



TRAINING REPS



Radio Discipline

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Five years ago, following an in-depth review of firefighter line-of-duty deaths, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) identified the top five issues contributing to these tragedies, known in fire department circles as the "NIOSH 5." One of these critical issues was communications.

Over the past few years, our department has made significant strides in improving communication. We have upgraded to new remote speaker microphones (RSMs) designed to endure the rigors and ambient noise, common in the fireground environment. Additionally, we have adopted Bluetooth compatibility with MSA G1 SCBAs department-wide. Most recently, we implemented programming that allows Chief Officers to initiate an attention tone from mobile radios, which reduces the time needed for relaying messages and minimizes errors in the conveyed message.

However, one area where we continue to struggle is radio discipline. This is especially impactful on tactical talk groups. Common issues include:

- Responding on a tactical channel when a divisional channel is more appropriate
- Open microphones on portable radios while en route
- Unnecessary chatter that is not relevant to operations

Each of these incidents distracts from critical information and can hinder effective communication during operations.

To help mitigate these issues, please keep the following tips in mind:

- Unless necessary, keep portable radios off while en route to avoid unnecessary keying or open carriers.
- Before transmitting, listen to ensure you aren't interrupting an active exchange of critical information.
- Assess whether your message is necessary and if it's an appropriate time to communicate it.
- Keep messages short and to the point. (Conditions, Actions, Needs-C.A.N.)
- Understand your role in the response. If your unit is responding beyond the initial assignment (such as a Working Fire, Tanker Strike Team, or Staff/Safety/Support Units), your communications should occur on the respective divisional talk group until you arrive and are given an assignment.

By enhancing our technological capabilities and reinforcing radio discipline, we can address the communication issues identified by NIOSH and ensure they do not impede our operations.

Desire ★ *Determination* ★ *Dedication*