



MESSAGE HANDLING USING THE ICS FORM 213

**New York City Amateur Radio
Emergency Communications Service
Basic Operator Course – Unit 3
Copyright 2006 NYC-ARECS**

OBJECTIVES

- WHY EmComm Units use ICS Form 213
- WHAT is an ICS message?
(How it *differs from an NTS radiogram*)
- CONCERNS for operational traffic
- HOW to send a message by VOICE
- HOW to send messages by PACKET

Practice Using the ICS Form and Procedures

- Emergency Stations and Team Leaders must be proficient to set the example.
- All EmComm members learn to use ICS form.
- Practice on nets and in exercises.
- Because you cannot wait until a served agency official hands you a message during a real emergency to learn how!

Operations Net – “OPNET” Functions

Carrying traffic requested by served agencies only.

- Tactical communications: real-time info for immediate command and control purposes.
- Record communications: formal written messages sent by voice, data or CW, which is part of the official incident record.

Logistics Net – “LOGNET”

- LOGNET is a Directed Net
- Purpose is to reduce congestion on OPNET
- Inform general EmComm members of:
 - Situation & safety briefs , periodic updates
 - Assess equipment and personnel available
 - Schedule duty assignments
 - Relay non-sensitive traffic to net liaisons
- Uses a local coverage repeater: 147.360 + (107.2)
- (Sometimes called a “resource net” by NGOs)

Why We Do *NOT* Use The NTS Radiogram

- NTS Radiogram form is **NOT USED** by any state or federal agency
- NYS SEMO and NYC OEM use ICS procedures and formats
- Originate all outgoing messages on ICS 213
- Some incoming messages (Salvation Army & Red Cross) use NTS
- Do **NOT** reformat incoming messages; handle all incoming traffic as received

Why We Use the ICS 213?

- Operational messages are routed directly, by the MOST EXPEDIENT method.
- Served agency messages are sent directly between OEM and deployed resources.
- ICS Form 213 is widely used by FEMA, SHARES, DHS, CAP, Coast Guard.
- Its use is straight-forward, a common sense sending protocol, similar to an email message.

Why Members Learn and Practice Message Handling

- **Accurate, Brief, Clear** messages in plain language, provide efficient emergency communications
- **NYC-ARECS/RACES needs SSB & packet capability:**
 - Contacts with NYS SEMO and mutual aid areas
 - Traffic going beyond the NYC region
 - SSB ops are independent of repeaters
 - NYC-ARECS/RACES Digital Emergency Network operates 24 / 7 and interfaces with the Internet

Signal Reporting In Plain Language

- Loud & Clear (log as **LC**)
- Good Readable (log as **GR**)
- Fair Readable (log as **FR**)
- Weak Readable (log as **WR**)
- Weak Unreadable (log as **WU**)

When is a Formal Written Message **NOT** Used?

Formal messages *are not needed* for most “Real-Time” Tactical Communications:

- Direct conversations between third parties
- Life-safety matters *when timing is critical*
- Most routine task assignments
- Most routine task completions
- Most routine resource coordination
- *Record routine exchanges as line-items in your ICS Form 309 Comm Log*

Formal Written Messages For “Record” Communications

*Because incident reports are public documents,
USE A FORMAL MESSAGE FOR:*

- Station activation & closure
- Damage assessments
- Shelter and EOC status
- Situation updates
- Declarations
- Resource Requests
- ICS facility relocations

Operational Traffic

- “Record” communications -- SITREPS (situation reports), resource requests, etc. must be signed by the agency originator, to identify responsibility & authenticity
- Agency controller establishes priority. If used, precedence follows the Message Number before the Group Count, on “admin line” 4
- ICS Precedence: **URGENT, IMMEDIATE, R (ROUTINE)**

What Is An ICS Message?

- Record Communications *on behalf of served agency officials must be written in ICS Form 213 format or on the originating agency's approved form*
- **But don't fixate on the FORM!**
- **Be prepared to copy long messages.**
- ***Learn to copy messages without relying on a FORM!***

ICS 213 Message Form

- 1 - "To" line
- 2 - "From" line
- 3 - "Subject / Date / Time" line
- 4 - "Admin" line *We use the Form 213 that includes Message Number, Priority, and Group Count.*
- 5 - "Message" field (ten 5-word lines)
- 6 - "Signature" line
- 7 - "Reply" field (ten 5-word lines)
- 8 - "Reply Date/Time/Signature" line

1 - "To" line

Name, Agency & Title of Recipient

NYC-ARECS/RACES Modified ICS FORM 213 GENERAL MESSAGE

TO:

POSITION:

2 - "From" line

Name, Agency & Title of Originator

NYC-ARECS/RACES Modified ICS FORM 213 GENERAL MESSAGE

TO:

POSITION:

FROM:

POSITION:

