

Section 7: Incident Communications

Introduction

Incident communications may be the single most important element of a response, yet it is a common problem area. Effective emergency communications among on-scene responders, Incident Management Team staff, communication points, and the public is vital to the protection of life and property as well as efficient and effective incident management.

The method used to accomplish efficient and effective multi-jurisdictional incident management is in the use of a common communications plan with agreed-upon frequencies designated to various incident functions.

This communications plan will tie together the tactical and support units of the various agencies and organizations and maintain communications discipline.

The EOC should include a designated communications center to serve as the central hub for all incident communications.

All incident communications should be limited to essential information.

Communications Plan

The communications unit of the Incident Management Team (IMT), which works as part of the Logistics Section in the ICS, is responsible for all communications planning at the incident. This will include incident established radio networks, on-site telephone, public address, and off-incident telephone/microwave/radio systems.

An incident communications plan should be developed early in the response, to ensure that effective communications will occur among task forces, strike teams, unit leaders, and the Incident Commander/EOC. The Communications Unit Leader will develop the "comms" plan using ICS Form 205.

The incident communications plan should identify how each functional unit will communicate internally, and how communications will be coordinated among IMT functions and between field locations and the EOC. It is important to identify common communication channels, especially when dealing with multiple agencies or response organizations. A phone directory should also be developed, identifying the telephone numbers or extensions of all IMT members in the EOC or the field.

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Radio Nets

The following diagrams show how small, medium, and large-sized radio nets may be organized.

Small Size Radio Net

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Medium Size Radio Net

Large Size Radio Net

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Basic Radio Communications Checklist

An Incident Radio Communications Plan (See Sample Communications Plan in this Section, or ICS Form 205) directs radio communications during a spill response. Clear and accurate radio communication is critical to a successful response. The following general radio communications checklist has been developed for all response personnel.

- Obtain, review and follow the communications plan.
- Determine your primary and alternate communications channels.
- If you are assigned a radio, check it out and function test all channels.
- Obtain an extra battery and/or charger.
- Establish a communications schedule with your supervisor or dispatch.
- Establish a procedure for failed communications with your supervisor or dispatch.
- Establish a procedure for emergencies with your supervisor or dispatch.
- Use only assigned channels.
- Monitor your radio.
- Keep all communications to essential information
- Use the following system for phonetic spelling:

A - ALPHA	U - UNIFORM
B - BRAVO	V - VICTOR
C - CHARLIE	W - WHISKEY
D - DELTA	X - X-RAY
E - ECHO	Y - YANKEE
F - FOXTROT	Z - ZULU
G - GOLF	
H - HOTEL	
I - INDIA	
J - JULIET	
K - KILO	
L - LIMA	
M - MIKE	
N - NOVEMBER	
O - OSCAR	
P - PAPA	
Q - QUEBEC	
R - ROMEO	
S - SIERRA	
T - TANGO	

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Seward Communications Resources and Capabilities

Citywide Radio Communications

Seward has an analog VHF radio system with a simplex and repeater system to support everyday and emergency operations of city departments. Departments are assigned and licensed different frequencies, as listed on the following pages.

Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR)

During a large incident or one where multiple jurisdictions are involved, the Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) system may be utilized to support incident communications. ALMR is a two-way radio system in use today by first responders and public safety officials in Alaska. In Seward, only those city departments with emergency response functions will be assigned ALMR radios, therefore this system could not be used as the sole communications medium for a citywide incident where other departments were involved.

ALMR divides the state into five regions, corresponding to Alaska State Trooper detachment zones. The City of Seward operates as part of the Kenai Peninsula Borough detachment E. Within this zone, ALMR radios will have designated frequencies and "talk routes." Channel or talk route 1 is a hailing frequency. Channel 16 is an all-listen frequency. Other frequencies will be assigned as needed. The local EOC would likely need to establish a command channel other than 16, since channel 16 would provide a borough-wide all-listen that would include other EOCs in other jurisdictions.

As ALMR is implemented more broadly within the borough and the state, some of the existing operational frequencies used for emergency management in Seward may be eliminated.

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City of Seward Radio Frequencies List

The DISASTER/EMERGENCY frequency monitored at the EOC is:

SPD2 - 155.295

This is the only common channel that links the city with Spring Creek Prison

Common Emergency Channels

CB: Marine VHF: SSB:

Local Agency / Department Assigned Frequencies

Description	Transmit Frequency	Receive Frequency
Police Dept.	155.250	155.250
Police Dept. #2	155.295	155.295
Fire Dept.	154.430	154.430
Fire Dept. #2	153.920	153.920
AST Simplex	155.250	155.250
AST Repeater	161.130	155.790
EMS State/Seward AMB	155.160	155.160
EMS-A/Repeater	158.940	155.025
EMS-B/Repeater	156.015	155.115
KPB-OEM/Simplex	154.085	154.085
KPB-OEM/Repeater	155.085	155.085
Command/State	155.295	155.295
Electric	153.485	153.485
Fire/Bear Creek	154.250	154.250
Fire/Bear Creek/Repeater	159.450	154.250
Parking Enforcement - City of Seward	158.265	158.265
Parks & Recreation	153.740	153.740
Public Works	154.980	154.980
Public Works Repeater	158.760	154.980

