

CAL FIRE Butte Unit
Policies and Procedures



Approved By

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Subject: **8100 Command & Control**
Specific Subject: **8130.002 Clear Text & Common Terminology**

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POLICY:

All Department personnel will utilize the Incident Command System (ICS) clear text and common terminology for routine and incident communication.

PROCEDURE:

In an effort to reduce confusion and improve firefighter safety and operational efficiency the following radio communication procedures will be used in the Butte Unit.

COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES THAT FOSTER CLEAN, CLEAR, CONCISE COMMUNICATION

Dispatching Emergencies and Incident Communication

- Once a “pre-announcement” is broadcast, **all radio traffic should cease** until the dispatch is completed. The only exception to this is if a unit has Priority or a New Incident (that constitutes an emergency) traffic.
- When reporting a new incident use the phrase “new incident” and briefly provide general incident type and location. For instance, “Oroville, E45 new incident TC Hwy 99 south of Hwy 149; this serves as the pre-announcement for other resources Wait for the ECC to acknowledge you prior to giving **detailed** the incident information (including specific type, location, and a report on conditions). After acknowledgement by the ECC, “E45 Oroville”, “Oroville, E45 at scene single vehicle roll over in the center median, Hwy 99, ½ mile south of Durham Pentz, request TC response, checking on injuries.”
- During **two-frequency dispatching**, you must monitor both BTU Local and BTU Support, while responding/returning from alarms. During two-frequency dispatch mode, the ECC will use Local Net to dispatch emergencies, receive reports from the field of new incidents, and for routine movement of apparatus including move-up and cover. Reports from the field of new incidents, “New Incident”, should be broadcast over local net. All other incident related radio communication from the field (with the exception of reporting new incident) such as responding, at-scene, status updates, requests for resources and available, are transmitted on Butte Support.
- The ECC may dispatch **specific** resources which differ from the first-out station resource due to operational needs; e.g. specific personnel or equipment.

- During augmented resource dispatching, the ECC may not use all of the closest available resources to fulfill the additional needs. Some resources may be by-passed in order to meet the initial attack needs of the Unit (coverage in critical response areas). Please do not call the ECC to complain or use the radio to advise that you are closer than “Engine XX”. The ECC must maintain some balance of initial attack coverage in key response areas (typically red coverage level stations).
- Although not used as frequently any longer, group quick calls may be utilized during high-level vegetation fires or complex incident dispatches (during the day) – this shortens the time it takes to dispatch the incident. Please listen to the dispatch after the quick call – if you’re not listed you were not dispatched. There is no need to contact the ECC, please cancel your response and return to your last assigned location.
- Remember, radio traffic with sirens and air horns blaring in the background are extremely hard for all to understand.
- Write down location, tactical net, I.C. designator – if you’re likely first due resource (or could be). Incident numbers and dispatch times are available to view via CAD paging to cell phones. Please use this tool, rather than asking for this information via Local Net. Supplemental and Daily incident number information can be also obtained via daily emails from the ECC.
- Resources dispatched to an incident, within another jurisdiction (i.e. NEU, TGU, PNF, etc.), need to only go “responding” and “available” with the Butte ECC. All other radio traffic, such as “at scene” etc., while assigned to the other jurisdiction, should be done with that agency’s dispatch center. If dispatched out of Unit, resources will advise the ECC when they are leaving the Unit. This is done so the ECC can transfer the BTU resource to the requesting Agency in CAD
- Unit’s arriving “in the area” of an incident need to advise the ECC when they arrive “at scene”, and provide the ECC with the corrected/updated incident location (address).
- The first unit going “at scene” should be prepared to give a brief report on conditions. If ordering resources, precede the order with “resource request”, then “break” and wait for the ECC to respond (i.e. “Oroville, E73 at scene, 2-story structure, smoke visible from the top floor, resource request”), then wait for the ECC to acknowledge.
- As the I.C. you must monitor Local Net, as well as the tactical and command nets. The I.C. is the primary contact for the ECC. Other resources (at scene) are not expected to monitor Local Net, unless they are available at scene.

Avoid calling the ECC by phone with incident information that should be given over local net.