3 - “Subject / Date/ Time” line

Incident Name, Date, Local Time

NYC-ARECS/RACES Modified ICS FORM 213 GENERAL MESSAGE

TO:

POSITION:

FROM:

POSITION:

SUBJECT:

DATE:

TIME:

DATE format is **DAY MONTH**
TIME is **24-hour LOCAL** time
(unless the served agency specifies **UTC**)

4 - Message Number & Group Count

Precede "Message" Text (ten lines, 50 words)

Plain language, no codes or jargon

MESSAGE NUMBER:

GROUP COUNT:

					5
					10
					15
					20
					25
					30
					35
					40
					45
					50

5 - “Signature” line

SIGNATURE:

POSITION:

**Name and title of the originating official
is essential for message authentication**

6 - “Reply” Block (ten lines, 50 words)

REPLY TO:

GROUP COUNT:

					5
					10
					15
					20
					25
					30
					35
					40
					45
					50

7 –“Reply Date/Time/Signature”

DATE:

TIME:

SIGNATURE/POSITION:

Transmitting The Message Headers

- *Precedence, if any, goes after the message number*
- *After sending the line say **“Break for text, OVER”***
- *If the receiving station requires a “fill” on anything sent up to this point they use **“SAY AGAIN”***
- *Otherwise they simply say **“GO...”***

Hints On Sending And Receiving The Text

- Pause briefly after each line of five words
- Say **“BREAK”** after text and before sending SIGNATURE in case a fill is needed
- To request a “fill” say:
“Say Again...”
 - word before (or all before) ...
 - word after (or all after) ...
 - word (or all) between... and...

The SIGNATURE

- Identifies the ORIGINATOR of the message
- In ROUTINE traffic the Originator is often the STATION OF ORIGIN
- Operational (served agency) traffic usually has a third-party signature, such as:

SIGNATURE:

Captain Bill Bennett

POSITION:

Incident Commander

FDNY – Battalion 22

When to use the Proword “I Spell”

- **DO NOT** automatically spell familiar words or acronyms like “EOC” or “RACES” unless operating conditions are poor enough that it is needed
- Necessary for proper names (there is no “common spelling” on emergency nets):
“Jones, I spell JULIET OSCAR NOVEMBER ECHO SIERRA”
- To clarify homonyms, words which sound alike, but have different meanings, such as :
“To, I spell TANGO OSCAR”

PUNCTUATION - 1

- Use “I Spell” when WORDS are used as PUNCTUATION
- **“PERIOD”** Ends a sentence. *NOT spelled out when sending unless conditions are weak readable and require “fills.”*
- **“DOT, I spell Delta Oscar Tango”** for a single period within a text group (email address). Don’t use to end a sentence, use PERIOD!

PUNCTUATION - 2

- “DECIMAL, I spell ...” used in figure groups only, (such as radio frequencies sent in a message text)
- “DASH, I spell DELTA ALPHA SIERRA HOTEL” for a hyphen
- “ATSIGN, I spell ALPHA TANGO SIERRA INDIA GOLF NOVEMBER” for symbol “@”

Message Text Quality Control

- Formal “Record” messages always should be CLEAR and SUCCINCT.
- Written so that their meaning cannot be misinterpreted or read in more than one way.
- Write out the message in full, using plain text only.
- If a telephone number is given in the message TEXT, it is sent as three groups: Area Code, Exchange and 4-digit number.

What About National Traffic System ARL Numbered Radiograms ?

- **ICS & RACES don't use ARL numbered radiograms!**
 - But you should still know what they are... in case you **RECEIVE** one.
 - They may be used in response to Red Cross DWI (Disaster Welfare Inquiry).
 - IF sent an ARL numbered radiogram the “number” is **SPELLED OUT!**
- ***NO Health & Welfare traffic on OPNETS – take to LOGNET.***
 - *W is an ARES task with Red Cross.*

Example Of ARL Radiogram

4566 W K3SRF ARL 6
ARLINGTON VA FEB 22

PHYLLIS MATTHEWS
1508 FIFTEENTH STREET
LYNCHBURG VA 24501
434-555-1212

ARL THREE VIRGINIA HOSPITAL CENTER
ARLINGTON
CHRISTA THOMAS

To Deliver, Add ARL Numbered Radiogram Text

(ARL THREE)

AM IN *[VIRGINIA HOSPITAL CENTER ARLINGTON]*
HOSPITAL. RECEIVING EXCELLENT CARE AND
RECOVERING FINE.

CHRISTA THOMAS

NTS / ICS Training Notes

- In ARRL-NTS practice, its considered unnecessary to say the line headers
- NTS operators use “Initial X-Ray” to indicate the end of sentence
- But in ICS we use the headers because the receiving station may be unfamiliar with the ICS message form
- RACES / ICS stations use “PERIOD” to end a sentence for simplicity and clarity with our served agencies

Operator Notes

- Don't give "op notes" while sending text
- Op notes, if needed, are given **AFTER** the signature and **BEFORE** saying "Break" *upon completion of the message...*
- Give Op notes at the same time you provide any "fills" requested by the receiving station of missed groups. If no fills are needed, give the Op Note before telling the receiving station how many listed messages remain to be sent

Using the Proword “CONFIRM”

CONFIRM?

