

# **RADIO VOICE PROCEDURE**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this document is to lay down a Standard Operating Procedure ( SOP ) for all radio voice operations of this Department. All emergencies require a fast response and to eliminate undue delay all radio messages must be transmitted quickly and accurately. Furthermore, in adverse weather conditions or poor reception areas, operators can usually maintain communications provided the SOP is followed.

## **2. RADIO NETS**

A group of radio stations operating on the same channel for the purpose of communicating with each other is known as a “ Radio Net “

There are two types of stations in a Radio Net :-

- a) Net Control Station
- b) Field Units - comprising mobile , portable or fixed units at Police or Fire Stations

**The Net Control Station is responsible for radio discipline and the efficient relaying of messages regardless of the Rank of the operator manning the Net Control.**

## **3. OPERATING TECHNIQUES**

Effort should be made to keep transmissions **as brief as possible**. Particularly important on a congested channel where multiple incidents are in progress.

Think about what you are going to say prior to commencing your transmission. Have all the relevant information to hand to minimise delays in relaying full and accurate details.

Transmissions should be carried out in a normal tone, keeping emotion out of your voice.

3.1 The following speech techniques should be adopted

3.1.1 maintain an even **RHYTHM**

3.1.2 Use normal conversation **SPEED**

3.1.3 Maintain normal speech **VOLUME**

- 3.1.4 If possible, use a slightly higher **PITCH**
- 3.1.5 Each word should be spoken **CLEARLY** and **DISTINCTLY**
- 3.1.6 Maintain a constant distance from the microphone. Too close will result in distortion, too far away will result in soft audio being transmitted and difficult to read in the field.
- 3.1.7 It is crucial that all messages are clearly understood, therefore use natural phrases or sentences and not sent as individual words.
- 3.1.8 **ALWAYS LISTEN ON THE CHANNEL PRIOR TO TRANSMITTING. ONLY ONE STATION MAY TALK AT ANY ONE TIME.**
- 3.1.9 Spell important or difficult words using the **PHONETIC ALPHABET**.
- 3.1.10 Never acknowledge a message passed on to you unless you have received the entire message and **UNDERSTAND** it. **NEVER GUESS** or **MAKE ASSUMPTIONS**. If you are not sure, ask the station to **REPEAT** the message.

#### **4. CAUSES OF CONGESTION ON RADIO CHANNELS**

- 4.1 FAILURE TO USE PRESCRIBED PROCEDURES
- 4.2 FAILURE TO LISTEN BEFORE TRANSMITTING
- 4.3 FAILURE TO FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS ISSUED BY NET CONTROL
- 4.4 USE OF UNAUTHORISED ABBREVIATIONS
- 4.5 LACK OF RADIO DISCIPLINE

#### **5. ESTABLISHING COMMUNICATIONS**

The Net Control Station is responsible for all communications that take place on their allocated channel of operation. Any unit wishing to converse with a station other than the Net Control must obtain permission prior to calling the unit with whom they wish to converse. The Net Control may deny such permission if an emergency incident is in progress or **Radio Silence** has been declared and the message to be passed is unrelated to such an incident .

Any person wishing to transmit shall **listen** for a period long enough to satisfy themselves that they will not cause harmful interference to any other station that may be transmitting. **MAKE SURE THAT THE**

**VOLUME CONTROL IS TURNED UP SO THAT YOU MAY HEAR CHANNEL ACTIVITY.**

If the channel is busy and you have an **URGENT** message, wait for a break in transmissions and the word “ **BREAK** “ is used to call attention to your situation. This should only be used in genuine cases where your situation is of a high priority. If this is not the case, wait until the message exchange currently in progress is complete prior to making your call.

**6. RADIO TESTS**

6.1 Radio tests are usually conducted on a daily basis. The quality of the transmission is rated from one to five as per the following table :

The receiving station indicates that the message is totally <b>unreadable</b>	1 over 5
The message being transmitted is <b>broken</b> to the extent that only some words are heard. The words put together are unintelligible	2 over 5
weak signal, <b>Difficult to read</b> , however with carefully listening, the message can be understood	3 over 5
<b>Readable</b> , The message can be understood with very little difficulty, but is not perfectly free of static / noise	4 over 5
<b>Perfectly readable, loud and clear</b> , no background noise or static	5 over 5

6.2 In addition to daily tests, Metro Fire vehicles will test when responding to an emergency incident that they have been despatched to.