- Resources assigned to incidents are expected to monitor tactical net(s) during multi-engine responses and use tactical frequencies for communications between resources. Do not use Local Net for tactical communications.
- Be sure to monitor the assigned "Air-to-Ground" whenever firefighting aircraft are at an incident.
- If not provided, expect the ECC to ask about resource status approximately 10 minutes after arrival at incidents. This is a safety and resource status issue. The Unit is concerned with your safety as well as your resource status (available vs. committed) and your anticipated time at the incident. Use simple, short updates for incident information and resource status (i.e. "Oroville, E33 can handle, committed 30" vs. "Oroville, E33 can handle with equipment and personnel at scene, committed 30 minutes").
- Remember if your status is "committed" you will not be considered for a subsequent dispatch; committed means that you are not able to respond to another incident regardless of location and type. If your status is "available at scene" it implies that you are available with a short or no delay for subsequent emergencies, and "available" means that you have been released by the IC and are ready to be reassigned.
- Use "available" or "available in response area" (by itself) when released from an incident. Do not use "released from.... incident, available" or "Finished with last assignment, available". "Available in response area" is a quick way to communicate your status when available from an incident that is within your own response area.
- If resources are "available" and directed to return to quarters by the ECC it is not necessary to state "copy, returning to quarters" simply acknowledge with your radio identifier; i.e. E-2180.
- Resources in staging are assigned to the incident and as such must be released by the IC. The ECC will not redirect these resources until they status themselves with the ECC as "available".
- If your resource is considered "available at scene" and you are at/in route subsistence (feeding), you should monitor Local Net. Do not advise the ECC that you are "at subsistence" unless you are an available resource. Typically resources are not "available" until after their meal.
- Wait until you are fully "in service" prior to advising the ECC that you are

“available”. Stating “Available, insufficient hose or water” is not usually appropriate (unless the travel time back to your station is extensive – more than 30 minutes). If there is a need to provide status, due to a resource leaving the incident which is not in service, state “Oroville, Engine XX returning to quarters, out of service, equipment rehab” (i.e. “Oroville, E2162 returning to quarters, out of service, equipment rehab”).

- When you are the I.C., advise of resource status for resources remaining at the incident, prior to going available yourself (i.e. E64 is Olive I.C. – “Oroville, Olive I.C., E2160, WT64 released, E64 available response area”).
- CHP requests the following information for disabled vehicles in need of a tow: Location; roadway status (clear, etc.); type and color of vehicle; and specific tow, if requested (AAA vs. Rotation; Standard/Flatbed vs. Heavy Tow). There is no need for the membership card number.
- If you feel (know) that your resource will be “first due” to single engine incidents, and you were not dispatched presumably because of CAD routing please state, “Oroville, Engine XX, responding first due from Y & Z” (your location). The ECC will continue your response, in most situations. However, you must follow up with the proper documentation after the incident. Simply responding to incidents because you feel that you may arrive simultaneously, with other dispatched resources is NOT appropriate. Please keep in mind that this is for the first due resource only.

Out of Unit Dispatches & Cover Assignments

- Please give your ETA when responding out of unit for fires or cover assignments. The ECC receives requests from the Region ECC in three ways – Planned Need (get there by XX: XX hours, Code-2), Immediate Need (get there ASAP, Code-2), or Immediate Need – Code 3 (get there ASAP-Code 3).
- When the ECC has dispatched you to an out of unit assignment, please report **any personnel changes via CADWEB or if not practical over the radio** (if different from that listed on morning report) and an ETA to your destination **upon your departure from the station**. If you have been dispatched as part of a strike team that assembles first at a common location, the ETA will be provided by the S/T Leader upon your departure from the rendezvous point.
- When the ECC has dispatched you to an out of unit assignment, **it is necessary to advise the ECC when you are leaving the Unit**. With CAD to CAD between units the ECC will keep control of your resource until such time as you state you are leaving the unit. You are expected to monitor Butte Local when leaving Butte, and other unit Local frequencies when passing through respective CAL FIRE Units in addition to CESRS (Travel net) while traveling. Upon your return to the unit advise the ECC of your return and location and they will route you to your home station or cover depending upon unit needs.