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Additional Local and Regional Frequencies

Description	Transmit Frequency	Receive Frequency	TX Code
Afognak	151.925	151.925	
ADOTPF Main Frequency	47.04	47.04	
Alaska Railroad Channel 1 (Train to train/dispatcher alternate)	164.6250	164.6250	
Alaska Railroad Channel 2 (Train to dispatcher)	164.6250	165.3375	
Alaska Railroad Channel 3 (yard)	165.2625	165.2625	
Alaska Railroad Channel 4 (yard – gravel or coal)	164.9875	164.9875	
Alaska Railroad Channels 5 & 6 (yard)	161.4150	161.4150	
Alaska Railroad Channels 7 & 8 (reserved)	n/a	n/a	
Alaska Railroad Channel 9 (radio telephone)	171.3125	171.3625	
Alaska Railroad Channel 10 (radio telephone)	166.2250	171.3375	
Alaska Railroad Channel 11 (radio telephone)	166.3750	171.7250	
Alaska Railroad Channel 12 (maintenance of way)	161.4750	161.4750	
Alaska Railroad Channel 13 (maintenance of way)	161.5050	161.5050	
Alaska Railroad Channel 14 (maintenance of way)	161.5350	161.5350	
Alaska Railroad Channel 15 (maintenance of way)	161.5650	161.5650	
AST Cooper Landing	159.090	155.520	114.8 (2A)
AST Kenai	161.010	155.730	127.3 (3A)
AST Moose Pass	161.130	155.790	127.3 (3A)
AST Portage	161.010	155.415	127.3 (3A)
AST Silvertip	161.010	155.730	114.8
CES	154.325	154.325	
CES Repeater	159.195	154.385	
Exit Glacier Repeater	168.500	166.300	100.00 (12)
Forestry	169.175	169.175	
Kenai Fjords National Park (KFNP)	166.750	166.750	

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Description	Transmit Frequency	Receive Frequency	TX Code
Simplex			
KFNP Exit Glacier/Seal Rocks	166.750	168.575	131.8
KFNP Rugged Island	166.300	168.500	100.00
KFNP McArthur Pass	166.300	168.500	123.00
KFNP Old Exit Glacier Road Maintenance Yard Rptr	164.750	166.900	100.00
Kenai Fjords Tours	150.815	150.815	
Kenai Fjords Tours	151.685	151.685	
Kenai Peninsula Civil Defense	154.085	154.085	
Lifeguard	155.325	155.325	
Marathon Fuel	151.715		
METCO	154.515	154.515	
Moose Pass Fire Company	158.955	153.945	
Seward Marine Center SSB	4146.0	4146.0	
Seward Marine Center SSB	8294.0	8294.0	
Seward Marine Center SSB	6224.0	6224.0	
SVAC (State Medical)	155.160	155.160	
U.S. Forest Service Simplex	169.175	169.175	
U.S. Forest Service Repeater	169.975	169.175	110.9
U.S. Forest Service Repeater	169.975	169.175	123.0
U.S. Forest Service Repeater	169.975	169.175	131.8
U.S. Forest Service Repeater	169.125	169.125	136.5

Marine VHF Frequencies

Frequency	User
156.500	Marine 10
156.800	Marine 16 Seward Harbor working Channel
157.050	Marine 21
157.100	Marine 22
157.400	Marine 28
162.550	Marine Weather
157.050	Marine Weather
Alaska Railroad Channels 7 & 10 & 16	Available marine frequencies

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Public Information

During a regional emergency that involves the activation of the Incident Management Team, a Public Information Officer (PIO) should be appointed to coordinate the dissemination of information about the incident. The Public Information Officer is responsible for the formulation and release of information about the incident to the public, the news media and other appropriate agencies and organizations.

Public Information Flow

During an emergency, it is important to quickly disseminate information in order to orchestrate an effective, community-wide response.

The timely and effective distribution of public information can enhance respect and understanding of local government, galvanize public support, and aid in response to emergencies.

The following flow of incident information should be observed whenever possible.

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Media Guidelines

Consider the following guidelines before releasing information to the media.

- Provide accurate and consistent information. Release only those facts which can be confirmed. If little information is available, indicate this fact and schedule future briefings as information comes in.
- Release only approved, specific and verified information, such as:
 - Nature and extent of emergency occurrence
 - Impacted or potentially affected areas of the community
 - Advice on emergency safety procedures (as applies)
 - Mitigation activities being conducted by responders
 - Procedures for reporting emergency conditions to the EOC
- Control rumors. Correct any inaccurate information published by the media.
- Do not release information that might hinder emergency response, prejudice the outcome of an investigation, or pose a further threat to public safety.
- Do not allow media access to the EOC except under limited, controlled circumstances, and only with the prior approval of the Incident Commander.
- Keep logs and, if possible, tape recordings of public information briefings, releases, interviews, and warnings.

