Message Handling Procedures

ARES/RACES of Delaware County Pennsylvania

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1 Introduction

Emergency Communications is serious business. Whether we are simply speaking to another radio operator about something we observed, or we are passing official message traffic on behalf of a third party, we have two overarching goals. They are, in priority order:

- 1. Transfer the message accurately (zero errors)
- 2. Transfer the message efficiently (quickly, with as few words as possible)

To accomplish both goals, we all need to agree on a set of "rules" that we will use when speaking on the radio. In most respects, it doesn't really matter what the rules are, if we all operate by the same rules. Failure to follow the same set of rules results in either inaccurate copy of the message, or unnecessary repeats and extra words used, or both!

Also, please see the Messaging¹ section of the ARES Manual².

All Delaware County ARES/RACES operators are expected to follow these procedures when passing message traffic.

¹ https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/display/DelcoARES/Messaging

² https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/display/DelcoARES/ARES+Manual

2 About Messaging

2.1 Introduction

An important skill for radio operators providing emergency communications is the ability to concurrently receive, send, and log messages so that information is readily accessible to the radio operator, the supporting team of radio operators, and members of the served agencies.

Messaging has long been our primary activity as amateur operators. In an emergency condition, certain specialized types of messaging are needed to support the operational capabilities of our agency partners. For that reason, the types of messages that are sent and received by ARES volunteers, the forms, and the records that are used to record those activities are important and necessary for our success. There are three key NIMS documents that capture information and organize the work effort so that each member of the radio team can handle the flow of radio messages systematically.

This chapter outlines the documents and the workflow. It assumes that the messages are handled in an EOC/ Incident Communications Center setting — which is the most challenging of the four scenarios below.

2.2 Message Scenarios and Methods

For amateur and served agency partners during an emergency or a declared disaster, moving pertinent and precise information from one point to another is of the utmost importance.

Typical scenarios for the operators handling the messages include:

- Operators at an Emergency Operating Center (EOC) working with representatives of responding agencies.
- Operators supporting a large field operation, such as an evacuation shelter.
- Operators supporting a small field operation, such as a neighborhood incident or mobile in a vehicle.
- Operators located at home.

Messages can be handled in many ways. Here are a few:

- By phone cellular service or by landline.
- By fax.
- By Internet.
- By local UHF/VHF voice transmission.
- By HF voice transmission medium and long-range communications.
- By digital communications UHF/VHF, HF.
- By satellite communications.

Though many of these modes of communication and others not mentioned here may or may not be accessible or available, it is the job of the ARES communicator to move messages to specified parties on request by any combination of means available.

2.3 Messaging and Logging Documents

There are several types of messaging documents that have been developed around the country and the world that have been useful for certain emergency issues or operational capabilities. However, for the purposes of ARES messaging and unit operations, we endorse the standard use of Incident Command System (ICS) forms for both exercise as well as operational use. The reason is that our served agency partners already use these documents as part of their standard protocol. If we are working with the same documentation as our partners in exercises as well as our own practice scenarios, it will be much easier to work our team members and agency partners in an actual incident.

During an emergency, the operators need to maintain good awareness of an evolving situation. The operators must have information about the incident ready for briefing team members at the local site as well as exchange messages in an accurate and timely fashion.

After an hour of intense radio communications, operators can easily forget or be confused on the details of what happened and when. Accurate logging of information helps the operator maintain situational awareness by shifting the operator's reliance from personal memory to transcribing information real-time onto log documents that can be reviewed by the operators and others.

The operator or other team member can quickly scan through the logs to locate the time and key details of an event or message. The key documents are the ICS 214 Activity Log and the ICS 213 Message Form.

Radio messages fall into two broad categories:

2.3.1 Tactical or informal radio messages

Tactical messages are unstructured messages originated by the radio operator and typically convey status, progress, or situational information. Examples are road closures or obstruction, current location of a vehicle responding to a situation, or a short message from a third party to be relayed to another person. For tactical messages, key elements of the message are implied and usually not stated such as time of the message, and the position of authority of the message originator and recipient.

These types of messages are used to facilitate many things. Here are some examples:

- · Command communications
- Weather status
- · Resource needs
- · Logistics needs
- · Search and rescue operations
- Damage assessment
- · ARESMAT coordination
- Security

2.3.2 Formal radio messages

Formal messages are structured messages containing a prescribed sequence of key message elements. Radio operators expect the elements to be exchanged in a certain sequence and will receive and write the information onto message forms. The NIMS ICS 213 is the message form common to emergency management agencies. Each agency in turn may implement specialized message forms to report and exchange operational information important to that agency.

