

SAR COMMUNICATION BASICS

The SAR radio operator represents their entire unit. A level head, common sense, and good judgment are requirements of a good operator.

- Use plain English
- Pronounce words clearly and distinctly
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Keep messages brief and to the point
- Don't be hesitant, be decisive and deliberate
- Remember – praise in public, criticize in private

Keep in mind that it takes very little battery power to listen to others on your radio, but transmitting a message uses a lot. Being brief and to the point will conserve your battery and will keep others from ridiculing your extensive dissertations. Before you ask which end of the compass points north, remember that everyone on a search is probably listening to you. Always think about what you are going to say & how you will say it before depressing the mike.

Always check your radio before you need to use it. When going out on a search all the radios being taken should be checked before being handed out. Each radio should be checked again before leaving base camp by doing a radio check with the command center.

Remember that everything you do on the radio is heard by everyone else. Your team's radio usage is probably the most evident sign of your team's ability as a team when working with other agencies. If you are unprofessional on the radio, they will assume that you are unprofessional in general, and vice versa. Radios are probably one of the most useful devices used in SAR. Become very familiar with it, it might save your life someday.

Plain English

Clear speech should always be used. There are many different versions of 10 codes and not all search & rescue teams know the same ones. A misunderstood message could endanger someone's life.

Avoid words or phrases that carry strong emotions. Most emergency situations are emotionally charged already, and you do not need to add to the problem.

General Operations

1. Make sure that the channel selector is on the proper channel.
2. The antenna transmits your signal. Get it as high and vertical whenever possible. Do not hold it near your body or crowd around it.
3. Forget humor. The radio system is busy enough without it.

Speaking Voice

1. Pronounce words distinctly and clearly. Speak slowly.
2. Think the message through before transmitting. Know what you want to say before you say it. Don't try and adlib a message.
3. Make your voice emotions as minimal as possible, regardless of the situation. Don't shout. Shouting distorts your voice.
4. Hold the mike about 1 inch from your mouth. Hold the mike to one side of your mouth and do not talk directly into it, but talk across it.
5. Use simple, easily understood words.

Procedures

1. Wait for a clear channel – listen carefully for other units on the air. Wait until their conversation has ended for a few minutes, minimum 60 seconds.
2. End message quickly and clearly.
3. Include 3 message elements:
 - a. Identification of unit called and unit calling
 - b. Text of message
 - c. Clearance (“unit clear”)
4. Limit transmissions to 30 second blocks.

When transmitting a message over a radio, key the mike (push the button) about a second before you start talking. This gives sufficient time for the radio to “power up” to transmit. Keep the button pressed until a second after the message to allow the full message to be transmitted.

The Transmission Series

1. Listen to hear if the channel is clear for 60 seconds
2. Who you want to speak to, then your call sign

- a. “Dog Team 2, IC” means IC (incident command) wishes to speak to Dog Team 2.
 - b. Dog Team 2 if they heard IC would respond, “this is Dog Team 2 go ahead”.
 - c. Then the last person to talk would sign off by “IC clear” or “Dog Team 2 clear” so others know the channel is clear for someone else to use.
3. UTM Coordinates are communicated in a 5 x 5 format. For example, the coordinates of 10 S 0671842 by 4344475 would be communicated 71842 x 44475.

An example of correct radio procedure (Ground Team 3 calling Command Base) to report their position and beginning of their search.

Ground Team 3:	command base, ground team 3
Command Base:	go ahead ground team 3
Ground Team 3:	beginning search of segment C at coordinates five - nine - three - six – six by four - four - four - seven - two
Command Base:	repeat, beginning search at coordinates five - nine - three - six – six by four - four - four - seven - two
Ground Team 3:	affirmative
Command Base:	command base clear

The speed of your message should consider whether or not someone must copy down the information. If they do, think of yourself writing the information as you say it. Speak slowly enough so that the information will be received the first time and not need to be repeated.

Try to keep your messages brief and to the point. Anytime you are transmitting you are expending your battery and the radio resource.

Do's / Don't's

- Don't presume that everyone knows how to operate a radio. Check people out on the radio before they start,
- Don't just grab someone and hand them a radio except in an emergency. Train in communications before they are needed.
- Speak across the microphone so that breath sounds will not distort the message.

- Do not have your body between the antenna and receiver.
- Have the antenna pointing straight up.
- Keep things simple and short.
- Three parts to a message: 1) Contact with unit; 2)The message; 3) Clearance of the channel.
- Hold the transmit key for at least one second before beginning the message. This will assure that the first part of your message is not lost.
- If working as a relay, be sure to relay the message EXACTLY as you received it.
- If you have a long message, break it into 30 second increments.

Message Delivery

- Keep tension and excitement out of your voice.
- If you receive a written message to transmit, never change a single word.
- Be specific about your location. Use coordinates.
- Forget humor.
- Condense, don't be redundant and think before you talk.

Don't say yes, say affirmative.

Don't say no, say negative.

Don't let irritation, disgust or sarcasm into your message.

Don't shout into the microphone. Speak in a normal volume.

Don't operate portable or mobile radios without their antennas properly attached.

Don't change your radio frequency unless told to.

- Use correct terminology.
- Do not use layman's terms.
- Use complete sentences when you speak.
- Speak calmly using a neutral tone.
- Do not try and transmit if others are using the channel.
- Speak across the microphone using a normal voice volume. Keep the tone of your voice neutral and slow down your rate of speech.
- Speak clearly, making an effort to pronounce each word distinctly.

- Be brief, using the correct terms, phrases and codes needed to make your message understood. Know what you are going to say before you press the transmit key.
- Avoid using codes and abbreviations unless they are part of your system and will be understood by the persons receiving the message.
- Receive the full message from the sender. Do not attempt to cut another unit off so that you can send. Doing so will block everyone out, including both people transmitting.
- **Do not** use slang or profanity.
- Keep “air time” to a minimum and as brief as possible.
- Diminish the possibility of misunderstanding.
- Be wary of family of subject over-hearing transmissions.