

Berks County Department of Emergency Services

Communications Division
Standard Operating Procedures Overview
July 2014



As per June 4, 2014 SOP Revision

End User Training is CRUCIAL

- Accurate and thorough training and re-training. Do NOT cut corners.
- Understand each disciplines and how it functions.
- This is only an overview. Read the manual in it's entirety and ask questions.
- This is, and will continue to be a work in progress. Changes and modifications will occur as we all learn about the system and its use.

Communications Standard Operating Procedures:

*Radio
System
Overview*

*Important
points to
review*

*A closer look
into each
Discipline*

General Radio System Operations and Security

- Authorized system users, who have been trained and possess the required radio equipment, are permitted to operate on the Radio System
- Inappropriate or unauthorized use of the Radio System will not be tolerated.
- Any report of lost, stolen or missing radios shall be directed to the on duty Watch Officer.
- A system user who reports any type of system trouble shall be directed to the on duty Watch Officer.

Conventional vs. Trunking

- Uses a dedicated radio frequency for each radio channel in a system.
- Each frequency is assigned to a group of users.
- A channel (33.94) = A frequency (Low Band County Fire)
- The sharing of a limited number of communications paths among many users.
- Uses a group of similar radio frequencies to create a “pool” for radio users to access.
- A channel is now referred to as “Talk Group”

Trunked System Talk Groups

- **Categories:**
 - Dispatch – Receive Only Talk Group
 - Hailing – Primary radio communications path between users and radio operators
 - Operations – Used for major incidents, pre-planned events, or extreme business.
 - Administrative – convenience of the users and certain specific agencies.

Other Radio Talk Groups

- Conventional Interoperability Channels – for out of county mutual aid units. This is a permanent patch between previously used *Frequencies* and current *Talk Groups*.
- Conventional Tactical Channels – for on-scene, off trunked systems communications.

Dispatch Talk Groups:

Fire EMS Dispatch

Reading Fire Dispatch

Reading EMS Dispatch

Purpose:

Dispatch Fire and EMS Units to incidents.

Hailing Talk Groups:

County Fire & County EMS

Fire Police

Municipal police & County Agencies (Coro, Sheriff, Jail)

Reading Fire & EMS

PURPOSE:

Status keeping: Responding, On Location, Assuming
Command, Available/Clear

Operations Talk Groups:

County Fire & EMS
Fire Training Center
Reading Fire & EMS
Fire Police

BLS & ALS Reporting
Law Enforcement Agencies
Berks Scope 1 & 2
Field Training

Purpose:

At the direction or approval of the coordinating radio operator; Major incidents/events, overflow of normal incident radio traffic, training exercises, pre-planned events and hospital patches are all worthy of Operations TG Channel.

Administrative Talk Groups:

Law Enforcement Organizations

Reading Fire & EMS

County EMS, Fire & Fire Police

Interoperability Channels:

- Also known as Interoperability Overlays.
- Allow non- System Users to access the System for mutual aid purposes or out-of-county EMS units to communicate with Berks County Hospitals.
- A permanent patch exists between non-system user's current radio to the Berks Trunked System.
- Consist of Call Channels and Tactical Channels.

Tactical Channels:

- 12 Tactical Channels exist = *Brks7Tac1* through *Brks7Tac12* (referred to as *Berks Tac1 – Berks Tac 12*)
- “Point to point” channels for incident, on-scene, communications.
- ALL public safety radios provisioned on the system have access to the Tactical Channels.
- Radio Operator will document the Tactical Channel assigned and the designator of the requestor.

Purpose:

To use in areas of unreliable system coverage such as inside buildings or dense vegetation. Also on scene small scale operations.

Ex. Water Supply Operations on a working Structure Fire.

Operational Procedures & System User Rules

Section 2 – Administrative Policies and Procedures

- Explanations
- Important Points
- Expectations of System Users

Release of 911 Records

- DES record request forms are located on the Berks DES website.
- Request forms may be e-mailed or faxed.
- Immediate requests will be handled by the on duty DES Watch Officer.

*Call
911!*



“Pinging” Cellular Telephones

- All ping requests must be made directly to the on duty DES Watch Officer in writing or on recorded telephone line.
- DES will evaluate the request and advise if request is approved.