2.4 ICS 214 Activity Log

The radio team should maintain an ICS 214 Activity Log³ at their operator position. When an operator arrives at the EOC and is ready to start a shift, that information should be logged in the ICS 214 log. Similarly, when an operator ends their shift, that information is also logged in the ICS 214.

Major internal events, such as the start of the incident, start of the radio operations, or key changes in the readiness or capabilities of the radio team should be logged into the ICS 214. Major external events, such as a key milestone, improvement or worsening of the incident, and availability or loss of electrical power should also be logged.

³ https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/download/attachments/70254674/

ICS%20Form%20214%2C%20Activity%20Log%20%28v3%29.pdf?api=v2&modificationDate=1547157244446&version=1

The updates to the ICS 214 log tend to be occasional during the incident. Attaching the current copy to a clipboard will keep it readily locatable and accessible for the team.

The ICS 214 form's primary purpose is to capture the record of significant activity during an operational period other than message traffic. If there is no other recording form available, the ICS 214 Activity Log could serve as a means to capture the necessary information concerning the transmittal of point-to-point messaging. This form will list the supervisor as well as the operators of the communication group as assigned for that period and the pertinent information of the operation and will provide a chronological record, by time, of that period's activities.

2.5 ICS 213 General Message Form

The standard ICS Form ICS 213⁴ has been used for a number of years for general messaging and is used to exchange most formal radio messages. This form is not restricted in the number of words that can be used in the message. The ICS 213 is described as a general message form. It serves both as a sending document as well as a response document. When used operationally for either exercises or actual emergencies, the document becomes part of the permanent record of the operation.

The ICS 213 can be used as a transmittal document for other pertinent documentation, such as:

- · Health and Welfare information
- General supplies requests
- Transfer facilities statuses
- Shelters available
- Shelter capacities
- · Road and other infrastructure statuses
- Hospital availability reports and patient capacities
- Personal injury status and transport reports, etc.

As messages are received, the radio operator:

- Logs the incoming message activity in the ICS-214 activity log.
- Writes the incoming message activity onto the top half of the ICS 213 form.
- Records the communications event information in the bottom margin of the ICS 213 form.
- Retains a copy of the message at the communications position.
- Handles and delivers the message to the intended recipient according to the established procedures of the EOC.

The intended recipient composes a reply to the message and completes the signature block of the reply message is handled according to the established procedures of the EOC and delivered to the radio communications position for transmission.

The radio operator:

- Logs the outgoing message request in the ICS-214 activity log.
- Establishes contact with the receiving station.
- Exchanges the message with the receiving station.
- Records the communications event information in the bottom margin of the ICS 213 form.
- Retains a copy of the message at the communications position.
- Completes the handling and filing of the message according to established procedures within the EOC.

The radio operator should expect occasional inquires about the messages that were received and sent. It is important that the message events be logged in the ICS 214 and the ICS 213 forms so that the flow of messages can be tracked and the status of a particular series of exchanged messages is known. It is also important that the

⁴ https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/download/attachments/153158686/ics%20form%20213%2C%20general%20message%20%28v3%29.pdf?api=v2&modificationDate=1580314003031&version=1

<u>operator position retains a copy of the message forms</u>. For this reason, experienced radio operators know to expect occasional pauses with other stations as they process and update information in these logs and forms.

2.6 Modification of ICS Forms Including ICS-213

One of the reasons that ICS is successful is the use of common terminology. The use of common terminology allows personnel from different organizations to communicate with each other without being misunderstood.

"ICS-213" is the name of the ICS General Message Form. The official ICS forms are published by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) for wildfire ICS and by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for all-hazards ICS. ICS-213 doesn't refer to just any general message form; it refers to the official form. When amateurs modify the official ICS-213 and publish it with the same name, they violate the common terminology principle of ICS — now there are two or more things that have the same name but are not the same.

Naming the form in the style of ICS forms, such as ICS-213AR, implies that it is an ICS form approved by the same authority that approves all ICS forms. Sometimes modified forms will carry other designations that compound the confusion, implying endorsement where none exists. For example, there exists a modified ICS-213 form that bears the designations "ICS-213" and "NFES 1336." NFES 1336 is the ordering code in the National Fire Equipment System for the NWCG ICS-213 General Message Form. Someone could order printed forms from NWCG and not get what they thought they were ordering.

