



HEMPFIELD FIRE DEPARTMENT – OPERATIONS

200.2 – RADIO PROTOCOL

ISSUED:

January 25, 2021

REVISED:

PURPOSE:

To ensure efficient and professional communication during every incident assigned to members of the Hempfield Fire Department. Through a standardized approach to radio communication during an emergent or non-emergent incident, incident stabilization can be achieved.

SCOPE:

This standard operating policy shall apply to all members of the Hempfield Fire Department. This policy should be employed on every incident that members of the Hempfield Fire Department respond to.

ENFORCEMENT:

The Fire Chief and all Hempfield Fire Department Officers are ultimately responsible for ensuring the safety of firefighters in Hempfield Township. It has been proven through many case studies that clear, efficient, and professional radio communications have a direct result on incident scene safety. Any person deviating from this policy may be required to submit, in writing, an explanation for deviating from this policy to the Fire Chief within five days.

GENERAL:

Nearly every incident that the members of the Hempfield Fire Department participate in, either emergent or non-emergent, will begin and contain some element of radio communications. It is important to note that communication differs from typical verbal communication that may include in person-to-person conversation or telephone communication. With person-to-person conversation or telephone communication it can be assumed that the sender and receiver of the message can be clearly defined or assumed, radio communication does not afford the same general understanding.

Radio communication during any incident must have clearly defined sender and receiver style communications. This means that the sender of the message must be clearly defined as well as the receiver of the message. In order to facilitate this type of communication a standard set of radio communication is imperative.

PROCEDURE:

The Hempfield Fire Department utilized the Westmoreland County 911 Center to facilitate dispatching processes and centralized communications through the Westmoreland County 800 MHz radio system, with a redundant UHF Hempfield Fire communication system. Within the Westmoreland County 800 MHz radio system, the Hempfield Fire Department will fall under the Zone 3 Fire Command channel. When an incident is dispatched the Westmoreland County 911 Center will utilize the Westmoreland County 800 MHz Fire Dispatch Channel. At no time shall communication with the dispatch center or any other responding units, take place on Fire Dispatch. Hempfield Fire UHF frequencies shall be maintained as a redundant communication channel to be used in the event of an overloading or service interruption of the Westmoreland County 800 MHz system.

1. Dispatch
 - a. The Westmoreland County 911 Center will use the Fire Dispatch Channel to make announcements related to the dispatching of emergent and non-emergent incidents
 - b. At no time should communication with the Westmoreland County 911 Center or any other unit assigned to the incident take place on the Fire Dispatch channel
 - c. Base station radios should be set to the Fire Dispatch Channel to allow for house siren activation
 - i. Caution should be exercised to ensure that when a member is acknowledging a company response to an incident, that they do not acknowledge on the Fire Dispatch channel. Incident acknowledgement should take place on the Zone 3 Fire Command channel
2. Zone 3 Fire Command
 - a. All mobile radio equipment should be set on the Zone 3 Fire Command channel with the ability to scan the Fire Dispatch channel
 - b. All incident response should be acknowledged on the Zone 3 Fire Command channel
 - c. Apparatus response indication should take place on the Zone 3 Fire Command channel
 - i. Radio protocol should be the apparatus name with the staffing level
 1. "Engine 00 in route with a crew of 6"
 - a. If the response includes Junior Firefighters the dialogue should be "Engine 00 in route with a crew of 4 plus 2"
 - ii. After the Company Officer/Acting Company Officer calls the apparatus in route on the Zone 3 Fire Command channel the mobile radio and all portable radios associated with the incident shall be changed to the tactical channel assigned by the Westmoreland County 911 Center for the incident
 - iii. In the event of an anticipated overloading of the Westmoreland County 800 MHz system the tactical channel of 16 could be assigned for an incident as determined by the Westmoreland County 911 Center, in these circumstances the mobile radio shall remain on Zone 3 Fire Command while portable radios assigned to the incident should change to tactical channel sixteen (16) while assigned to this incident
 1. Communication for these incidents should remain limited and should consist of announcing the apparatus on scene and clearing of the scene
3. After the apparatus has been announced as in route, with the appropriate staffing level, mobile radios and portable radios shall be turned to the assigned tactical channel as determined by the Westmoreland County 911 Center.

