

Communications

Communications Plans

The communications plan is determined, agreed to and approved by all members of the IMT and approved by the Incident Controller.

The plan must identify:

- Who the CFA and other agencies are that need to communicate with each other.
- The most suitable means of doing this.
- The equipment and radio channels required to ensure uninterrupted communications for safe, effective and efficient operation throughout the entire period of the fire/incident.
- Fall back options if any element fails.

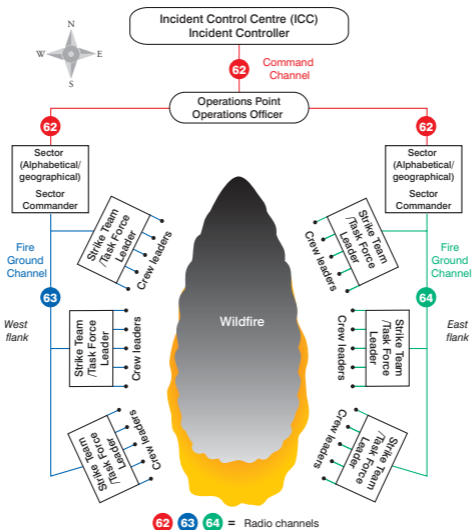
The plan should also include the following as appropriate:

- Radio network.
- Telephone network.
- Aircraft communications.
- Interagency communications.

- Communications equipment.
- Maintenance arrangements.

The plan is to not be departed from without the consent of the Incident Controller.

Sample Communications Plan



Mayday Radio Procedures

- The message “Mayday Mayday Mayday” may be transmitted immediately by a CFA individual who believes they or others are in a situation of grave and/or life threatening danger.
- A Mayday call has absolute priority over all other transmissions.**

Content of Message

When transmitting a Mayday message, the individual is to state:

- Their station identification;
- Their location;
- A summary of the situation they are in; and
- What assistance they require.

Action – CommCen

- Acknowledge the message and direct all other stations to ‘wait out’.
- Advise the Incident Controller of the message and follow all instructions of the Incident Controller in supporting those in distress including immediate dispatch of emergency

services (eg. Ambulance) to the control point if this has not already occurred.

- Deal with all communication originated by the emergency message.

Action – Incident Controller

- Take responsibility for managing the Mayday call.
- Plan the response to the Mayday call by:
 - Confirming the details provided by the caller.
 - Committing resources to the rescue.
 - Establishing a rescue sector (as determined by the Incident Controller).
 - Allocating appropriate radio channels to the rescue and the rest of the fire or incident.
 - Issuing a general message, or if appropriate, a red flag warning, to the fire/incident ground.
- Secure area and appoint appropriate resources.
- Once the rescue is complete, conclude the Mayday call. This shall be communicated via briefings and broadcasting a general message on all incident channels.

Notifications

- The Incident Controller is to notify the RDO of all Mayday calls.
- The RDO is to advise the State Duty Officer of all Mayday calls.

Actions by all other persons

- On hearing a Mayday call all other radio traffic is to cease.
- Prior to the Incident Controller allocating resources, only those resources within the immediate vicinity are to render assistance at the direction of the Crew Leader(s). Safety of rescuers must be considered at all times.
- All other crews are to continue to combat the fire or incident.

(Reference: Chief Officer's SOP 9.15)

Mobile Communications Vehicles

Role

- Be available to the Incident Controller for the purpose of handling and monitoring communications at the scene.
 - Control point.
 - Division command point.
 - Sector command point.
 - Staging area.
- To be a focal point for all other agencies (eg. ambulance).
- To control the flow of information.
- Should it become necessary to establish an ICC, the unit's role changes.

Siting of the Appliance

Wherever possible, site vehicle on a hard standing area on level ground close to the scene. Also consider the following:

- Access to telephone cables, private or commercial.

- Access to 240V power supply.
- Keep clear of overhead hazards.
- Be in a location with good access for emergency service personnel to liaise with each other.
- Be in a location to control the scene.

Information and Records

- Information should be sent up and down the chain of command at regular intervals.
- All relevant messages are to be logged.
- No statements are to be made to the media without the permission of the Incident Controller/MCV Supervisor or other person in accordance with Chief Officer's SOP 9.16 – *Media Management*.
- All faxes and messages should be kept with the radio/telephone log book.