To avoid creating confusion about which form is which:

- Whenever modifying an existing official form, it is important to remove all agency names and form number designations, etc., that are unique to the original forms, unless the form contains a specific prohibition on making changes. Forms created by the US Government are usually in the public domain (17 U.S.C. 105) and changes can usually be made to them. For example, if changes are made to form ICS 213, remove "ICS 213" and "NFES 1336" if they appear on the original General Message Form, to make users aware that the form has been modified.
- 2. Do not make up a designation that resembles any other widely-accepted designation style. For example, do not label your Amateur Radio General Message Form as ICS-213AR. Instead use plain language (another ICS principle) label it something like "Amateur Radio General Message Form," or if necessary to have a code, something like AR-MSG, or something that won't imply it is an official ICS form.
- 3. Consider giving credit to the source in a line at the bottom, such as "Based on FEMA Form ICS 213" doing so makes it clear that this form is not the official ICS 213.

Those who designed the official ICS forms established a system to periodically review and update their forms. If blocks to track message transmission need to be added to the official ICS forms, the case can be made to the forms review committee; it is for them to decide on the final design and to publish the new official version. Until then, amateurs can write the message tracking information they desire by hand in the top or bottom margin of the official ICS 213 form; or they can create their own version, as long as they take care to avoid confusion between their message form and the official form.

2.7 NTS Messaging Forms

During an operation, messages may be received into the communications group from a representative of the National Traffic System on one of two forms.

- ARRL Radiogram⁵ (Instructions⁶)
- FSD-244 Amateur Radio Disaster Welfare Message

Though both documents are very similar in format and content, the FSD-244 is more specifically dedicated to relating information specifically related to an incident or disaster. If the operator receives a message in either of these formats it should be forwarded on to its intended recipient in the same format it is received unless the operator is instructed otherwise.

 $^{5\,}https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/download/attachments/153158686/ARRL\%20Radiogram\%20Fillable.pdf?~api=v2\&modificationDate=1581441200985\&version=1$

⁶ https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/download/attachments/146997422/ARRL%20Radiogram%20Dissected.pdf? api=v2&modificationDate=1609097983517&version=1

3 Enhancements to NTS Procedures

The set of rules used by Delco ARES/RACES is based on the message passing rules used by the ARRL National Traffic System (NTS)⁷ and spelled out in their documentation⁸:

- ARRL NTS Message Passing Guide Chapter 1 The ARRL Message Format⁹
 - We don't usually deal with ARRL Radiograms. So, this chapter is mostly useful as introductory information for Chapter 2
- ARRL NTS Message Passing Guide Chapter 2 Sending Messages on Voice¹⁰
 - Chapter 2 defines how to voice various type of message content, such as numbers, initials, addresses, etc. Note: This is the most important chapter for our purposes.

The reader is encouraged to keep a copy of the NTS documentation¹¹ (at least Chapter 2¹²) along with this document and to refer to the NTS documentation where referenced.

In most cases, the procedures in this document are consistent with the NTS documentation. But there are two situations where we differ from the NTS documentation:

- When the NTS manual doesn't account for messages written by third parties. This mostly applies to punctuation.
 - For example, the ARRL NTS documentation expects that the ARRL Radiogram is written by an NTS radio operator that knows to use their unique procedures. They use an "X" (capital X) for a period at the end of a sentence. But the messages we must send are written by third parties in normal English, with a period (".") at the end of sentences.
- When the NTS manual doesn't have a rule that covers the situation.
 - For example, the ARRL NTS documentation doesn't cover how to speak symbols or GPS coordinates and doesn't account for the need to specify capitalization (such as in a web URL or a password).

⁷ https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/display/DelcoARES/NTS

⁸ https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/display/DelcoARES/Manuals+-+NTS

⁹ https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/download/attachments/193232973/MPG104A.pdf? api=v2&modificationDate=1614176037511&version=1

¹⁰ https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/download/attachments/193232973/MPG204A.pdf? api=v2&modificationDate=1614176037747&version=1

 $^{{\}tt 11\,https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/display/DelcoARES/Manuals+-+NTS}$

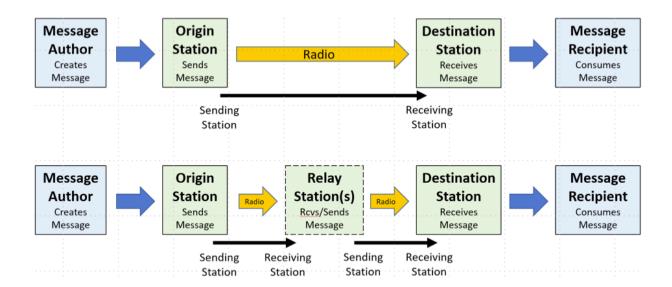
¹² https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/download/attachments/193232973/MPG204A.pdf? api=v2&modificationDate=1614176037747&version=1

4 Message Passing Roles

When discussing the various people involved in handling a message, words like "Sender" or "Receiver" can be ambiguous. For example, does "Sender" mean the person that wrote the message? Or does it mean the radio operator who is sending the message?

