

CLEAR TALK IN AN EMERGENCY

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Radio Operators have a wide-range of experience and skills. During an emergency, radio operators will become assets to our communities and local agencies **IF** we can effectively communicate.

We're here today to review what we, as radio operators, can do to ensure effective communication to fulfill the Emergency Management Agency (EMA) **NEEDS** and utilize Radio Operators' **KNOWLEDGE** and **SKILLS**.

What is one of EMA's main tools during an emergency?

The Incident Command System (**ICS**).

“**ICS** is a management system designed to enable effective and efficient domestic incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a **common** organizational structure.”

A refresher on ICS will be done later in the year, so we won't go into ICS now but consider the word; **COMMON**".

Without common driving laws, could we drive in a different state? Without a common language, could we order a pizza or buy a pack of gum?

Radio operators have a “**common**” language in the form of common rules, terms and phonetics.

Miscommunication happens when those common terms aren't used properly.

During an emergency, what does EMA need?

Clear, Accurate and Detailed INFORMATION.

So, how can radio operators fulfill EMA's need?

With three steps;

Step 1: Phonetics

Step 2: Speed

Step 3: Information




STEP 1: PHONETICS

We all know the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Phonetic Alphabet, as promoted by ARRL.

ITU Phonetic Alphabet					
Letter	Word	Pronunciation	Letter	Word	Pronunciation
A	Alfa	AL FAH	N	November	NO VEM BER
B	Bravo	BRAH VOH	O	Oscar	OSS CAH
C	Charlie	CHAR LEE	P	Papa	PAH PAH
D	Delta	DELL TAH	Q	Quebec	KEH BECK
E	Echo	ECK OH	R	Romeo	ROW ME OH
F	Foxtrot	FOKS TROT	S	Sierra	SEE AIR RAH
G	Golf	GOLF	T	Tango	TANG GO
H	Hotel	HOH TELL	U	Uniform	YOU NEE FORM
I	India	IN DEE AH	V	Victor	VIK TAH
J	Juliet	JEW LEE ETT	W	Whiskey	WISS KEY
K	Kilo	KEY LOH	X	X-Ray	ECKS RAY
L	Lima	LEE MAH	Y	Yankee	YANG KEY
M	Mike	MIKE	Z	Zulu	ZOO LOO

We all had our trick to learning this phonetic alphabet: Read license plates; Read any abbreviation using this alphabet. Before you knew it, you were “thinking” this alphabet.

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We all know that “hams” enjoy having fun, but there is a time and place for everything.

During an emergency net is not the time to use “non-standard” phonetics for many reasons; the experience of the Net Control Station (NCS) or a relying ham. The frequency conditions. Language. Accents.

EMA uses the ITU Phonetic Alphabet.

So, remember,
its “**KILO**”, not kilowatt. It’s “**ZULU**”, not zed.


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There is a time and a place for
“**KI4 Zebra Kissing Weasels**”.

Q-Codes (or Q-Signals)

While Q-Codes were developed for use by Morse Code operators, their use is common on phone, as well.

You will often hear, “QRZ?” as someone asks “Who is calling me?” or “I’m getting a little QRM” from an operator receiving some interference or “Let’s QSY to 146.55” as two operators change from a repeater frequency to a nearby simplex frequency.



Be careful when using Q-Codes during an emergency.

Make sure your intended use of a Q-Code has been accurately understood by the receiving operator.

Don't assume all hams know Q-Codes.



STEP 2: SPEED

A Short Exercise:

Pen, pencil and paper...

Ready?

Everyone **COPY** the following call signs...

Has anyone ever received a prize for being the first to check into a net?

NO!!

So why the big rush when a Net Control Station calls for check-ins?

Can anyone guess why during the recent EMA AUX Comm we used the pro-words, “This Is” and asked for Full Call Signs?

**TO
SLOW
YOU
DOWN...**



Acting as Net Control Station (NCS) is tough job.

The NCS is responsible for controlling the entire cadence of the net; initial check-ins, acknowledging stations, handling relays, passing information to the served agency; and all the while documenting everything.

During an emergency, the NCS may not recognize your voice, the operating conditions could be very poor or you're just not hitting the NCS directly.

The added burden of picking through doubling stations is unnecessary.

Please be courteous to the NCS. Follow check-in instructions and respect your fellow hams.

Your check-in and report should be clear and given slow enough to be copied. The accuracy of your check-in or report depends on **YOU**.

A good rule of thumb:

Say It as if you're Writing It.



STEP 3: INFORMATION

During an emergency, what type of information will the EMA net be looking for?

You won't know unless you take time to **LISTEN.**

It's always a good rule of thumb to take a minute to listen when you tune up on a frequency. Is the frequency already in use? Is there an active net? Be considerate.

When EMA activates a net, it will always be a **DIRECTED** net.

Take time to “LISTEN” and “UNDERSTAND” what information the NCS is requesting at check-in.