Paperwork

The following paperwork should be available in the MCV and used as appropriate:

- Rapid log sheets.
- Radio/telephone log book.
- Facsimile header form.
- Media release form.
- Hazmat action guide sheet.
- Fire weather forecast sheet.
- Aircraft preliminary fire report.
- Region contact books.

A copy of all records, tapes (where fitted) and logs from the MCV is to be left with the Incident Controller after any fire or incident and the originals kept by the home station for at least seven (7) years (copies of tapes where available may be supplied at a later date).

Systems

The following systems may be available on an MCV:

- Telephone systems:
 - Magneto phones.
 - Commander phone systems.
 - Mobile phones.
- Fax and photocopier.
- Radios:
 - Aircraft radios.
 - Seaphone radios.
 - MFESB radios.
 - HF radios.
 - UHF-CB radio.
 - Radio microphones – Bus Bar.
 - Aerials.
 - Portable radios.
- Laptop computers.
- Tape recorder.

- Ancillary systems:
 - Air conditioner.
 - Hot water systems.
 - Refrigerator.
 - Weather instruments.
 - Water.
 - Water pump.
- Power:
 - Mains power.
 - Generator.
 - Lights.
- MCV crews are to wear appropriate PPC for the task they are performing.
- Consider the potential for the MCV to be overrun by fire or affected by a change in conditions at the fire or incident.
- Comply with all requirements for working on roof of appliances.
- Consider siting of appliance where use of intrinsically safe radio equipment is required.

- CFA members must ensure that no radio transmissions are made while work is being carried out on the roof of the appliance or in the vicinity of radio aerials.
- MVCs are not to be set up near overhead power lines.
- Do not use headsets during periods of severe weather (eg. lightning strikes).
- Site generators downwind.
- Ensure proper disposal of sink waste where applicable.

(Reference: Chief Officer's SOP 9.17)

Mobile Phones – Use in Operations

Operations

Mobile phones may be used during fires or incidents providing:

- They are approved by the Incident Controller, Strike Team Leader or Crew Leader.
- They are a part of an approved Regional or Incident Communications Plan for transmission of information.

- All information relating to the management of fires and incidents is communicated through the IMT chain of command.

Mobile phones must NOT be used:

- During operational activities (with the exception of the above procedures).
- To transmit operational information to or from the vehicles or CFA members directly involved in fire suppression.
- To raise issues or grievances with brigade, group or regional management that the IMT should deal with.
- Where safety is jeopardised.

Use of mobile phones will add to the congestion of the mobile network and should be avoided wherever possible.

Transmission of information that may affect the safety or welfare of personnel involved in response to an incident must be transmitted via VHF radio.

(Reference: Chief Officer's SOP 9.18)

Pro Words

Affirmative	Yes (not to be confused with 'Roger' – used when answering a question).
All Stations	General call from a base radio to all mobiles and portables on its network.
Cancel	Appliances or service nominated are no longer required to proceed; Ignore my previous statement.
Confirm	Reinforce a statement.
Correction	An error has been made in my last transmission.
Disregard	Delete all reference to my last transmission.
ETA	Estimated Time of Arrival.
ETD	Estimated Time of Departure.
Figures	Used before groups of figures, except before call signs and map reference.
Fire Call	Used to pre-empt a despatch or assignment of mobile appliances to attend an emergency call.
Go ahead	I am ready to receive your transmission.
Grid	A grid reference follows.
I Say again	I am repeating my last transmission.
I spell	Spelling by phonetic alphabet.
MAYDAY	Life is at risk – all other transmissions to stop.

Message	I have a message to transmit.
Negative	No.
Nothing Heard	I have not received a reply or heard from the radio whose call sign I have just used.
Over	My transmission to you has ended, but I intend calling another radio straight away.
Out	I have finished transmitting.
Radio check	What is my signal strength and readability?
Roger	Message received and understood (should not be used to answer a question).
Say again ()	Please repeat all of your last transmission (or the portion indicated).
Send	I am ready to receive your transmission.
Sitrep	Situation report of the fire/incident.
Standby	I must pause and will come back when ready.
Wait	I must pause for up to 5 seconds – unless urgent no other station is to transmit.
Wilco	Message received and will be complied with.
Wordback	Description of the type and situation of a fire/incident.

