

SANTA CLARA COUNTY LOCAL FIRE SERVICE AND RESCUE MUTUAL AID PLAN

APPENDIX 16 – INCIDENT COMMUNICATIONS PERSONNEL

Revised Date: July 2023

Next Revision Date: July 2025

Introduction

The Santa Clara County Fire Chiefs' Association acknowledges that supplemental communications support and assistance by trained radio operators/dispatch personnel may be of benefit to fire agencies in the event of a major incident. The intent is to provide additional, specifically trained communications dispatch resources to any fire department in Santa Clara County requesting such assistance. Historically, a number of Santa Clara County Fire agencies have established Incident Dispatch Teams (IDTs) which consisted of one or more fire incident dispatchers (INDI) who were specially trained, equipped, and authorized by their agencies to respond to the scene of a major emergency to provide communications and command post support for that incident. At the Santa Clara County Fire Radio Operators Group (FROG) recommendation, the County Fire Chiefs' have agreed to follow the California Incident Command Certification System (CICCS) format and utilize "Incident Communications Radio Operators" (RADO) that may come from a professional dispatcher, fire department or other approved background (see definitions below).

Purpose

RADOs can be helpful in various types of emergency situations to the requesting fire agency where additional or supplemental communications and coordination assistance may be of benefit to the Incident Command Staff and to the overall incident. Assistance from RADOs is intended to allow the Incident Command Staff to devote their time and focus to operational, planning, and logistical strategies, by relieving them of the burden of radio monitoring, transmitting, and tracking of resources. Types of incidents include: greater alarm/extended duration structure fires, Wildland/Urban interface (WUI) fires, complex hazardous materials incidents, multiple casualty incidents and localized environmental disasters such as floods, windstorms and plane crashes.

Definitions

Professional dispatchers have different qualifications from firefighter and other personnel due to training and day to day job duties. For the purpose of this document, professional dispatchers will be known as INDI and are defined as having two years of fire dispatching experience. They may also be RADO qualified. Other personnel who get RADO qualification through CICCS may not have this professional dispatcher background.

If an Incident Commander requires a professional dispatcher to respond, they must request an INDI versus a RADO.

Qualifications

Minimum qualifications required for RADO personnel include the following:

- Non-probationary fire dispatcher with two years fire dispatching experience, firefighter or other approved position (having successfully completed probation) according to each agency’s preference.
- Completion of CICCIS Required Training for a Radio Operator (RADO):
 - Introduction to ICS (I-100)
 - Basic ICS (I-200)
 - NIMS – An Introduction (IS-700)
 - Radio Operator (J-158) – self-study handbook
- Completion of FROG/Peer Review approved 8-hour RADO Class (optional)
- Authorized to respond to fire department emergencies within Santa Clara County for the purpose of functioning as a RADO. Note: with department head approval a RADO listed in IROC may also be available for deployment statewide.
- For professional dispatchers: recommendation and approval by own agency Communications Dispatch Manager, Fire Chief or department head.
- Training: ICS I300 or equivalent (desired)

Note: Required equipment will be issued to Incident Dispatchers by their home fire agency and will include their duty uniform and necessary personal protective equipment (PPE). Wildland PPE (aka “yellows” or brush gear) and safety shoes are recognized as adequate PPE for RADOs.

Terminology

For the purpose of clarification, the following definitions will apply:

- Responsible Jurisdiction or Requesting Agency shall mean the jurisdiction within whose boundaries the emergency exists
- Assisting Agency shall mean the jurisdiction providing outside assistance
- Shared Resource shall mean an INDI or RADO employed by one agency and shared with another agency for the purpose of assisting or supporting the Incident Command Staff.

Procedures

In the event of a major emergency in which supplemental communications assistance is needed or when the Responsible Jurisdiction either has exhausted their incident dispatch resources or has none to provide, the Assisting Agencies (upon request by the Responsible Jurisdiction), will respond one or more qualified INDIs or RADOs to the scene of the emergency or to a location and reporting time designated by the Requesting Agency. The limitation on the number of INDIs or RADOs available for assistance shall be determined by each individual Assisting Agency. INDIs or RADOs may be requested for either “Immediate Need” or “Planned Need” events.

Activation of an INDI or RADO will be requested as a Mutual Aid resource via the existing Red Net fire mutual aid procedures. The Incident Commander will place the request for outside agency INDI or RADOs through their dispatch center. The requesting agency will activate the Red Net All-Call feature to all fire agencies in the County and transmit the following:

- Name of requesting agency
- Need for INDI and/or RADOs and the number requested
- Type of incident, reporting location, and Thomas Brothers Map coordinates
- Conduct a roll call to determine which agencies have the ability to provide INDI or RADO resources

Each fire dispatch center that provides INDIs or RADOs will maintain a list of names and contact numbers for their qualified personnel. Upon receipt of a request, the Assisting Agencies will do the following:

- Advise of INDI or RADO response availability to the Requesting Agency
- Confirm the number of INDIs or RADOs responding, their names, and ETA

Upon confirmation of INDI or RADO response from Assisting Agencies, the fire dispatch center of the requesting jurisdiction shall contact the Incident Commander and advise of the number of personnel responding and a range of travel times to scene or designated reporting location (e.g. “IC, there are 2 mutual aid resources, one INDI and one RADO responding with an ETA of 30 to 60 minutes”).

INDI/RADO Response and On-Scene Coordination

Requesting agencies should understand that responding resources will be non-Code 3 and usually in privately owned vehicles. They may or may not have a portable radio capable of transmitting on the Incident frequency. For personnel that do have radio capability, they will acknowledge response on their own primary frequency and then switch to the designated mutual aid travel frequency.

Some Assisting Agencies own and operate their own agency command or communications vehicle. Such vehicles should be ordered as a separate Mutual Aid Request.

Upon arrival at the scene or to the designated reporting location, the INDIs/RADOs from Assisting Agencies will report to the Incident Command Post (ICP) and interface with either the Incident Communications Manager (INCM), the Communications Unit Leader (COML), the Logistics Section Chief or the Incident Commander (if the former roles are not filled). Mutual Aid INDIs/RADOs will identify themselves by name and agency to the Requesting Agency contact person and receive their incident assignment. In all cases, INDIs/RADOs will respond and report with a minimum of wildland protective clothing and agency identification.

Roles and Responsibility

The role of INDI/RADO resources is to assist with radio communications for the Incident Commander. Their functions may include the following:

- Monitor radio frequencies and transmissions for the IC
- Transmit radio communications as directed by the IC
- Document resources and events as directed by the IC
- Facilitate acquisition of other support services (such as Fire Associates, American Red Cross, placing food orders, etc.) as directed by the IC
- Placing and receiving phone communications as directed by the IC
- Other support functions within the scope of their training as directed by the IC
- Prepare an after-action communication report for the IC and/or requesting agency

Each agency providing mutual aid personnel may impose a limitation on the number of personnel available to respond to a Mutual Aid request. It is recognized that not all fire agencies in the County can provide INDIs/RADOs upon request and therefore it is understood that not every request for INDIs/RADOs can be directly reciprocated. **At all times**, INDIs/RADOs from Assisting Agencies come under the direct authority and command of the Requesting Agency's Incident Commander. Assisting Agencies will bear all costs and coordinate any compensation for INDIs/RADOs who respond as an authorized Mutual Aid resource.

Note: Recognizing that not all fire dispatchers fall under the direct management authority of their agency's respective fire departments, it shall be the responsibility of the Communications Managers of responding INDI resources to administratively manage the participation of their dispatchers pursuant to this program through the Santa Clara County Public Safety Communications Manager's Association (PSCMA).