TWIN STATE MUTUAL AID
FIRE ASSOCIATION

Communications Standard Operating Procedures
Revised October, 2022

Twin State Mutual Aid Fire Association

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Revised September, 2021

PURPOSE

The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to encourage standardized communications procedures within the Twin State mutual aid radio system, so that radio transmissions will be brief, concise, and understood, and in conformity with the Federal Communication Commission rules and regulations.

DEFINITIONS

Run Card

A Run Card is a form which is maintained in the dispatch center, and which was approved by the Chief of a department and the Dispatch Committee. The Run Card lists the apparatus which will respond to fires and incidents in that departments areas. The Run Card also indicates cover truck assignments, and special instructions. Appendix B has the types of incidents that fall under each alarm that Dispatch follows.

Still Alarm

Any incident other than a structure fire, which generally does not call for mutual aid response on the initial call. This should also state who to tone if no one responds after the third tone.

General Alarm

Any incident that requires more resources more than a still alarm but not as much as a first alarm.

First Alarm

The initial response to a structure fire, or other incident as predetermined by the Chief of the department.

Working Fire

A fire or other incident at which all of the resources of a department are committed. Upon receipt of the report of a Working Fire by an Incident Commander, the Dispatch Center will send station coverage, in accordance with the Run Card.

Second Alarm or any additional alarm

An incident of such magnitude that additional resources are required in accordance with the appropriate Run Card for that department. Automatic cover is also provided to specified fire stations.

Special Call

A special call is for apparatus or equipment specifically requested by the Incident Commander to assist at a fire or incident.

Staging Area

Apparatus and equipment responding to an incident may be directed by the Incident Commander to an appropriate Staging Area.

Cover

Cover is apparatus that responds to another to fill in at a vacated fire station.

Pilot

A pilot is someone who is familiar with the Town and who remains in the station with a cover truck to guide them to emergencies in that town.

On Scene Reports

An On Scene Report shall be given to the Dispatch Center by the first arriving unit at an emergency and relays what is seen and the need for additional resources.

Under Control

Under Control is used to indicate that an incident has been stabilized, and is within the control of units currently at the scene.

In Service

A unit is in service when it is able to operate at normal capacity.

Out of Service

A unit is out of service when it is not able to operate at normal capacity.

Personnel Accountability Report (PAR)

Accountability status of all personnel on scene of an incident.

Mass Casualty Incident (MCI)

Any incident that overwhelms the responding departments resources.

FCC RULES AND REGULATIONS

All transmitters within the Twin State land mobile radio system must be in compliance with Part 90 of FCC Rules and Regulations.

THE TWIN STATE RADIO SYSTEM

Twin State operates a single frequency (154.400 mhz) conventional radio system for dispatch operations. Dispatch base stations, and all department mobile and portable radios operate on this frequency.

Five base stations are utilized for daily dispatch operations, as follows:
1. Cannon Mt., Franconia

2. Grafton County Courthouse, Haverhill
3. Mann Hill, Littleton
4. West Newbury Fire Station, West Newbury, VT Ayers Mountain, Haverhill
5. Peacham Fire Station, Peacham, VT

Additional radios may be utilized for backup purposes when necessary and include:
-Fairbanks Mt. Radio, accessible only by the St Johnsbury Fire Dept. Dispatch center, can provide coverage to the Barnet and Monroe area.
-Lincoln Dispatch, provides coverage to Woodstock area.
-Courthouse backup radio.
-Several fire departments maintain some base station capability.

In the event of Dispatch evacuation or console failures, the Hanover Dispatch Center can operate the Twin State base stations in most instances. In addition, the Cannon, Mann Hill, and West Newbury radios can be controlled by UHF link radios installed in the Grafton County Mobile Communications Unit, and at the Littleton Fire Department.
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GENERAL RADIO PROCEDURES

The following are suggested guidelines for effective radio communication.

1. Be sure the frequency is clear before transmitting.
2. Hold the microphone or portable about one inch from your mouth, and to the side, so that you speak across the microphone,
3. Wait for dispatch or the unit you are calling to answer before transmitting your message.
4. Don't "clip" your transmission. Push the microphone button before you start talking, and hold it for a second after transmitting your message. All of your message will then be heard by the party you are calling.
5. Use "reverse" calling when transmitting to Dispatch or another unit. Example: "Twin State from Bath engine". By giving your unit designation last, there is a better chance that the unit or station you are calling will hear your unit name.
6. Remember, a radio is not a telephone. You must wait until the unit you are talking to has finished his/her conversation before you begin to talk.
7. Speak in a deliberate and clear voice.
8. Messages should be short and concise.
9. Use plain language when identifying units.

TWIN STATE RADIO POLICY

FREQUENCIES

154.4000 mhz is designated as frequency #1, and is used by Dispatch to tone departments, and for units to converse with Dispatch only.

The following is a list of fireground frequencies and are to be used by units operating at a fire or emergency scene and during training sessions.

TS FG4 154.2950 PL 136.5
TS FG5 154.2800 PL 136.5
TS FG6 154.2350 PL 136.5
TS FG7 154.1600 PL 173.8

AUTHORIZATION

Twin State member departments should install all frequencies in their department vehicles. Any Chief may authorize other officers in his department to install all frequencies in their personal vehicles. All Chiefs are responsible for all radios in their departments and their proper use.

Only base stations with expressed written permission from Twin State may have frequency #1 installed. The following departments have been licensed by the FCC to have frequency #1 in their base stations.