Eg “ Delta Echo, Delta Echo, Romeo Pappa Zero Niner Testing over “

Reply “ Romeo Pappa Zero Niner from Delta Echo, 5 over 5, You are responding to ……….”

**Take note of the phonetic alphabet used to emphasise the call signs.**

**TIME FORMAT**

All times used are in the 24 hour format of SAST ( South African Standard Time )

**EXAMPLE**

9 ‘ o clock in the morning would be Zero Nine hundred hours 09h00

9 ‘ o clock in the evening would be Twenty One hundred hours 21h00

After 12 noon, add 12 to the time to obtain the 24 hour format

6-15 p.m would become 18h15      7-20 a.m would become 07h20

11-45 a.m would become 11h45      11-45 p.m would become 23h45

**7. PHONETIC ALPHABET**

The alphabet is given below, with the pronunciation given in brackets. The syllables to be emphasised are underlined.

A - ALPHA	( <u>AL</u> FAH )	N - NOVEMBER	( NO <u>VEM</u> BER )
B - BRAVO	( <u>BRAH</u> VOH )	O - OSCAR	( <u>OSS</u> CAH )
C - CHARLIE	( <u>CHAR</u> LEE )	P - PAPA	( <u>PAH</u> PAH )
D - DELTA	( <u>DELL</u> TAH )	Q - QUEBEC	( <u>KEY</u> BECK )
E - ECHO	( <u>ECK</u> OH )	R - ROMEO	( <u>ROH</u> ME OH )
F - FOXTROT	( <u>FOKS</u> TROT )	S - SIERRA	( <u>SEE</u> ARRA )
G - GOLF	( <u>GOLF</u> )	T - TANGO	( <u>TANG</u> GO )
H - HOTEL	( HO <u>TELL</u> )	U - UNIFORM	( <u>YOU</u> NEE FORM )
I - INDIA	( <u>IN</u> DEE AH )	V - VICTOR	( <u>VIC</u> TAH )
J - JULIET	( <u>JEW</u> LEE <u>ETT</u> )	W - WHISKY	( <u>WISS</u> KEY )
K - KILO	( <u>KEY</u> LOH )	X - X-RAY	( <u>EKS</u> RAY )
L - LIMA	( <u>LEE</u> MAH )	Y - YANKEE	( <u>YANG</u> KEY )
M - MIKE	( <u>MIKE</u> )	Z - ZULU	( <u>ZOO</u> LOO )

## 8. NUMERALS

0 ( ZERO )	5 ( FIFE )	HUNDRED ( <u>HUN-</u> DRED )
1 ( WUN )	6 ( SIX )	THOUSAND ( THOU - SAND )
2 ( TOO )	7 ( SEVEN )	
3 ( THUH -REE )	8 ( AIT )	
4 ( FOWER )	9 ( NINER )	

When transmitting numbers it is easy to misunderstand when sent as in a string such as a telephone number eg. 2053424. The correct procedure would be to include the phrase “ numbers follow “

prior to transmitting the numbers the previous example would then be :

“ TOO, ZERO, FIFE, THUHREE, FOWER, TOO, FOWER, over “

When the numbers relate to an address in a despatch message, it is important to emphasise the individual numbers in the string to avoid misinterpretation.