Continuity of Operations



- Detailed information regarding system failure/outages, whether planned or unplanned, and how they are to be handled.
- All attempts will be made to notify systems users of outages, both field users and DES staff members.
 - CAD, WebCAD, MCT's, Fire/EMS paging & back up paging, text paging, Radio system, telephone issues, DES evacuation, and personnel shortage.

WebCAD

- Software package allowing users to access incident information electronically
- Agencies will maintain on file a WebCAD agreement.
- WebCAD shall be used a primary method of retrieving incident information



Media Policy

- All calls from Media personnel are directed to the on duty DES Watch Officer.
- DES will be advised of a point of contact from media details..
- A call for service will be processed in CAD and given to the agencies point of contact.

Telephone Requests from Field Users

- DES will make any reasonable telephone call for any public safety agency directly related to agency's discipline.
- DES Watch Officer has the ability to deny any unrelated or unreasonable requests.
- DES Watch Officer has the ability to grant approval of requests in exigent circumstances.



Request for Aeromedical Assets

- Aeromedical requests shall be for the ship to be placed on “Stand-by” or to “Fly”.
- Policy describes the validity of requests.
- Procedure defines the process of obtaining aeromedical assets, coordination of MedComm, DES and field users, and Talk Group/Channel purposes.



Information Regarding Potentially Infectious Respiratory Illnesses

- DES operators receiving a request for EMS services for a patient with a medical (non- trauma) complaint, will be asked questions defined in the procedure to obtain whether or not a threat of Respiratory Illness exists.



General Announcements

- Outlines the manner in which requests for announcements, immediate or delayed, are submitted to DES for approval.



Premise Alerts

- ❖ Describe the process by which premise alerts are maintained by Berks DES and System Users

General Radio System

Operations

- ✓ FCC Regulations
- ✓ Radio Etiquette
- ✓ Agency Identifiers
- ✓ Incident Timers & Security Checks
- ✓ Air Priority
- ✓ MayDay
- ✓ Urgent Traffic
- ✓ Plan Charlie (SCCP)

FCC Regulations

- Users must adhere to all FCC regulations
- Proper call signs
- 24-hour military time
- Plain language must be used whenever practical.



Radio Etiquette/ Professionalism

- Speak slowly and clearly directly into the mic.
 - Ensure no loud noises are behind you.
- Wait briefly after PTT to ensure the resource is assigned and to avoid clipping.

Approved Agency and Unit Identifiers

- Law enforcement identifiers are organization number and agency-assigned unit type.
- EMS identifiers are organization number, station number, and the apparatus or unit position identifier.
 - Western Berks Station 3 Medic Truck 5 = Medic 650-3-5
- Fire identifiers are dependent on jurisdiction. County Fire identifiers use organization number.
- Clarity is the desired outcome. Common language unit identifier is always acceptable.
 - “Reading City Medic 1” or “Reading City Patrol Unit 306” are permissible.



Incident Timers and Security Checks

- Berks DES performs security checks either upon request, or as a result of pre-programmed waiting times associated with specific call-type.
- Security checks will be in 5 minute intervals unless otherwise requested.
- User may communicate “No further checks.” Transmission will be echoed by DES and no subsequent checks will be offered.
- Specific procedures exist for each discipline as well as handling of a failure to respond to a security check.



Incident Timers and Security Checks

- Radio operator performs a check 20 minutes after EMS arrives on scene.
- EMS may request no further checks saying, “No further checks.” Transmission will be echoed by DES and no subsequent checks will be offered.
- Lacking such a transmission, checks will continue to be offered every 20 minutes until the call is cleared



Incident Timers and Security Checks

- 20 minute timer will be set after establishment of Command. At timer expiration, Radio Operator will notify Command
- Command established for the following:
 - Structure Fires where command is established
 - Motor Vehicle Accidents w/Entrapment where command is established.
 - Any other incident upon specific request of Command.
- Command may request “No further timer notifications.”
 - DES acknowledges and no further action required.
 - If Command does not request “No further timer notifications,” another 20 minute timer initiated and process continues until command terminated or “No further” is requested.

Air Priority

- TG immediately becomes reserved for traffic related to the incident for which it was declared.
- Radio Operator sounds 5 short beeps on both TG's (reserved and relocated) to notify users of the Air Priority and where they are to operate.
 - DES may suggest moving incident to an Operations TG.
- Once incident concludes, announcement will be made on all necessary TG's.

