
4. The only approved terminology when referring to dispatch is BEDFORD. Not Bedford County, not Dispatch or anything else, just BEDFORD.
5. The dispatch channel is now called Channel 1, and is to be referred to only as such.
6. All units (fire and EMS) responding to calls shall, when marking enroute to every call, state their level of fully trained staffing.
  - a. If this information is not provided, the dispatcher will ask for it.
  - b. In instances where there is a recruit/trainee on board, that will be included separately, for example: “Engine 11 responding with three plus one recruit” or “Medic 1-1 responding with two, BLS, plus a driver.”
  - c. Refer to BCoFR SOG F/R 21 “Minimum Staffing and Response Guidelines” for additional related information.

7. All units (fire and EMS) responding to an EMS call (and EMS units assigned to a fire call) shall, when marking enroute, shall state the highest certification level of members aboard. For example, "Medic 1-1 responding with three, enhanced level."
  - a. If this information is not provided, the dispatcher will ask for it.
8. All call-related communications shall be made on the appropriate Ops or dispatch channel. It is not appropriate to have side-bar conversations on a private channel.
  - a. Incident-related tactical matters may be conducted on one of the four TAC channels.
9. When marking a call as covered by your agency, the only thing that shall be said is "covered" or "call covered." Nothing else is necessary. This is done on Channel 1.
10. Unless your agency has been dispatched to multiple calls at the same time, it is not necessary to repeat the call location when marking enroute. Just give the above information.
  - a. If there are multiple calls then advise the dispatcher which call you are responding to.
11. When arriving on scene, it is only necessary to say your unit number and "on-scene." It is not necessary to repeat the location.
12. Except on EMS calls, a scene size-up report shall be given by the first arriving unit. See the attached information regarding the content of this report.
  - a. Vehicle placards with this information are available from the BCoFR office.
13. Per Virginia EMS regulations, only EMS-licensed fire department vehicles shall respond to EMS calls requiring the delivery of EMS services, and they must be staffed with at least one EMS-certified member.
  - a. This does not apply when lifting assistance only is requested by an EMS unit.
14. Except on calls and as noted below, the E-911 Center does not track individual units/vehicles; there shall be no radio transmissions placing units in or out of service for repair, maintenance, training or similar non-call activities.
  - a. It is important, however, that the E-911 Center be notified when certain specialty units are out of service. The E-911 Center shall be contacted by radio when a heavy rescue, ladder/tower, or air truck/unit goes out of service for repair or maintenance and when it is returned to service.
    - i. This section does not apply to units going out of service for call-related purposes, i.e. a medic unit that needs to restock or fire apparatus that needs water or clean-up after a call. Those transmissions are appropriate.
15. Call text messaging is no longer supported. Local agency members may receive call alerts using Active911.
  - a. Local agencies that use Active911 shall contact the E-911 manager to add their agency to call notifications. The local agency is responsible for maintaining their database of authorized members.

16. All radio numbers assigned to local agency members shall be assigned by the local agencies, using the following parameters:
  - a. Radio numbers shall only be assigned to those active members who run calls.
  - b. BCoFR does not support the retiring of specific radio numbers. If a local agency chooses to retire a number it will be one less available to that agency.
  - c. For all agencies, the first number(s) will be your station number.
  - d. For fire agencies, the next numbers will be between 01 and 49.
  - e. For EMS agencies, the next numbers will be between 51 and 99.
  - f. The x00 and x50 numbers are reserved for base stations.
  - g. If any agency uses all of their available numbers there are two options:
    - i. If the agency has more than one station they can choose to divide up radio numbers between the stations by adding that number as the second digit. For example, 8101 or 8201, or
    - ii. If the agency only has one station, they will add a 1 as the digit after their station number and start with numbering as above and within the above ranges, i.e. 5101 or 13101.
  - h. The BCoFR radio field integration manager shall assign all BCoFR radio numbers in consultation with other staff as necessary.
  - i. BCoFR functional units may assign radio numbers to their personnel as designated for that unit.
  - j. There is NO correlation between radio numbers assigned persons or apparatus and the seven-digit Unit ID (formerly four-digit LID) numbers assigned to a particular radio.
17. To ensure system-wide consistency and the need to have a unique number for every radio, BCoFR shall assign all vehicle radio numbers. The lead for this will be the appropriate BCoFR deputy chief.
18. BCoFR will define and determine the descriptive word designations, ex. Engine, Rescue, etc. for all apparatus.
  - i. When local agencies order new apparatus, they shall confer with the appropriate BCoFR deputy chief for the determination of the word designation and unit/radio number to be assigned for that unit. New apparatus shall not be lettered or marked with any designation other than that assigned.
19. Dispatch procedure changes:
  - a. Weekly pager testing is discontinued.
  - b. Dispatchers will no longer announce on the third set of tones that it is the last call before turnover.
  - c. Dispatchers will no longer give a patient's age/sex during the initial dispatch of a call. It will be included in the patient information given when a unit marks enroute.
  - d. Dispatchers will no longer give detailed location or direction information when dispatching a call. This information only be given if the responding unit asks for directions or there are unusual circumstances.
  - e. Dispatchers will no longer give the rationale for why a particular unit is dispatched on a call, i.e. primary units on another call, failed to respond, etc.