Franconia   Ryegate, VT
Groton, VT   Sugar Hill
Peacham, VT   West Newbury, VT Ayers Mountain, Haverhill

RADIO PROCEDURES FOR FIELD UNITS

When responding to fires or emergencies, the following procedures shall be used. Limit unnecessary radio traffic.

1. The first vehicle leaving quarters signs on using the term "responding" and repeats the type of incident and location.
"Twin State from Littleton Engine 3 responding 123 Main Street for fire a alarm activation"
2. No more than two individual responders should sign on via radio for an incident

3. The first unit (responder or apparatus) arriving at the scene will report their arrival and give the Dispatch Center an initial report and establish Incident Command.
"Littleton K1 on-scene 123 Main Street establishing Littleton Command, nothing showing from exterior"
4. The Incident Commander shall establish appropriate fireground frequencies and relay these to dispatch.
"Bath K1 advising all units to operate on Fireground 4"
5. Incident Command or designee shall monitor the primary Twin State frequency and provide pertinent updates and request any additional resources.
"Twin State from Woodstock Command be advised incident is under control, no additional apparatus needed on-scene"
6. Advise the Dispatch Center when apparatus is returning to quarters.
"Twin State from Twin Mountain Engine 1, all Twin Mountain units returning"
7. Advise the Dispatch Center when apparatus is back in quarters and whether it is in service or not.
"Twin State from Wells River Engine 1, all Wells River units in quarters and in service"

RUN CARD DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURE *See Appendix A*

COMMUNICATION CENTER NOTIFICATIONS

Dispatch may use the following methods and/or applications to notify dispatched agencies:
1. Radio
2. Text
3. *Several automated notification systems/applications*

COMMUNICATION CENTER RADIO PROCEDURES

Dispatch will be responsible for the dispatching of all apparatus and emergency equipment for mutual aid emergencies, and for maintaining adequate station coverage in member towns.

If no apparatus has signed on within 5 minutes after the department is toned, dispatch will initiate a second tone. If no apparatus or officer has signed on after another 2 minutes dispatch will initiate a third tone. At this time the next-due department according to the Run Card is toned.

Responses will be in accordance with the run cards except that the dispatchers may use their own discretion when mutual aid equipment is unavailable for any reason.

Dispatch will inform the Incident Commander when his requests have been executed by Dispatch such as calling the power company, Red Cross, etc.

Upon confirmation of the report of a working fire, cover will be dispatched in accordance with the appropriate run card.

Dispatch will conduct 20 minute PAR checks with Incident Commanders during all incidents until advised to discontinue.

COMMUNICATION CENTER MANAGEMENT

The Grafton County Sheriff's Department, Communications Division, provides dispatch service to Twin State and many of its members through contractual arrangements. Operation of the Dispatch Center is the responsibility of the Director of Communications. Questions or concerns regarding Dispatch activities are to be addressed solely by the Fire Chief to the Director of Communications. Dispatch operations for Twin State departments are governed by the agreements between Twin State and the County. Should any particular issue not be resolved to the satisfaction of either the Chief or the Director, the issue will be brought to the Twin State Dispatch Committee for mediation.

Twin State Department members are expected to address all Dispatch-related concerns to their Chief. Direct contact with the Dispatch center personnel must be limited to that necessary for the dispatch of resources and maintenance of response to incidents. All requests for audio recordings, or other Dispatch support, will be forwarded by the Fire Chief to the Director of Communications.

Appendix A:

The following are Guidelines that could be used when developing Run Cards

The following should be taken into consideration when putting together your Run Cards/Response.

1. Location is key for what type of apparatus is needed.
2. Getting a staging area and Officer assigned to it early on to help manage resources.
3. Ladder/Tower should be on the Run Card early as to make sure there is room to place the apparatus.
4. Having units switch to the proper Radio frequency to clear up the Dispatch frequency.
5. Having too many Run Cards can become confusing for Incident Commanders and Dispatch

Different types of Run Cards that are needed for each town.

1. Fire Response/ Structure etc
2. Motor Vehicle Accident
3. Medical Emergencies
4. Brush/Grass/Wild land
5. Mass Casualty

The following shall be followed when making Run Cards

1. Fire Chiefs of the departments that are requested on a Run Card need to be notified and must agree to the request made for their resources. Fire Chiefs also need to notify EMS leaders of the resources needed from them and they need to agree to the request.

2. Departments when making Run Cards need to keep in mind the amount of resources that are available may be limited. Some resources can be listed as a Special Resources and listed on the bottom of the card and activated from that list when requested. These are called "Special Call".

3. Fire Chiefs of the department that the incident is occurring need to

show their station cover request. The Dispatch committee will take care of the rest of the departments coverage needs. This may be done with what is called zone coverage meaning a department would cover more than one department from a central location. The mutual aid normally does not cover Ladder for Ladder as the mutual aid has limited resources of Ladders to use.

4. Apparatus sent as station coverage must be able to fit in fire station it is responding to, this is to protect the apparatus during winter months so it does not freeze and is able to remain in service to respond if needed.

When making Run Cards the normal protocol will be that the run card comes from the Fire Chief of the department. This does not mean department members are not involved in the making of the card. This is just so the response is coming from the highest ranking member of the department. This is also covers any changes requested from the department that the Fire Chief has approved the change.

Appendix B:

Still Alarm;

      Odor investigation
      Fire alarm/Co activation
      Outside smoke
      Utility issue
      Fuel spill
      MV fire
      Illegal fire
      LPG leak

General Alarm;

      Smoke in a building
      Chimney fire
      All rescues of persons
      Any additional still alarm call
      No response from dispatched town.

First Alarm;

      Confirmed building fire