- a. When appropriate the Company Officer/Acting Company Officer shall contact command for orders/assignments
 - i. “XYZ Command from Engine 00, we are approaching the scene requesting orders”
 - ii. Upon receiving orders from command, orders shall be briefly repeated to ensure the appropriate message was received
 1. Apparatus: “XYZ Command from Engine 00, we are approaching the scene requesting orders”
 2. XYZ Command: “Engine 00 you are assigned to fire suppression, first division.”
 3. Apparatus: “Command, Engine 00 first division fire suppression, received”
 - b. Throughout the incident proper radio protocol will consist of the receiver of the message to be announced first within the message followed by the sender of the message
 - i. Sender: “Engine 00 from XYZ Command”
 - ii. Receiver: “XYZ Command from Engine 00, go ahead”
 - iii. Sender: “Engine 00...” followed by the orders from the sender
 - iv. Receiver: “Command, Engine 00.... received” the receiver will briefly summarize the message
 - c. As apparatus are released from the scene or their staging assignment to return to service, this announcement will take place on the assigned tactical channel
 - i. Apparatus: “Dispatch, be advised Engine 00 is returning to service, released by XYZ Command”
 - d. If all units are returned to service at one time, only the incident commander will clear the units from the incident on the assigned tactical channel
 - i. Incident Commander: “Dispatch from XYZ Command”
 - ii. Westmoreland County 911 Center: “XYZ Command go ahead”
 - iii. Incident Commander: “Dispatch all units will be cleared from the scene and I will be terminating Command and clearing the tactical channel.”
 - iv. Westmoreland County 911 Center: “XYZ Command that is received”
 - e. Every unit on scene is not to call back in service once the incident commander has made this announcement, this process ties up valuable air time on the 800 MHz system
 - i. The only exception is if units are slowly returned to service from the incident and the Incident Commander has not formally made the announcement over the airwaves
4. The Westmoreland County 800 MHz system as well as the Hempfield Fire UHF system should only be used for incident related communications
 - a. Communications not associated with the incident or non-emergent in nature should not be broadcast over these frequencies
 - b. Communication over the Westmoreland County 800 MHz system or the Hempfield Fire UHF system shall remain professional at all times
 - i. Maintaining a calm and steady radio presence helps to stabilize an incident
 - ii. The radio waves can be monitored by the general public and the media caution must be taken to the information presented
 5. For non-emergent details that require the use of an assigned radio frequency, prior arrangements must be made through the Hempfield Fire Department Chief or their designee

6. The Westmoreland County 800 MHz system and the radios associated with this system are outfitted with an Emergency Button that can be activated in case of an emergent situation such as a firefighter mayday situation
 - a. Activation of the Emergency Button locks system resources and denies the use of these resources to other system users.
 - b. In order to activate the Emergency Button, the orange button on the mobile and portable radio's must be depressed by the user
 - i. Should the Emergency Button be activated the Westmoreland County 911 Center will attempt to make contact with the radio title that is associated with the activation
 - ii. When contact is made with the individual information about the situation at hand should be relayed.
 - iii. Should contact not be able to be made with the radio user, the Westmoreland County 911 Center will contact the Incident Commander and an additional alert tone will be activated in order to attempt to contact the radio user
 1. The announcement will include information for all units operating to switch to a newly assigned tactical channel reserving the original tactical channel for the use of the downed firefighter
 - c. In the event of an accidental activation of the Emergency Button the Westmoreland County 911 Center will make radio contact with the affected radio
 - i. With an accidental activation, when the Westmoreland County 911 Center makes contact with the user the dialogue should include information of the accidental activation
 1. Westmoreland County 911 Center: "Portable 00 you have activated your emergency button."
 2. Portable 00 User: "Dispatch from Portable 00, be advised it was an accidental activation and I am resetting now."
 - ii. To reset the Emergency Button the user shall hold the Emergency Button for three (3) to five (5) seconds until a solid tone is heard
 - d. Should the Emergency Button be accidentally activated, the user shall use caution to not change the channel on the activated radio as this will cause an Emergency Button activation across several channels on the system.
 - i. Caution shall also be exercised to ensure the activated radio is not simply turned off as this will cause prolonged disruption on the system.