

COLUMBIA COUNTY OFFICE OF FIRE COORDINATOR

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TRAINING NEWSLETTER

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“Last calling unit, repeat....”

How often do we hear that on our fire service frequencies? Your answer is probably the same as mine: too often! Let’s analyze what needs to be done to make this mostly go away. Communication requires a sender and a receiver. In order for the receiver to acknowledge and understand the message, the receiver must know that his/her attention is required. When you are attending a noisy social event, if you want to talk with someone, you get their attention first and then begin your message. If you don’t, the background noise of the event might make it difficult for the person you are speaking with to realize that you are indeed trying to speak to them.

The same is true of our incident scene in person communications. If we need to speak to the OIC, first we get his/her attention, then we convey the message. Our radio communications need to follow the same protocol if our radio communications are to be effective. We all know there are a lot of distractions at an incident scene. Units are arriving, roles and responsibilities need to be assigned, the Incident Action Plan needs to be formulated and Strategies and Tactics need to be developed and implemented. Sometimes this process is simple and straightforward, at other times quite complex.

“Hey you, this is me!”

When you get someone’s attention in an in person situation, “this is me” is obvious. Our radio technology does not allow for visual contact (at least not yet) so we need to verbalize both.

“Command (Hey you!), this is 96-20 (This is me!)”.

“Columbia County 911 this is Smallville Command”

“78-32 this 96-20”

This procedure will especially assist the dispatchers. They are dealing with multiple radio frequencies and multiple phone lines. They are really good at multitasking but a little help from us goes a long way to make all of our jobs more efficient and effective. The dispatch center is ripe with distractions even during calm periods. If they don’t know you are calling them, they may only hear your ID and may not realize that your message is meant for them. Hence, “Last unit calling, repeat....”.

4-C’s for Effective Radio Communications

Connect: Who do you want to talk to? Who are you?

“Smallville Car 2 this is Main Street Command”

Wait for a reply.

“Smallville Car 2”

Convey: What do you want them to know or do?

“Establish additional master streams from a 2nd water source.”

Clarify: Did they get the message correctly? (Receiver repeats important details)

“Received Command, establish master streams from 2nd water source.”

Confirm: Let them know if they got the correct message or not!

“Affirmative Smallville Car2.”

Effective Radio Communications Continued

- Speak slowly and clearly
- Use “plain language” = NO CODES!!
- Don’t shout
- Avoid distracting background noises (if possible)
- Listen before transmitting
- PTT – pause – speak – pause – release
- Pertinent info only, be succinct

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