SCOPE

This guideline applies to all South Metro Fire Department personnel responsible for emergency response.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this guideline is to outline basic communication concepts, terminology and procedures used by the South Metro Fire Department and the Dakota Communications Center (DCC).

PROCEDURE

I.   General Guidelines

   A.   Short & Specific

   Before transmitting know what you are going to say. Choose precise terms to communicate the desired message as clearly and briefly as possible without wasting airtime.

   B.   Task Oriented/Company Oriented

   Command's orders to operating companies should indicate a specific task assigned to the company. They should be of a magnitude reasonably performed by a single company alone or in concert with other companies.

   C.   Indicate Objective

   In addition to being task and company oriented, assignments should indicate an objective to the action. The company should know exactly where to go, to whom to report, what is the task and what is the objective of the task. Orders should tell what to do - not how to do it (unless Command wants something specific).

   D.   Clear Tone/Self-Control/Effective Rate

   Speak clearly at a practiced rate . . . not too fast . . . not too slow. Control your emotions and excitement deliberately. If you do not consciously control your voice, it will become garbled under stress.

   E.   Well Timed/Spaced
   • Prioritize your messages. Do not use up valuable air time with unimportant messages and insignificant details. Let critical messages go first. Maintain an awareness of the overall situation and your role in it.
   • Do not interrupt conversations unless you have Emergency Traffic. Listen before transmitting and wait until a message transaction has been completed.
   • Pause between consecutive messages. This will make it clear when one message has been completed and another started. It will give other units a chance to get on the air with important messages.

II. Unit Designation

A. For radio communications, the following designations will be recognized as standard:

Dispatch	Empire	
Crew of any unit	Unit ID	Engine 1
Engineer of any apparatus	Unit ID Driver	Engine 1 Driver
Firefighter on any unit	Unit ID, Rank & Name	Engine 1 Firefighter Smith

B. It should be noted that all transmissions with units other than within South Metro, including Empire, or when at a scene where mutual aid units are present, "South Metro" MUST be included as part of the unit ID.

III. Radio Code

A. "Plain language" radio messages should be used in preference to numerical codes to facilitate understanding. There is no official South Fire Department radio code.

B. The following terminology shall be used to report unit status to Empire:

1. Station Copy   Acknowledgement that a page was received
2. Enroute   Unit is responding to a call
3. Arriving   Unit is on scene (state which street the unit is arriving on)
4. Clear   Unit is clear and available for calls, unless otherwise indicated.
5. Fire Controlled   Bulk of fire is out / little risk of further spread
6. Fire Out   Fire has been extinguished

C. The following codes are recognized exceptions to "plain language" and may be used in sensitive situations, when a plain language message could cause a problem at the scene or due to a particular code being accepted as "plain language":

1. 10-4   Acknowledges a transmission
2. 10-50   Property Damage Accident
3. 10-52   Injury Accident
4. 10-72   Deceased/DOA
5. 10-99   Bomb Threat
6. Code 4   Situation Controlled (PAR checks no longer needed)

IV. Order Model

Radio communications will be regulated by the following order model guidelines – "Hey you, It's me".

1. Sender call the receiver by their unit ID and then give their own unit ID.
   a) "Command from South Metro Engine 2"
2. Receiver will give their ID to indicate they are ready to receive.
   a) "Command"
3. Sender will then give their message, order, etc.
   a) "Engine 2 has extinguished the fire on first floor"
4. Receiver will give ID and acknowledge receipt of message. A brief restatement is the best acknowledgment.

          a)   "Command Received – fire extinguished"

    5.   Dispatch will acknowledge all communications directed to it by a brief restatement of the message, with particular attention given to repeating on the scene, size-up and progress reports, recall reports, requests for additional resource and all Incident Status changes and milestones.

V. "MAY DAY"

"May Day" is a term to be used only in the event of a lost or trapped firefighter. (See "May Day" Communications for further details.) A well-defined communications structure is essential in any rescue operation. Empire will play a crucial role in ensuring the effective rescue of firefighters.

VI. "Emergency Traffic"

Used to identify priority traffic on the radio. Everyone else should be quiet until Emergency is cleared.

VII. Initial Radio Report

    A.   The importance of the initial radio report of the first arriving unit to an emergency cannot be overstated. Information passed onto the other responding units and dispatch sets the tone, (both positive and negative) for the initial stages of the incident. A standardized set of information must be passed along and to effectively do this. Develop these skills by getting yourself into a regular routine through practice on routine emergencies and training.

    B.   The first unit arriving at the scene of any non-medical incident will give a brief initial radio report that describes the situation.