Eg. 848 Smith Street “..... 848 Smith Street, number AIT, FOWER, AIT Smith Street over “

**Not sent** as “ Eight hundred and forty eight Smith Street “

## 8. STANDARD PHRASES

AFFIRMATIVE	YES OR THAT IS CORRECT OR PERMISSION GRANTED
BREAK	USED TO BREAK INTO A TRANSMISSION WITH URGENT TRAFFIC ( MESSAGE )
CANCEL	DISREGARD MY LAST INSTRUCTION
CORRECTION	USED TO CORRECT AN ERROR IN THE SENT MESSAGE
GO AHEAD ( SEND )	PROCEED WITH YOUR MESSAGE

HOW DO YOU READ	HOW INTELLIGIBLE IS MY TRANSMISSION
I SAY AGAIN	I REPEAT A PART OR PARTS OF MY MESSAGE
I SPELL	USED TO INDICATE THAT YOU ARE GOING TO SPELL OUT A WORD IN A MESSAGE
NEGATIVE	NO, PERMISSION NOT GRANTED OR THAT IS NOT CORRECT
NUMBER/S	USED TO EMPHASISE NUMERALS WILL FOLLOW
OUT	MY TRANSMISSION WITH YOU IS COMPLETE
OVER	MY TRANSMISSION IS COMPLETE AND I EXPECT A REPLY FROM YOU.
SAY AGAIN ( REPEAT )	REPEAT PART OR ALL OF YOUR MESSAGE AS INDICATED
STAND BY ( WAIT ONE * )	I AM BUSY AND WILL CALL YOU BACK OR I WILL FIND OUT FOR YOU.
STAND DOWN	HAS THE SAME MEANING AS CANCEL

“ STAND BY “ is often mistaken as “ STANDING BY “ which is taken to mean “ GO AHEAD “. Units then proceed with their transmission when the Control is not ready to accept the message.

\* The term “ WAIT ONE “ is used by the military and has a clearer meaning. **Do not forget to call back the person when you become available.**

## **9. OPERATING PROTOCOLS**

### **9.1 CALL SIGNS**

To avoid confusion on a Radio Net, all transmissions need to be identified as to whom the message is intended and from whom the message has been sent. Call signs are used for this purpose and consist of a combination of figures and letters. This may be the vehicle reference number eg ( RP 15 ), a policemen's force number ( PC 225 ) or a designation eg ( Alpha 1 ).

The format to be used is “

- A) CALL SIGN OF THE STATION BEING CALLED - GIVEN TWICE
- B) CALL SIGN OF THE STATION CALLING
- C) “ OVER “ the word ” message “is often included to indicate that a message will follow.

### EXAMPLES

“ PC 225, PC225, 416 ( Net Control ) OVER “. *This indicates that PC 225 is being called by Control whose call sign is 416.*

REPLY : “ 416, PC 225 , GO AHEAD , OVER “ *note that PC 225 does not give the call sign 416 twice as the station that called him will be waiting for his reply. The practice of repeating the call sign twice is used to attract the initial attention of the person with whom you wish to converse. Once contact has been established this practice is not required.*

“ ROMEO PAPPA 15 ( ONE FIVE ), ROMEO PAPPA 15, DELTA ECHO, MESSAGE OVER  
“ *RP15 is a fire appliance being called by Delta Echo the Net Control.*

REPLY : “ DELTA ECHO , ROMEO PAPA 15, SEND YOUR MESSAGE OVER “

## 9.2 CALL DESIGNATIONS

Whilst Call Signs are used to establish the initial communications link between two or more stations, it is often also important to know who the message is from. In these cases a call designation is used to identify the origin of the message.

### EXAMPLES

Forward Control Point ( FCP ) - This may be a vehicle or a position within a building or complex. The FCP is responsible for managing an incident and all communications would be channeled via the FCP. As an incident may be prolonged, the incident commander may rotate. To cater for this the name of the officer in command would be used as the designated call sign

eg. “ Delta Echo, Delta Echo from FCP ONE ( Call Sign ), message over “ **Initial call**

“ FCP ONE , Delta Echo, send your message over “ **Control replies**

“ Delta Echo, FCP ONE, from Divisional Commander Smith.....” **Divisional Commander Smith is the Designated Call sign.**

## **10. REPETITION OF MESSAGES**

Radio messages from any incident must always be **REPEATED** by the recipient to the sender to ensure that the message has been clearly understood. The message may be abbreviated, but the meaning of the message must remain the same. If any part of the message is unclear, ask the station to repeat part or all of the message. Make use of the PHONETIC ALPHABET as required.