MAYDAY

- **MAYDAY** can be used on any Channel or TG but should generally be used in conjunction with an Emergency Button Activation (EBA).
 - Not used to signify emergency traffic.
- User experiencing personal distress shall use the term “**MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY**” when beginning distress call and in advance of their unit identifier and the identifier of the unit if they are making a direct call versus an announcement.
- **MAYDAY** situation is addressed with highest urgency!

Urgent Traffic

- Use “URGENT TRAFFIC” when recipient is to discontinue other actions except related to immediate life threatening circumstance.
 - May be used on any Channel or Talk Group and should always be directed to a DES Radio, other system user, etc.
- PRIORITY shall not be used in place of URGENT TRAFFIC.
- URGENT TRAFFIC transmissions shall always be sent in four-part messaging.

Special Circumstances Contingency Planning (Plan Charlie)



- Emergency services dispatch plan during severe weather or other extenuating circumstances.
 - Authorized by DES on duty Watch Officer
- Notifications made via Hailing Talk Groups for Police Fire and EMS at implementation and termination of the SCCP.
- Procedure modifications will be in place during the event for each disciple.

Additional Operations

Talk Groups

- ✓ Disaster Operations
- ✓ Flight Operations
- ✓ Countywide Exercise Operations
- ✓ Public Works Operations
- ✓ Agency Specific Operations
- ✓ Reading Agency Specific Operations
- ✓ Telepatch Operations
- ✓ Local Emergency Managements Operations

Special Operations Talk Groups

- ✓ Disaster Operations Talk Group = Disaster N₁
 - ✓ Exceptionally large multi-discipline incidents or events
 - ✓ 5 North Site Talk Groups, 5 South Site Talk Groups, and 5 Countywide Talk Groups
- ✓ Flight Operations Talk Group = FlightOps
 - ✓ Used for extensive communication between air assets and large number of ground units such as in a search and rescue.
 - ✓ Not intended for aeromedical transportation landings.
- ✓ Countywide Exercise Operations Talk Groups = BrksExerCW
 - ✓ Used for communications during large scale multi-jurisdictional/ multi-discipline training events.

Special Operations Talk Groups

- ✓ Local Emergency Management Operations Talk Group
 - ✓ Two Operations Talk Groups for field operations
 - ✓ Berks Local EMA = BrksLocalEMA
 - ✓ Reading EMA = Rdg EMA

- ✓ Public Work Operations Talk Groups
 - ✓ These Talk Groups are intended for future expansion and will not be used without DES approval.

- ✓ Non- Reading Agency Specific Operations Talk Groups
 - ✓ Used by entities outside of the primary Municipal/regional Police, Fire and EMS system Users to conduct day to day and incident operations.
 - ✓ Includes, but not limited to Coroner, Heim, Jail, Sheriff, etc.

Special Operations Talk Groups

- ✓ Reading Agency Specific Operations Talk Groups
 - ✓ Used by specific agencies in the City of Reading for day to day and incident communications
 - ✓ Including, but not limited to, Reading Police, Reading Streets, Downtown Improvement District (DID), etc.

- ✓ Telepatch Operations Talk Groups
 - ✓ Used as a last resort in the unusual circumstance that a field user needs to be placed in contact with a specific party by telephone.
 - ✓ Does NOT provide the same degree of privacy as a cellular phone call.
 - ✓ TelePatchAES – Law Enforcement use
 - ✓ TelePatchADP – Non- Law Enforcement use



Message Format

- Two part messaging is permissible when contacting DES for ONLY simple status changes.
- Unanswered two part messages will revert to four part messaging.
- Four part messaging will be used for ANY information other than simple status changes.

Important Incident Information

- Important information obtained by DES operators will be conveyed to field users.
- Field Users will convey important information to DES staff for proper status keeping and facilitating additional response units.

IMPORTANT

Berks County Emergency Response Team (BCERT) Calls

- All radio transmissions for BCERT incident details will take place over encrypted Talk Groups.
- Fire & EMS Users will avoid the reference to BCERT operations.
- Where Fire or EMS support is needed, an OIC from BCERT shall contact Watch Officer to make the request.
- Fire & EMS agencies will be dispatched for an immediate “Work Detail” and advised to call DES by phone for additional information.