- The ECC is charged with implementing a unit wide cover plan during periods of drawdown. When dispatched to a cover assignment it is very important to promptly respond. Please do not acknowledge your response to cover another facility until you are physically enroute. The ECC will use that acknowledgement as a gauge to estimate your location for future dispatches and other operational needs.
- For cover assignments, the ECC may dispatch **specific** resources due to operational needs. If there are no such needs, the ECC may specify "Station XX, one engine cover Station YY".
- Engines covering BCFD stations in the Chico area (FS41, 42 & 44) should check in at the covering stations for spare UHF portable radios. Be sure to review the cover crew guide. You need to monitor CHI Fire UHF Blue Net (CHI Primary Net) for automatic aid dispatches. If you are dispatched automatic aid to a CHI incident, advise the ECC ASAP that you are "Committed Chico Fire" on BTU Local Net, then advise CHI dispatch you are responding on UHF Blue Net. It is not necessary to give the location or type of emergency you are responding to (the ECC already has this information, via Chico CAD screen). If you do not have access to a UHF radio, then communicate with CHI Fire on VFIRE 21. If no UHF radio, please advise Chico Fire Dispatch, via phone, that you will be available via VFIRE 21.

Routine Radio Communication

- Listen for a few moments before initiating radio traffic, especially if you have been away from the radio...this will help avoid routine traffic interruptions between pre-announcements and quick-calls/dispatches.
- If you call Oroville on Local Net and do not get a quick response, assume that the ECC is processing a new incident. Wait a minute or so, and then try again. If the ECC did not acknowledge you then you must repeat your message, this is particularly important when you have a resource status change. If the ECC doesn't acknowledge your traffic they may not properly have your status. For instance, if you are "available in response area" and you don't hear an acknowledgement from the ECC then after a short break try again.
- Supervise your crew's use of the radio. Ensure that your radio users are properly trained in the use of the radio and radio procedures. Do not interrupt current radio traffic unless you have "priority" or a "new incident".
- Prior to transmitting depress the push to talk button and wait a brief moment prior to speaking, speak clearly and concisely, wait a brief moment after speaking to release the button; this will help you avoid having your transmission cut off. This allows the repeater to open and applies to radios, portable and mobile, as well as headsets.
- Communicate in a clear, concise, medium speed voice. Keep radio

transmissions to necessary traffic only. Omit unnecessary wording: "Be advised", "At this time", "At scene, switching", "Release, returning to quarters".

- If the ECC notifies you that your transmission is unreadable, please attempt to troubleshoot the problem prior to retransmitting. Most transmission issues originate from low powered HT's/low batteries, faulty equipment or using the incorrect repeater tone. Familiarize yourself with local geographical/topographical features that effect radio transmission and plan repeater use accordingly. Common BTU local tones are: north Tone 11 (Bald Mtn.), south Tone 10 (Sunset) and if your location is shielded from one of the above repeaters try Tone 9 (Mt. St. John) across the valley. Tone 12 (Colby) serves north of Butte Meadows and Hwy 32 Corridor. Tone 13 (Bloomer) serves the central part of the county (Paradise, Butte Valley) & south county.
- Be sure that headsets are properly adjusted and users are clearly familiar with their use. Radio headsets are extremely difficult to understand when the user does not have them properly adjusted. Users need to understand that the headset microphone needs to be very close to the mouth (practically touching the lips) for intelligible audio.
- Simple, routine messages to the ECC should be given in their entirety (i.e. "Oroville, E2180 en route FS73" rather than "Oroville, E2180"... "Oroville"... "E2180 en route FS73"). The radio identifier should precede complex messages, requiring ECC documentation (i.e. "Oroville, E42", wait for Oroville to acknowledge, then state your message).
- Always use your full resource identifiers. The ECC may drop the identifier when dispatching several resources of the same kind, but they will begin with the kind identifier (i.e. "Engine") and then read off the numbers (i.e. "Engine 2154, not 2154").
- Always use the dispatch agency identifier when calling the dispatch/command center (i.e. "Oroville, E64 responding").
- Movement within a stations immediate response area does not require notification to the ECC, unless significant movement for an extended period of time (i.e. E64 will be at Loafer Creek for 2 hours – then advise, "Oroville, E64 available Loafer Creek, 2 hours"). Delays in response, greater than 5 minutes, must be reported to the ECC (i.e. "Oroville, E44 delayed response, 10 minutes"). Be sure to return your resource to immediate response availability, when completed (i.e. "Oroville, E44 available, immediate response"). The CAD system will place a time penalty on resources that are in the delayed response status.
- Do not go in-route to one location by way of another location (i.e. "Oroville, E63

in-route FS73 by way of FS72”). The ECC has no way of knowing/tracking in CAD what response area you will be in when they need you.

