

TWO-WAY RADIO USE AND PROTOCOL GUIDELINES

These guidelines are designed to help maintain a reliable and efficient use of two-way radios by an organization. A successful communications system ensures the safety and efficiency of all teams, minimizes interference, and promotes professional and courteous communications.

1 RADIO ASSIGNMENT AND DISTRIBUTION

Radios will be assigned based on job responsibilities and operational needs and should be used by authorized personnel only. Ensure radios are returned at the end of each shift or task.

2 RADIO OPERATION GUIDELINES

- Power on the radio and check for proper functionality before use.
- Select the assigned channel and frequency for your team or department.
- Avoid unnecessary chatter; keep communications concise and relevant.
- Speak clearly and at a moderate pace.
- Use the radio's microphone approximately 1-2 inches from your mouth for optimal transmission. Keep the radio as vertical as possible.
- After pressing the push-to-talk (PTT) button, do not speak right away. Wait until you know the radio is transmitting or the beginning of your communications will be cut off. Release the PTT button when you are finished talking.
- Radios are not telephones, so they are not full duplex, therefore, only one person can speak at a time.
- Avoid interrupting ongoing conversations; wait for a suitable break before transmitting.
- Begin and end transmissions with standard sign-in and sign-off phrases.

3 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

A specific channel will be designated for emergency communications. In case of emergency, use clear and standardized language, avoid jargon or expletives. Emergency messages are prioritized over routine communications. Do not use emergency channels for non-emergency communications.

4 CHANNEL ETIQUETTE

- Avoid unnecessary background noise; mute your radio when not in use. Keep the volume at a moderate level to avoid draining the battery or distorting your speech.
- Wait for a brief pause before transmitting to ensure you do not interrupt ongoing conversations.
- Identify yourself and the recipient clearly before conveying your message.
- Refrain from using jargon or codes that may confuse others.
- Be brief. Be concise.
- Use your professional judgement when communicating and do not use language you would not use in a face-to-face business conversation. Federal law prohibits obscene, indecent, and profane language on two-way radios.

5 STANDARD SIGN-IN AND SIGN-OFF PHRASES

Sign-in Phrases: i. “This is [Your Name] checking in on Channel [Assigned Channel].” or “Good [Morning/Afternoon/Evening], this is [Your Department/Team Name].”

Sign-off Phrases: i. “Signing off from Channel [Assigned Channel]. [Your Name] out.” or “This concludes the transmission. [Your Department/Team Name] clear.”

6 TWO-WAY RADIO CODES

Some organizations still use standard codes like these so it's good to be familiar with them, but most organizations have moved away from these codes.

10-4: Acknowledgment, message received and understood.

10-9: Repeat your last message.

10-20: Location, asking for the current location.

10-33: Emergency, indicating an urgent situation.

10-42: Out of service, temporarily unavailable.

10-55: Intoxicated person.

10-76: En route, on the way to a location.

10-100: Restroom break.

7 COMMON RADIO TERMS

Affirmative, Roger or Check: Yes, I agree or understand.

Negative: No, I do not agree or understand.

Over: Use this instead of "Okay?"

Wilco: Will comply, indicating both understanding and intent to comply.

Copy: Confirming that a message has been received and understood.

Say Again: Requesting a repetition of the last message.

Do You Read? Use this to make sure someone is still there & ask for a reply.

ETA (Estimated Time of Arrival): Estimated time when someone is expected to arrive at a location.

Out: Conversation concluded; no response required.

8 INTERFERENCE AND TROUBLESHOOTING

Report any interference or technical issues immediately to the designated IT or maintenance personnel. Avoid using radios near sources of interference such as large electronic equipment or power lines.

9 BATTERY MANAGEMENT

Each organization has their own protocol for battery management, so these are general guidelines. Charge radios at the end of each shift or as needed to maintain sufficient battery levels. Carry spare batteries if the shift duration exceeds the standard battery life. Power off radios when not in use to conserve battery life.

10 MAINTENANCE AND REPORTING

Two-way radios are tough and reliable, but they are not designed to replace tools like hammers. Report any damaged or malfunctioning radios promptly. Regularly inspect your two-way radio for physical damage or signs of wear. Keep radios clean and free from dust or debris.

11 CONFIDENTIALITY

Exercise discretion when discussing sensitive information over the radio, even if you are using digital radios. Be aware of your surroundings and avoid conversations that could compromise security.

12 REVISIONS AND UPDATES

Radio protocols and procedures may be updated due to changes in technology or new operational requirements and personnel will be notified of these updates and changes.

13 NATO PHONETIC ALPHABET

For greatest clarity in communications, spell words out using the universally accepted NATO Phonetic Alphabet.

NATO PHONETIC ALPHABET

	A alpha	B bravo	C charlie	D delta	E echo	
F foxtrot	G golf	H hotel	I india	J juliett	K kilo	L lima
M mike	N november	O oscar	P papa	Q quebec	R romeo	S sierra
T tango	U uniform	V victor	W whiskey	X xray	Y yankee	Z zulu