## **11. MESSAGE CATEGORIES**

### **11.0 MESSAGE LENGTH**

Where a message is long, to ensure that it is clearly received , it is preferable to break the message up into logical segments and confirm that each portion has been understood. The term “ Copied so far ? “ Is used to obtain confirmation that the portion of the message has been received and understood . The format continues until the whole message has been transmitted. This also has the advantage of not tying up the channel for a long period as a patrol with an urgent message will be able to “ Break ‘ into the conversation when you pause to obtain confirmation on reception of the message.

### **11.1 STATUS MESSAGES**

These type of messages refer to the availability of vehicles or staff to despatch to emergency incidents or complaints. **On Duty, Mobile Out, In Attendance, Not Available, Mobile Back, At Station** are all examples of Status Messages.

### **11.2 ASSISTANCE MESSAGES**

**ASSISTANCE MESSAGES HAVE PRIORITY OVER ALL OTHER RADIO TRAFFIC**

Upon arrival at an incident, the Fire / Police officer may require additional assistance over and above what may still be mobile to the scene. This may include OTHER SERVICES such as AMBULANCE, ELECTRICITY, WATER, HEALTH SERVICES or any other as specifically

requested.

For **METRO POLICE**, if the incident poses a danger to the officer, **RADIO SILENCE** will be implemented by CONTROL to give the affected officer priority on the channel and to provide a commentary on location of vehicle or suspects in the event of a chase. Only patrols assisting with the incident may converse whilst Radio Silence is in force.

The Fire Service has a particular format for their assistance messages. If two Rescue pumps have been despatched to an incident and two additional pumps are required on scene, the message would be “ .....**make** Rescue Pumps Four “ ( *This is known as a make up by the use of the word “ make “ in the message )*

### 11.3 **INFORMATIVE MESSAGES**

These are used to provide the Communications Centre and any other resources that may be en route to the incident a clear picture of what is found upon arrival or actions taken on scene by officers and will be logged in the incident record.

Eg “ 416, PC 225, Two vehicles involved, no injuries, Breakdown in attendance clearing roadway, over “

Eg “ Delta Echo, Romeo Pappa Zero Nine, One vehicle well alight, working with one line of 38mm hose , over “

A “ **Persons Reported** “ message would indicate that persons are injured or trapped and the necessary medical or rescue units should be mobilised.

### 11.4 **STOP MESSAGES**

These are used by the Fire Service to indicate that no further assistance is required at the incident.

A Pre Determined Attendance ( PDA ) would have been despatched depending upon the type of incident. Refer to Standard Departmental PDA . If the Officer on scene is satisfied that the resources on scene are capable of handling the incident, a STOP message will be sent. Any units then not required may return to their respective stations.

### **EXAMPLE**

Truck on fire , N2 South bound at the Clairwood off ramp. The pre determined attendance is a Rescue Pump and a Water Carrier from the closest available station. Upon arrival of the Rescue Pump an informative message is sent. In this particular case it also includes a STOP message as the fire has been extinguished. The Water Carrier is thus not required to proceed to the incident.

Eg “ Delta Echo, Romeo Pappa One One, STOP for incident N2 South bound, Clairwood off ramp, Fire extinguished prior to arrival, over “

Control ( Delta Echo ) repeats the message and will then contact the Water Carrier

“ Whisky Charlie Zero Four, Whisky Charlie Zero Four, Delta Echo , message over “

“ Delta Echo, Whisky Charlie Zero Four, send your message, over “

‘ Whisky Charlie Zero Four, Delta Echo, Stop received, You may Return to station over,’

“ Delta Echo, Whisky Charlie Zero Four, message received, contacted N2 on ramp, returning over“

” Delta Echo OUT “

## 11.5 **PRIVACY AND MESSAGE CONTENT**

It must be understood that the radio network is not secure and care must be taken in the content of messages passed. Anyone in possession of a scanner receiver, although such a device is illegal, would be capable of intercepting these transmissions. Messages of a sensitive nature should be confined to the telephone network. In such a case the relevant recipient should be requested to contact Control via the telephone to pass such information.