Procedures Governing System Features

- ✓ Scanning
- ✓ Digital Vehicle Repeater Operations
- ✓ Talk Timer
- ✓ Busy Process
- ✓ Emergency Button Activation (EBA)

Scanning

- Scanning allows Users to set radio to “hear” communications that are being transmitted on TGs and Channels that the radio is NOT selected on.
- Every system radio has three separate Scan lists available
 - Trunked Scan List
 - Disaster Scan List
 - Conventional Scan List
- Scan lists can be edited.
- Scanning is NEVER a guarantee that traffic will not be missed.
- Mobile radios have special functions that differ from portable radios.

Digital Vehicle Repeater Operations

- Digital Vehicular Repeater Systems (DVRSs) --a radio repeater that accepts an input from portable radios on a conventional channel and retransmits input over a connected mobile radio set to a specific TG.
- Two reasons for using a DVRS:
 - Portables can be used in areas where there is mobile coverage but not portable system coverage.
 - Portable can be used inside a structure where there is no System coverage by relaying through a DVRS in a vehicle parked outside of the building.

Talk Timer

- System will deny the User's ability to transmit a message longer than 60 continuous seconds.
- 50 seconds after beginning transmission, User will receive notification tone indicating Time Out Timer will be expiring in 10 ten seconds.
- If User fails to unkey within 10 seconds, a continuous tone will be heard and transmission will be stopped.

Busy Process

- High usage of the trunked radio system could cause a user to receive a System Busy Tone.
- Upon receiving Busy Tone, User **MUST NOT** continue to press PTT button.
- When a talk path becomes available, Talk Permit Tone is received and User should immediately push the PTT button and send transmission.
 - Normal time in queue should be under 2 seconds

Emergency Button Activation (EBA)

- ONLY initiated in an unanticipated situation posing immediate threat to User's personal safety!
- Depress and holding button for 1/2 second to activate.
 - TGs are programmed to either have EBAs remain on the TG (Tactical) or to switch to a monitored TG called an Emergency Revert TG.
- Dispatch receives audible and visual notification on console identifying radio and TG and immediately contact the unit and attempt to verify the activation.
- A unit that performed an intentional activation shall, to the extent possible, immediately respond with details to permit appropriate resources be sent to assist.
- Accidental activations will be confirmed and emergency button immediately reset.

Law Enforcement Talk Groups

- Communication with Berks County Police will take place on two law enforcement dispatch/hailing talk groups.
- LEO System Users have been divided between two channels to balance radio traffic.
 - BrksPDDispA
 - BrksPDDispB
- Units can switch between Talk Groups to communicate with another agency or if they are dispatched to assist a unit on the other channel.
- Special functions, events or incident specific traffic will be moved off the Hailing TGs and onto Operations TGs.



Law Enforcement Talk Groups

- There are 5 Operations TG's
 - (2) North, (2) South, and (1) Countywide
- There are 2 Scope Channels.
 - BrksSCOPE1 – Main Scope Channel
 - BrksSCOPE2 – Used if main scope channel is extremely busy.
- There are currently 17 Regional/Administrative TG's
 - LEO's can use their own or other agency's assigned Regional TG's for agency business or inter-agency business not related to DES.

BOLO Announcements

- BOLO will be dispatched as soon as radio activity levels allow.
- Broadcast of BOLO cancellations are completed when originating agency cancels within 24 hours of entry.
- A BOLO remains “active” until cancelled by originating agency or it “expires” after 96 hours has passed since the original entry.



Law Enforcement System Users

Status Keeping

- DES will not maintain status of units that will be busy for a period greater than four hours.
 - Court
 - Training
 - Other administrative duties
- Radio operators may inquire a units status at any time.
- Units going out of service for MCT log on (via radio) will make the request on the Scope Talk Group.



Law Enforcement Talk Groups

- A single point of calling for law enforcement System Users to reach each other was created.
- It is intended to be used by any law enforcement User attempting to reach any other law enforcement User but not sure which Talk Group they are assigned, PD Alpha or PD Bravo.
- BrksPDIntraOp
 - Ex. Spring Twp Police need to make contact with Exeter Police, they are unaware of which TG they are assigned to and use BrksPDIntraOp to call Exeter Police and make contact with a 25 unit.



Dispatching of Law Enforcement

Priority Calls

- “In-progress” or “Just occurred”
- Voice dispatched to allow units to respond without delay.
- Units will advise DES when they are on location to begin security checks.
- Priority calls will NOT be placed back in pending due to shift changes.

