


**CAL FIRE Butte Unit**  
Policies and Procedures



Approved By   
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Subject: **8100 Command & Control**  
Specific Subject: **8130.014 Incident Communication**

Original Policy Date: **January 2010**  
Revision Date: **April 2016**

**POLICY:**

Radio net usage and assignments will follow the "Radio Call Plan" and Butte Unit Tactical Frequency Plan (Command, Support and Tactical Frequencies).

**PROCEDURE:**

The following are the basic functions of the CAL FIRE/Butte County Fire Department radio systems:

Administrative Traffic: Administrative traffic is any radio communications not related to an emergency incident. It will be conducted on Local Net (151.4000 MHz). Whenever a "restrict radio traffic to priority traffic only" is placed on Local Net by the ECC, administrative traffic will then be conducted by phone.

Dispatch Traffic: Dispatch traffic is radio communications used to receive reports of emergencies, to dispatch equipment and to maintain the status of equipment in-route to or from an incident. Dispatch traffic will be conducted over Local Net (151.400 MHz). Because of the occurrence of simultaneous emergency incidents during fire season, it may become necessary to clear this frequency for the dispatch of additional incidents. At the direction of the ECC the status of equipment in-route to or from an incident can be accomplished by the ECC assigning a command frequency/net to a single complex incident or series of incidents in progress.

Incident Communication: Communications at the incident are managed through the use of a common Communications Plan and an incident based communications center, if established. The Communications Plan is solely for the use of command, tactical and support resources assigned to the incident.

All communications between organizational elements at an incident will be in standard clear text. All communications will be confined to essential messages.

The Communications Unit and/or the ECC are responsible for communications planning at complex incidents. This will include incident-established radio networks, on-site telephone, public address and off-incident telephone/microwave/radio systems.

Radio Networks: Radio networks for complex incidents will normally be organized as follows:

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Command Net   | This will link together: Incident Commander, Command Staff, General Staff, Branch Directors and Division/Group Supervisors.   |
| Tactical Nets | There may be several Tactical Nets. They may be established around agencies, departments, geographical areas or specific functions. The Communications Unit Leader or the ECC, in the absence of a Communication Leader, will develop the plan for use of these nets. They will normally link Division/Group Supervisors, Task Forces, Strike Teams and single resources. |
| Air to Ground | An air to ground tactical frequency may be designated or regular tactical nets may be used to coordinate air to ground traffic.   |
| Air to Air    | Air to air nets will normally be pre-designated and assigned for use between aircraft at the incident.  |

Mutual and Automatic Aid:

The ECC will assign nets and frequencies in accordance with written agreements, availability and ICS procedures.

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

1. The ECC will assign nets as necessary.
  - A. Tactical nets will be assigned to first alarm incidents shortly following the initial dispatch. The Command designator will be provided at the same time. For example: .... First unit at scene, Maple IC on Gridley Fire.”
2. It will be a dual responsibility of the ECC and the IC to monitor the incident situation and the need for additional nets. The IC, or Communications Unit Leader, if assigned to the incident, will be responsible for ordering additional nets.
3. Under normal conditions, local net will be used as both dispatch and command net. This will be standard and will not be announced.
4. The ECC will assign a separate command net (with repeater capability) when one or more of the following criteria is met:
  - A. The ECC is adequately staffed to monitor and control the command net.

- B. Multiple incidents prevent relaying critical incident information between the IC and ECC on local net.
- C. The incident is complex in nature and requires a clear frequency to transmit and receive incident information between the IC and ECC.
- D. A rapidly expanding incident develops requiring a clear frequency to transmit and receive incident information between the IC and ECC. More than one incident in Butte may be on the same dispatch/command net simultaneously. Proper radio discipline will be maintained to control usage. A support net is not a supplemental tactical net.
- E. When a command net is assigned other than local net, ECC will announce: Beep, Beep "Units responding to and at scene the Lindo Incident, command net Butte Support, Tone 4."