When called, check-in with the Proper Group;
Base Station = Home, Fixed location
Mobile = Driving
Portable = Hand-Held (HT) Radio

During an emergency, why is it important to check-in with the proper group?

Real-time **RESOURCE** information.

A “**mobile**” check-in , tells the NCS you’re driving and can’t take message traffic.

If you check-in “**portable (HT)**”, the NCS will know you have limited battery power.

A “base station” check-in, could mean a more robust station that could be a go-to contact for the NCS.

What type of additional information might the NCS ask of a “base station” check-in?

Power Source

- Commercial Power or Battery?
- If operating off batteries, how long can you operate? Do you have a way to recharge your batteries?

Exact Location / Area to better understand your station coverage.


In general, the standard EMA net check-in procedure will be; when a group is called by the NCS, you will say, “This is”, un-key the mic and listen for doubling, re-key and give your FULL Call Sign Phonetically (*Remember, to use the STANDARD ITU Phonetic Alphabet.*) and any other requested information.

You may be asked to give your First Name and Zip Code or major cross-streets.

We'll talk about how to list major cross-streets in just a bit...



AN EMERGENCY CHECK-IN SCENARIO



The National Weather Service (NWS) has predicted heavy rain and thunderstorms for the area. Sure enough, it's raining "cats and dogs".

You're at home when suddenly your power goes out. Not to worry, you're a "Ham"! You turn on your hand-held radio (HT) and hear the weather net has been activated.

You tune to the EMA net frequency, 147.090; that net has been activated too. You listen for the NCS' check-in instructions and you check-in.

“tap, Tap!, TAP!!”...What’s that noise?!? Oh NO! Its hail; Big Hail...Baseball sized hail!!

Now what?

You see to the safety of yourself, your family and your property. You won’t help the situation if you become injured or need to be recused.

This point cannot be stressed enough.

Once, you and your family are provided for; you contact the EMA net NCS and report your information.

“This is”, un-key the mic and listen for doubling, re-key and give your Call Sign and wait to be acknowledged by the NCS. Once acknowledged, you report . . .

“It’s hailing here and I see some damage. Oh, I’m on Yale in Bartlett.”

What’s wrong with that? **PLENTY!**

You need to provide
clear, accurate and
detailed information.

WHO, WHERE and WHAT...

The **WHO**...

At initial check-in you used the proper procedure and were acknowledged by the NCS.

Because the NCS requested stations to provide “equipment type” at check-in, he now knows:

Who's reporting and what type of equipment you have.

The **WHERE**...

Yes, NCS may have your zip code from the initial check-in but the more detailed your information is; the better.

Is “I’m on Yale in Bartlett” enough information?

No. Yale is a long road.

If the NCS only gets your detailed location, help could still be sent.

Consider; “I’m between Kirby-Whitten and Altruria, on Yale Road in Bartlett”.

Give a sub-division name; look for a street number; add “I’m closer to Kirby-Whitten”.

Try to be as clear as possible and remember to speak slow enough to be understood;

- Don’t “eat” the mic
- When you key-up, a slight pause will help the NCS get your entire transmission
- Say it as if you’re Writing It

The **WHAT...**


What size is the hail? Pea size? Dime size?
Quarter size?

Use **common** descriptors. Use the National Weather Service (NWS) descriptors, if possible.

HAIL SIZE (in.)	NWS Descriptor
.50	Marble or Moth Ball
.75	Penny
.88	Nickel
1.00	Quarter
1.25	Half dollar
1.50	Walnut or Ping Pong
1.75	Golf ball
2.00	Hen Egg
2.50	Tennis Ball
2.75	Baseball
3.00	Tea Cup
4.00	Grapefruit
4.50	Softball

Be specific when reporting damage. Are there trees down? Power line(s) down? Is there damage to houses and/or cars? Again, “I see some damage” isn’t very informative.

Consider saying just what you can see from your safe position; “I can see two cars have broken windows; one tree is lying across Yale, blocking traffic at my location.”



Remember, the EMA net NCS will relay your information to the EMA contact; who, in turn, will relay the information to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

DETAILS - DETAILS - DETAILS

In closing, for **CLEAR TALK IN AN EMERGENCY;**

LISTEN for net instructions

DON'T rush to check-in

(Doubling stations don't help

in any situation) and **CHECK-IN** with

your PROPER GROUP

Stay **SAFE**

And remember our **three** steps to CLEAR,
ACCURATE and DETAILED information;

Step 1: **Phonetics** -
Standard ITU Phonetics

Step 2: **Speed** -
Say It as if you're Writing It

Step 3: **Information** -
It's all in the details!

CLEAR TALK IN AN EMERGENCY

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.
73 AND 88!!**

Here are a few web links for useful information.

ARRL Resources: <http://www.arrl.org/get-on-the-air>

ARRL Ham Radio Glossary: <http://www.arrl.org/ham-radio-glossary>

Grid Square Locator: http://www.levinecentral.com/ham/grid_square.php