Non-Priority Calls

- Dispatched to a unit’s MCT when unit is MCT ready.
- Radio Operator will advise when an assignment has been dispatched to the user’s MCT.
- Units not ready for MCT dispatches will receive a voice

Law Enforcement Vehicle & Subject Stops

- Conveyed as a four part message.
- Accurate information relating these stops is required.
 - Location
 - Description
 - Any other pertinent information
- Officer safety is the main objective!

POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

Law Enforcement

Vehicle & Foot Pursuits

- All pursuits, by policy, require an Air Priority.
- Initiation of a pursuit shall immediately be declared to DES including current location and direction of travel.
- If available, additional information shall be provided.
 - Reason for pursuit
 - Vehicle: descriptors, information on the occupants
 - Foot: description(s) of actor(s)
- Radio Operator will echo all information provided.

Sheriff Warrant Service Notifications

- Deputy in charge of warrant service team calls DES on an admin line and provides:
 - Exact location serving warrant.
 - Whether requesting police assistance (respond, call, etc) or a notification only.
- DES generates CAD incident (SERVE PFA/WARRANT) and assigns Sheriff unit to the incident.
 - If assistance requested, the police agency is assigned to incident and a radio dispatch made with nature of the assistance requested provided.
 - If notification only, the Sheriff incident is copied and assigned to police agency and incident is processed as a non-priority (MCT dispatch) assignment.

Financial Institution Hold-up Alarms

- High priority and dispatched as soon as possible.
- DES will “make the call” at the LEO’s request.
- Coded process is used to determine whether activation is intended or accidental.
- Officer(s) are advised by radio whether a proper or improper response was received.
- Incident communications will be moved to an Operations or Regional Talk Group if an improper response is received.



County EMS Talk Groups

- County EMS incidents will be simulcast over a receive only TG.
- BrksEMS is the primary Hailing TG for communications between DES and EMS system users.
- Fire Users dispatched on a medical call will utilize BrksEMS.
 - QRS Responses
 - Medical Assists



County EMS Talk Groups

- Operations Talk Groups
 - BrksEMSOps1 & BrksEMSOps2
 - Significant incident communications
 - Scheduled event or detail
 - BLS Reporting
 - SJMCBLSPatch1
 - RHTCBLSPatch1
 - ALS Reporting
 - BrksALSHail – initiate contact with MedComm
 - BrksALSPatch1 through 3 – used at the direction of MedComm



County EMS Talk Groups

- Administrative Talk Groups
 - Replaces agency owned conventional channels.
 - Unit to Unit coordination that could be lengthy
 - Wheelchair Van to base communication.
 - BrksEMSAdm1 & BrksEMSAdm2



Reading EMS Talk Groups

- Reading EMS incidents dispatched through “Call Alerting” on their own Trunked Radio System
 - RdgEMSDisp
- Status keeping and normal communications will take place on a Reading EMS Ops TG
 - RdgEMSOps1
- Incident Operations for EMS incidents or events will take place on Reading EMS Ops 2
 - RdgEMSOps2