- Do not use fire station names (i.e. Harts Mill) on the radio – use the fire stations assigned number (i.e. “Station 62”).
- Consider yourself available for dispatch at training drills or other events, unless the ECC has other direction from the I.C./Drill Coordinator. When arriving at drills, state “Available at...” (i.e. “Oroville, E33 available at Butte College, training”, not “At scene Butte College” or “Arrived Butte College”).
- It is not necessary to tell the ECC that you are available following the planned movement of equipment, simply state “Oroville, E2165 returning to quarters”. If the ECC has a coverage or incident need they will redirect you accordingly. This applies to the planned movement of apparatus, such as to training, the shop or grocery shopping where the ECC did not initiate the movement.
- Do not state, “Returning to quarters, perishables on board”. This is not a change in your status. You may still be dispatched to incidents or cover as needed.
- On occasion the ECC is directed to initiate the staffing of additional equipment and/or hold personnel on duty until staffing needs are met. The ECC initiates this request at the direction of the Duty Chief. The Battalion coverage is responsible facilitating equipment staffing, any questions regarding personnel status or the staffing of equipment should be directed to your battalion coverage and not the ECC.

Appendix A – Clear Text Words & Phrases

Unreadable: Used when signal received is not clear. Try to add the specific trouble. Ex: “Unreadable, background noise.”

Loud and clear: Self-explanatory

Stop Transmitting: Self-explanatory

Copy, copies: Used to acknowledge message received. Unit radio ID must also be used. Ex: “Engine 2163, copies.”

Affirmative: Yes

Negative: No

Respond, Responding: Used during dispatch – proceed to or proceeding to an incident. Ex: “Engine 2180, respond...” or Oroville, Engine 2180 responding.”

En-route: Normally used by administrative of staff personnel to designate destination. En-route is not a substitute for responding.

In-quarters, with Station number: Used to indicate that a unit is in a station. Ex: “Oroville, E-2176 in-quarters” (when in quarters assigned station), or “Oroville, E-2176 in-quarters, Station 45” (another station where the equipment is not assigned).

Uncovered: Indicates a unit is unstaffed, because there are no personnel to operate it.

Out-of-service: Indicated a unit is mechanically out of service. When repairs have been completed the following phrase should be used: “Oroville, Engine 63, back-in- service, available”.

In-service: This means that the equipment is returned to service from an “out of service” state.

Repeat: Self-explanatory

Weather: Self-explanatory

Return to___: Normally used by ECC to direct units that are available to a station or other location.

_____your location: Self-explanatory

Place a call: Self-explanatory

Disregard: Self-explanatory

Standby: Self-explanatory

_____available for a phone call?: Self-explanatory

At Scene: Used when unit arrives at the scene of an incident.

Available: Used when a unit is ready for a new assignment or can return to quarters. The ECC will give the unit a new assignment or direct it to return to quarters.

Available at Scene: Used when a unit is still committed to an incident, but could be dispatched to a new emergency if needed.

Can handle: used when the amount of personnel & equipment needed to handle the incident is at scene. Example: "Oroville, Palermo IC, can handle with units at scene."

Burning Operation: Self-explanatory **Report on Conditions:** Self-explanatory

Fire Under Control: A fire is controlled when there is no further a containment threat. Crews may continue to do mop-up work, however the fire fight is over. (?????)

Emergency/Priority Traffic: Radio users will restrict traffic to emergency/priority radio traffic.

Emergency Traffic: Term used to gain control of a radio frequency to report a Firefighter emergency. All other radio users will refrain from using that frequency until cleared for use by the ECC.

Resume Normal Traffic: Self-explanatory