Media Briefing Facilities

In the event of a major, protracted incident, it may be more convenient for the EOC and more efficient for the media for briefings to take place at a conference room or banquet facilities in a local hotel, where public information activities will not interfere with the conduct of the incident.

If possible, the public information staff may assist the media in such logistical support as finding hotel rooms, providing coffee and refreshments for early morning briefings, arranging for additional phones, etc.

The following have been identified as potential media briefing facilities during a local emergency:

Facility	Location	Comments
Exterior of City Hall	410 Adams St.	In the past, public information briefings have been held outside of city hall to eliminate the need for the PIO to travel away from the EOC.
State Court area within City Hall	410 Adams St.	Security would be needed to keep media out of actual EOC.
Liberty Theatre	305 Adams St.	Coordinate with theatre staff - (907) 224-5418
Seward Community Library	238 5 th Ave.	

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Facility	Location	Comments
Seward high school	2100 Swetmann	Might be an option if media can't get into city. Coordinate with KPBSD.

A list of local media contacts can be found in SECTION 13 of this plan. It includes radio and major television stations, and newspapers. It does not include all area media representatives.

Media Access to the Scene

In cooperation with on-scene personnel, media representatives may be allowed restricted access to the scene, depending on the nature and location of the incident. This should be done only after considering the safety of media personnel, the impact on response, and the wishes and concerns of the victims. Media representatives who are allowed access to the scene must be accompanied by a member of the Public Information staff. All media representatives should sign a release of liability before they visit the scene.

If it is not safe or practical to admit all media representatives to the scene, a media "pool" may be created, where media representatives select one camera crew to take footage for all. If even such controlled access is impractical, a "staged" photo opportunity to tape response vehicles or support activities may satisfy the media's need for video footage.

Protect response personnel from unwanted media intrusion. Off-shift personnel should be provided uninterrupted rest in an area free from media access. It may be necessary to provide security to fire stations or other "home bases" for responders and allow them to disconnect telephones to ensure privacy.

Victims and families should have access to public officials without having to face the media. Try to provide a secure entrance to briefing areas, or arrange a meeting/interview room away from the press.

The media may be allowed access to response personnel at the discretion of the Public Information Officer, the Operations Section Chief, and the Incident Commander, only if such an interview does not interfere with the response effort. City, borough and agency personnel should not comment on the incident without the knowledge and consent of the personnel listed above.

Rumor Control and Public Assistance

The Public Information Officer may establish a separate "Branch" to deal with providing emergency information to the public through the EAS (emergency alert system) and public information/rumor control lines. Public information numbers may be published via the media. Release will result in fewer non-emergency calls to 911 and the EOC General Staff, will aid in information gathering, and will offer the public a means of getting valid information about the incident, rather than potentially harmful rumors.

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Requests for non-emergency assistance received by the public information staff should be routed to the appropriate EOC staff.

Intra-Agency Communications

Agency staff (city and borough) not directly involved in the emergency response, especially switchboard operators, must receive updated and accurate information about the incident. This information should include the phone numbers for public information/rumor control lines, in case the public attempts to contact city or borough agencies/departments directly seeking information on the incident.

Joint Information Centers

In a very large incident involving all levels of government, the Public Information Officer may become a member of, or feed information to, a Joint Information Center (JIC). A JIC is a central clearinghouse established by State and Federal agencies, and is designed to allow Public Information Officers from involved response and recovery agencies to coordinate information released to the media and the public.

Incident Websites

During incidents where electrical power is uninterrupted, an Incident website may be developed as a tool to disseminate information to the media and the public. Incident websites may include the following types of information:

- Situation reports issued by the City, the Unified Command, or other agencies with jurisdiction
- Public information messages about evacuation, shelters, disaster assistance, public health advisories, etc.
- Photographs of the incident scene
- Information for families of potential victims
- Public media/media briefing schedules
- Phone numbers or web links for additional information

Public Information Forms

The following forms or documents have been developed to assist in overall public information coordination. All of the following forms will become part of the final incident package.

Incident Status Summary (ICS Form 209)

The Planning Section or the official requesting activation of this plan will complete this form. The information contained is a brief analysis of the type of incident, damage, injuries or deaths, and initial response.

Incident Action Plan

The Planning Section will complete this document for complex incidents. It contains more detailed information about the incident, responders, and plans for control. With the approval of the Incident Commander, portions of the Incident Action Plan may be used to brief, or be released to the media.

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Unit Log (ICS Form 214)

The unit log is used to document action taken, instructions to unit staff, and occurrences significant to the unit. *All units activated in the EOC will maintain unit logs.*

Warning Message Log

The Warning Message Log is used to document time, method and nature of warnings to the public, and is maintained by the public information staff.

ICS and other Forms are located in Appendix A.