



Communication Breakdown

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Inadequate communication is amongst the top contributing factors in incidents that result in serious firefighter injuries and line of duty deaths. Through advances in technology, such as ambient noise cancellation and Bluetooth, we have made significant strides in improving the clarity of our transmissions while operating on S.C.B.A. within the I.D.L.H. One factor that can't be fixed with fancy software or new toys is us, the **USER**. Through training and consistent adherence to our policies and procedures we can develop good habits in order to communicate effectively and maintain solid radio discipline.

Quality radio traffic reduces the quantity of radio traffic

The radio is considered an essential component of firefighter survival and allows each firefighter to report, or cause to be notified of immediate or potential life-threatening hazards, missing or injured members, changing conditions and/or progress reports. These messages are important, yet often interrupted by status updates, unnecessary chatter, users on the wrong radio channel, and/or inattentive users. Here are some simple things that we can do to help reduce radio traffic and improve our ability to send and receive important messages:

- **Follow the five 'C's of Radio Communication.**
 1. **Conciseness** – Be Brief
 2. **Clarity** – Be clear in your message
 3. **Confidence** – Have confidence in the information you are sharing
 4. **Control** – Stay in control of voice inflections
 5. **Capability** – Practice speaking on the radio to improve your competence
- **Speak slow and normal.** Speaking fast and loud does not “clear the air” any faster. The majority of these messages can not be deciphered by the receiver. Requests to repeat your transmission only serve to clutter the channel even more. You can include the portable radio in drills/training to get some practice.
- **Status changes.** The fireground talkgroup is often riddled with status changes at the worst possible times. The size-up and P.A.I.R. checks transmitted by initial arriving companies paint a picture of both the incident scene and accountability. Late units responding to upgrade and units dispatched beyond the first alarm (working fire profile, additional alarms, etc.) should utilize the divisional talkgroups to call en-route and for any proceeding status changes. Units equipped with MDTs should utilize them to make ‘silent’ status changes as permitted. These units may monitor the fireground talkgroup for situational awareness during their response.
- **Divisions and groups reduce the overall amount of radio communications.** Units that are assigned to divisions/groups should communicate face-to-face with the division/group supervisor. The division/group supervisor is responsible for communicating needs and progress to the I.C. Conditions, Action, and Needs or “C.A.N. Reports” should be used for this. When a P.A.R. is conducted, the division/group supervisor should account and answer for all units assigned to them. 