(recipient uses voice inflection in form of a QUERY)

“CONFIRM Echo Sierra Papa?”

THE SENDING STATION’S RESPONSE:

“WRONG, I Say Again Word After FIGURES ONE SEVEN ZERO NOVEMBER PERIOD, Initials VICTOR, SIERRA, PAPA, OVER ”

CONFIRM (recipient’s statement that it is now correct):

“CONFIRM, GO”

Authentication

- Originating station must work from a form bearing an **ORIGINAL** signature of the releasing authority to verify responsibility for message contents and enabling authentication
- Messages to EmComm staff at an EOC may be signed by an EmComm operator, such as to report “on station” or to “request to terminate”

To Acknowledge Receiving Traffic

- If you do not require any fills acknowledge receipt to the relaying station, simply say:

“<your call> ROGER Number <Message Number> ,
OVER”

For example:

“Lee Center, Roger Number 6711, over.”

When You Are Done With This Message

- If the traffic just sent is the only message or last message you have to send, then say:
“END, no more, Over”
- If you have one or more messages to send, you say:
“Break, More to Follow, Over”

Delivering The Message

- Read the **TEXT** and **SIGNATURE** of the message to the recipient
- If leaving the traffic on an answering machine or with a third party (not the final recipient) give your callback telephone or other method of contacting you

Privacy And Professionalism

- EmComm personnel must **NOT** discuss disaster information when media is nearby
- Names are not used in messages except to identify the agency contacts
- Refer media requests to the agency's Public Information Officer

Packet Ops Considerations

- **Use “ST”** command (send traffic) as opposed to “SP” which means to send private
“ST FXEOC@WC4VAC”
- **Subject line** should identify drill or incident:
“SITREP HAZMAT INCIDENT I-95 EXIT 170N”
- Packet messages are still in ICS format
- With itemized forms send **ITEM NUMBER** followed by **CHANGED** information, do not repeat any unchanged data previously sent

ICS Form 213 Packet Message

ST FXEOC@WC4VAC

[TO]: CPT ANTHONY BARRERO, EOC FIRE DUTY OFFICER

[FROM]: CPT. RONALD L. MASTIN, IC

[SUBJECT]: URGENT I95 HAZMAT 2JUN0530EST

[BT]

TRACTOR	TRAILER	CARRYING	40K	POUNDS
EXPLOSIVE	BRAVO	OVERTURNED	LEFT	SHOULDER
RAMP	I95	EXIT	170N	CHEMTREC
VSP	AND	CARRIER	NOTIFIED	X
EVACUATING	SHIRLEY	INDUSTRIAL	PARK	EAST
OF	I95	AND	RESIDENTS	IN
LYNNBROOK	EAST	OF	FLANDERS	AND
SPRINGFIELD	ESTATES	WEST	OF	FRONTIER
AND	NORTH	OF	PALOMINO	X
NEED	SHELTER	OPENED	LEE	HS

[BT]

[SIG] BY AUTHORITY MASTIN / KE4SKY

Packet Ops Considerations - 1

- Connect to any BBS, network auto-forwards
- Do not connect directly into the EOC
- Traffic sent to EOC should be addressed to a specific office or agency when possible

Packet Ops Considerations - 2

- Stations send a check-in message once operational and a termination message upon closing their station:
 - Tactical call sign, Operator call sign
 - Time activated (or closed)
 - ID of served agency being supported, name and title of communications official in charge
 - Route (home BBS) by which messages may be responded to
 - Available communications and relay capabilities:
 - HF, VHF, UHF, packet, Internet e-mail, fax, etc.

Operational Considerations Working with served agencies

**INCOMING
MESSAGE**

EOC / RACES MESSAGE FLOW

*Verify with
coordinating
agency*



RADIO OPERATOR

Transcribes onto
message form*
*Press hard you are
making 4 copies

LOGGER/ RECORDER

Time stamps /
enters in log,
keeps bottom
pink copy, pass
others to EOC
Message
Controller

**MESSAGE
CONTROLLER**
Assigns priority,
Assigns to agency

RECIPIENT

Reviews message,
keeps top copy (white
original) canary copy
sent to coordinating
agency. Draft reply,
coordinate as needed.
indicate method of
dispatch, sign reply.



RADIO OPERATOR

Transmits reply,
returns to logger.

LOGGER
Passes
message to
Operator and
**records time
transmitted**

**MESSAGE
CONTROLLER**
Close Received Log
Keep Goldenrod Copy
Initial reply, record time out
to RACES Logger

**OUTGOING
MESSAGE**

Copyright 2006 NYC-ARECS/RACES