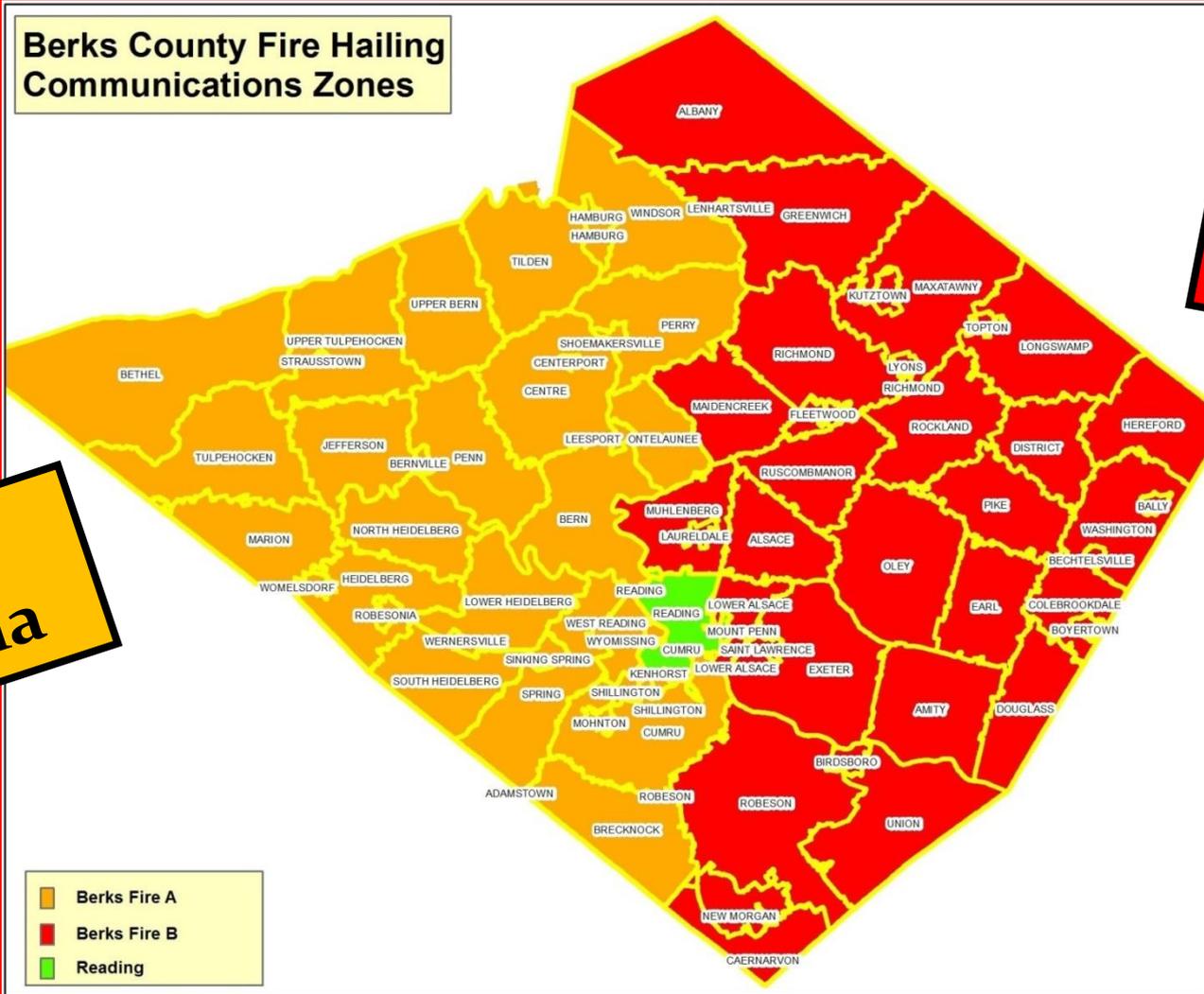
County Fire Talk Groups

- County Fire incidents will be simulcast over a receive only TG.
- County Fire system users will keep status changes and updates on a Fire Hailing TG.
- Municipalities have been divided into the two Fire Communications Zones.
 - BrksFireA (Fire Alpha)
 - BrksFireB (Fire Bravo)



Fire Hailing TGs by Municipality

Berks County Fire Hailing Communications Zones



Fire Alpha

Fire Bravo

- Berks Fire A
- Berks Fire B
- Reading

County Fire Talk Groups

- Operations Talk Groups
 - Berks Fire Ops 1 through 6
 - Primarily used during fire incidents/events
- Non-Incident Operations Talk Groups
 - Primarily used for training operations.
 - Fire Training
 - Fire Training Center



County Fire Talk Groups

- Administrative Talk Groups
 - Replaces agency owned conventional channels.
 - Business matters
 - Coordination of staffing apparatus after dispatch
 - Coordination among Fire police



Fire Police Talk Groups

- Fire Police Countywide
 - Limited status keeping, by OIC only.
 - Fire police hailing of DES
 - Unit to unit hailing
- Fire Police Operations Talk Group
 - Incident communications
 - Scheduled event



Reading Fire Talk Groups

- Reading Fire incidents will be simulcast on a receive only Dispatch TG.
 - RdgFireDisp
- Status keeping for Reading Fire will take place on Operations Talk Groups
 - RdgFireOps1



Reading Fire Talk Groups

- Incident Operations for fire incidents/events will use take place on Reading Fire Ops TGs 2 through 4.
 - RdgFireOps2 – RdgFireOps4
- “Command Officer” TG is for City of Reading Fire Department and only in leadership radios.
 - RdgFireCmd



Questions?