    C.   Your Initial Radio Reports should include the following:
        1.   Identify Unit
        2.   Describe Incident
        3.   Explain Actions
        4.   List Instructions for Other Units
        5.   Assume Command and Declare Strategy (offensive/defensive)

        Example: House fire at 240 9th Ave S

        "South Metro Engine 2 arriving on a two story single family dwelling with smoke and fire showing from the second floor windows on Side A. Engine 2 will be stretching an attack line. Engine 1 when you arrive - establish a water supply for Engine 2. Engine 2 will be 9th Avenue Command. This is an offensive fire."

VIII.Command

    A.   Once Command has been established, all communication between Empire and an incident will be directed through Command.

IX. PAR Check Communications

Communications for PAR Checks shall happen in the following manner
1. IC will radio to the fire ground "Units standby for PAR"
2. Crews will be given a minute to check their crews
3. PAR will then be asked of each unit, attempting to follow a numerical order of unit numbers
4. Crew supervisors will respond with the following information:
   - Unit has PAR
   - Confirm the number of personnel in their crew (or list the units that are assigned if reporting for a division or group)
   - Provide the IC with a CAN Report

Example:
   "South Metro Engine 2 has a PAR with a crew of 3. Engine 2 is on the second floor in light smoke conducting a secondary search."

X. CAN Reports

Progress reporting on the fireground during all phases of operations relays vital information between Incident Commanders and companies operating at the incident. Incident action plans are driven by the completion of tactical objectives. Conversely, if an objective cannot be completed, the IC needs to be advised so the safety of crews operating can be evaluated and the tactical and strategic plan modified.

A. South Metro fire crews will broadcast these progress reports in the form of a CAN report. The CAN report stands for Conditions, Actions, Needs and by using this order model, the person giving the report easily identifies how well they are doing, the conditions they are facing and any support or resource needs that they have.

B. Initial arriving companies shall also broadcast CAN reports, even when they are also functioning as Command. These initial CAN reports should be broadcast over the Fire Main talkgroup so that other responding companies and Empire can be kept aware of progress until a more formal command structure is established.

C. Crews should provide a CAN report ANYTIME they complete a task, especially those that are considered tactical benchmarks of typical fire operations.

D. Examples of when a crew should broadcast a CAN report:
   1. When responding to a PAR Check
   2. When Ventilation has been established
   3. When entering a structure
   4. A search is complete
   5. A victim has been located
   6. When a victim has been extricated
   7. When utilities have been controlled
   8. Upon reaching the seat of a fire
   9. When a fire is extinguished
   10. When a fire can't be extinguished

11. Any significant event that Command and/or other fireground companies should be aware of

Example: Engine company reaches a fire floor

"Command from South Metro Engine 2 we have reached the second floor. There is heavy fire at the end of the hall. We are putting water on the fire. We need a backup line at the top of the stairs."

XI. Progress Reports to Empire

During active firefighting operations, Command will provide Empire with regular progress reports or whenever significant tactical plans are changed or unusual situations are encountered. The first progress report should be given after initial action has been implemented and should include the correct address and an improved description of the building and fire conditions if the arrival report was incomplete. The first report should include the declaration of a working fire. This assists Empire in making staffing decisions to ensure they are dedicating appropriate resources to the incident. The dispatcher should repeat significant facts from all progress reports for the information of monitoring units and document in the incident history.

XII. Radio Talkgroups

A. The following are the primary radio channels that are used by South Metro Fire during typical fire and EMS operations:

    1. DK FMAINE – Fire Main East

        a) Page Fire Departments

        b) Patched to VHF Paging

        c) Fire Unit Communication w/ Empire

        d) NO Unit to Unit Communication

    2. DK SM OPS 2 – South Metro Operations 2

        a) Primary operations talkgroup for unit to unit communications

        b) Patched to a Fireground talkgroup when working with mutual aid companies

        c) Recorded at the Dakota Communications Center (DCC)

    3. DK SM OPS 3 – South Metro Operations 3

        a) Secondary operations talkgroup for unit to unit communications

        b) Cannot be patched, monitored or recorded by the DCC

    4. DK FIREGROUND 4 – 8

        a) Primary talkgroups for mutual aid communications

        b) Patched to OPS 2 talkgroups

        c) Are assigned or requested

XIII. Talkgroup Use Protocol

A. Alarm dispatched on Fire Main

B. Units go enroute on Fire Main

C. Units arrive and size-up on Fire Main and switch to SM OPS 2 for fireground communication

D. Communication with dispatch is done on the Fire Main

E. If Mutual-Aid is needed, the IC moves to Fire Main to report status and request Mutual Aid resources.

F. Dispatch assigns County Fireground and patches to Ops 2

G. Mutual Aid units are assigned to appropriate County Fireground when going enroute

H. Additional County Firegrounds can be requested (Depending on resources, these may not be monitored.)

XIV. Helicopters

A. Helicopter communications will take place on P-Tac talkgroups.