In terms of the Radio Act, the use of foul language is prohibited and stiff penalties exist for such transgressions.

***IN TERMS OF DEPARTMENTAL PROCEDURES ALL COMMUNICATION SHALL BE CONDUCTED IN ENGLISH***

## **METRO POLICE**

Due to the high volume of radio traffic on the Central Metro Police radio channel, their radio procedure differs from that used by Metro Fire. They tend to abbreviate calling procedures and try to keep messages short. The Control operator also has a tendency not to repeat details back to the person originating the message. This is not good practice as it allows for errors and critical information may be captured in the incident log incorrectly. It leads to misunderstanding and additional delays in obtaining the correct information which

could have been avoided if the message had been confirmed in the first instance. Operators must satisfy themselves that they fully understand the message received and the tasks that may have been requested to perform in relation to the message. Registration numbers, telephone numbers and peoples names are often given by staff in the field at a fairly high speed, making correct transcribing of the information difficult. If you are not sure that you have the information correct, have the patrol repeat the message.

## TERMINOLOGY SPECIFIC TO METRO POLICE

COPIED	MEANS MESSAGE RECEIVED
COPIED SO FAR ?	HAVE YOU RECEIVED MESSAGE SO FAR
E.T.A	ESTIMATED TIME OF ARRIVAL
GO WITH DETAILS	PROVIDE ME WITH INFORMATION
LANDLINE	TELEPHONE NETWORK
POCKET BOOK & PAGE	REFERS TO ENTRY MADE IN PC'S POCKETBOOK
PROCEEDING	HAS THE SAME MEANING AS " RESPONDING "
ROGER	MEANS MESSAGE UNDERSTOOD
STANDING OFF	SAME AS ON SCENE / IN ATTENDANCE

### Examples

1. Patrol whose call - sign is Delta Mike One requesting permission to pass a message to another patrol whose call - sign is Delta Mike Four. Control is 416.

*" Four One Six, Four One Six, Delta Mike One, Permission "* the word " CONVERSE " is sometimes used

*" Delta Mike One, Go ahead "* the word " PROCEED " is also often used

*" Delta Mike Four, Delta Mike Four, Delta Mike One "*

*" Delta Mike Four "* indicates that they are standing by for message

*" Channel 2 "* patrols change to Channel 2 to pass the message to keep Channel 1 clear for emergency calls

2. 416 wishes to despatch a patrol Charlie Two Golf to a serious motor vehicle accident at the intersection of Edwin Swales Drive and Titren Road by Southway Mall

*“ Charlie Two Golf, Charlie Two Golf, 416 “*

*“ Charlie Two Golf“ replies to call*

*“ I have a Code 3 at Edwin Swales Drive and Titren by Southway Mall, confirm you copied ?”*

*“ Copied Edwin Swales and Titren, I’m proceeding “*

3. 416 wishes to broadcast a message to all patrols on the channel

*“ 416, Code 11, 416 Code 11, all patrols be on the lookout for.....”*

In the above examples, take note of the standard codes used . Refer to the code list for detailed explanation

4. 416 wishes to call a specific patrol whose call sign is Echo Two Alpha crewed by PC 286

*“ Echo Two Alpha, Echo Two Alpha, PC 286 , 416 “*

5. 416 has been requested by PC 216 to conduct a stolen / registered owner check on ND 125-416

The reply would follow along the lines of :

*“ PC 216, your vehicle November Delta One Two Five Four One Six, is NEGATIVE, it’s a 1998 Ford Sierra, Red in colour, registered to a Mr. D. Naidoo of 154 Musgrave Road, Durban, Licence expires on 31 October 2004 ‘*

*The word “ Negative” refers to the fact that the vehicle is not listed as stolen on the S.A.P computer.*

**You will be given an opportunity to listen to recorded and live radio messages to become familiar with standard formats and phrases. You will practice Transmitting and Receiving incidentscenarios to hone your skills. No two incidents are ever the same, but correct radio and voice procedure will ensure that you successfully handle all radio traffic even under stressful conditions, when speedand**

**accuracy may save a life.**