Radio Procedures

- Radio channels used by CFA members will be identified in:
 - Regional Operations Management Plans.
 - Region Default Communications Plans.
 - Incident Communications Plans.
- Alternative channels need to be approved by:
 - The RDO.
 - CommGen.
 - Incident Controller, as appropriate.

Transmitting a message

- Give the call sign of the station you are calling and your call sign.
- The station being called will acknowledge.
- Repeat the call sign of the station you are calling, your call sign and give the message.
- Receive acknowledgment.

Receiving a message

- Give the call sign of the station you are replying to.
- Give your call sign.
- Say “SEND”.

Correcting mistakes

- To fix a mistake use the word “CORRECTION” then “I SAY AGAIN”.
- Repeat the last correctly transmitted word and the remainder of the correct message.

Repetition

- Can be used to provide emphasis or to ensure comprehension by the receiver.
- When repeating a message use “I SAY AGAIN”.
- When asking for a message to be repeated use “SAY AGAIN” followed by specifics of what you want repeated eg. “say again word before...”, “say again all after....”.

Operational Procedures

Sequence of information

Message	Meaning
Turn out	You have left your home location and are proceeding to the incident.
On scene	You have arrived at the incident scene.
Wordback	A precise definition of the status of the fire or incident (type & size) and requests for further resources.
SITREP	A situation report, which gives a more detailed description of the incident.
Messages	These allow opportunities for additional requests or to provide further information.
Investigating	Further investigation is required to establish the status and precise location of the fire or incident.
Not yet under control	the fire or incident has the potential to spread or increase in difficulty. The appliances and personnel in attendance may not be sufficient.
Under control	The resources in attendance and en route are sufficient to contain the incident.
Stop	The resources presently in attendance at the incident are sufficient. Resources that are en route are not required and may return to their own locations.

Returning	The calling mobile radio operator's vehicle has left the incident and is returning to its station or workplace. The crew is available to respond to another incident.
In station	Indicates that the vehicle has returned to its home location.
Committed	Vehicles on scene will not be available for other calls until further notice.
Available	Vehicles may remain on scene, but are made up and ready to respond to any further calls.
Out of Service	Vehicle is unavailable to respond to any calls until further notice.

To ensure that urgent operational information can be transmitted effectively, all CFA members using the radio network shall keep all transmissions brief and concise.

Situation Reports

- Use appropriate call sign.
- Location.
- Type of incident.
- Size of problem.
- Action being taken.

- Additional help required.

Trunking Radios

- To use the trunking facility the radio must be trunking enabled.
- Where fitted, press the Personality Selection Button (SEL) and select Personality 1.

Making a call

- Use the alpha numeric keypad to enter the number (remember to enter agency and interfleet numbers as required).
- To call a telephone dial 0 before dialling the phone number.
- Press the press to talk button (PTT).

Receiving a call

- Press the press to talk button (PTT) to answer.
- Watch the display for the indication of when to start speaking

Cancelling or ending a call

- Press the clear button or dial * and #.

Calling a radio from a telephone

- Dial the closest Fleetcom telephone exchange.
- After the tones, dial the ANN fleet number and the individual unit number.

Fleet Numbers

Fleet Number	Region	Number	Used
Agency	CFA	240	When dialling between agencies
	DSE	230	
	DHS	234	
	Hancocks	243	

	Region	ANN Number	MPT Fleet Number	
ANN and MPT Fleet numbers for regions	8, 13, CFA HQ	7400	2001	ANN when dialling from a phone to a trunking radio. MPT Fleet number when calling a radio in a different fleet.
	9, 10, 11	7401	2401	
	12, 22, 23, 24	7402	2801	
	4, 5, 6, 16	7403	3201	
	2, 17, 18, 20	7404	3601	
	7, 14, 15	7405	4001	
	Department of Human Services	7343	3201	
	Hancocks Plantations	7436	4401	
	State Air Desk	230 2001 700		
	VicFire Ballarat	240 4001 624		
Fleetcom Exchange	Melbourne	9620 0011		When dialling a trunking radio from a phone
	Hamilton	5571 2571		
	Ballarat	5333 5295		
	Swan Hill	5032 0011		
	Bendigo	5442 6334		
	Wangaratta	5722 3250		
	Traralgon	5174 6149		

Each radio will also have an individual ID number displayed on the unit.