We define the following terms to unambiguously identify the different people involved in the message passing process:

- Message author: Creator of the message (often a third party)
- Sending station: Radio operator sending the message
- Receiving station: Radio operator receiving the message
- Relay station: Acts first as a receiving station, then as a sending station
- · Origin station: The first sending station
- Destination station: The last receiving station
- Message recipient: The person/position to which message is addressed (often a third party)



The Origin Station and Destination station are particularly important because we use the message numbers that they assign for logging and tracking the message, even when a relay is involved.

5 Operator-to-Operator Messages

Operator-to-operator messages are messages where the radio operators are both the authors and recipients of the message. Using the terms defined above, the Message Author is the same person as the Origin Station, and the Destination Station is the same person as the Message Recipient.

Examples of operator-to-operator messages are:

- Check-in and check-out messages
- · Health & welfare checks
- Status reports (such as crowd counts, water level reports, traffic reports, etc.)
- Damage assessments (such as Mike-Mike reports, windshield surveys, etc.)

Note that the destination station may forward the information to someone else, like an event or incident official, after some summarization and analysis. But the key point is that the person who authors the messages and the person for which the message it destined is a radio operator.

Because the creator and consumer of the message are both radio operators, the operators have some freedom to define what the format should be and how it should be sent. In a directed net, the net control often specifies how the net will operate. In an open net, the two individual operators may decide how best to handle the message. This is quite different from passing messages on behalf of a third party.

6 Third Party Messages

Third party messages are sent and received by radio operators on behalf of others (third parties). That means that the third party determines:

- Message format (usually some type of form used by that agency)
- Message content (often including terms that are unfamiliar to the radio operator)
- Message to/from information (typically, an ICS position and location)
- Message handling order (how quickly they need it sent)

With third party messages, the radio operator must adapt to and operate within the served agency's workflow, not the other way around. An effective way to think of the radio operator's job is to compare it to a fax machine. What should come out the other end of the radio channel and be delivered to the message recipient should be a remarkably close facsimile or replica of the message that the message author created. The radio operator must not interpret or change the message and it must arrive at the other end in the correct format and fully legible.

The key operational difference between handling operator-to-operator messages and third-party messages is the need to send the third party messages exactly, so that the message recipient receives what the message author sent. Decades of experience has shown that the only effective and efficient way to do that is to use a shared set of procedures.

7 Standard ITU Phonetics

We use standard ITU phonetic alphabet pronunciation. Note that the standard ITU pronunciation for some letters and numbers is different from the way it is written. These differences **are marked in bold** below. Practice until they are second nature.

Wikipedia references:

• Search for NATO phonetic alphabet: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/NATO_phonetic_alphabet

7.1 Letters

Letter	Phonetic (Written)	Phonetic (Spoken)
A	alfa	AL-fa
В	bravo	BRAH-voh
С	charlie	CHAR-lee
D	delta	DELL-tah
Е	echo	ECK-oh
F	foxtrot	FOKS-trot
G	golf	GOLF
Н	hotel	hoh-TELL
I	india	IN-dee-ah
J	juliet	JU-lee-ETT
К	kilo	KEY-loh
L	lima	LEE-mah
М	mike	MIKE
N	november	no-VEM-ber
0	oscar	OSS-cah
Р	papa	pah-PAH
Q	quebec	keh-BECK
R	romeo	ROW-me-oh

Letter	Phonetic (Written)	Phonetic (Spoken)
S	sierra	see-AIR-rah
Т	tango	TANG-go
U	uniform	YOU-ni-form
V	victor	VIK-tah
W	whiskey	WISS-key
Х	x-ray	ECKS-RAY
Υ	yankee	YANG-key
Z	zulu	ZOO-loo

7.2 Numbers

Number	Written	Spoken
0	zero	ZEE-row
1	one	WUN
2	two	ТОО
3	three	TREE
4	four	FOH-wer
5	five	FIFE
6	six	SICKS
7	seven	SEV-vin
8	eight	ATE
9	nine	NINE-er

Multi-digit numbers are spoken one digit at a time

• Example: 600 = "six zero zero"

8 Symbols

Symbols are increasingly used in our everyday messages. We must have a mutually agreed-upon set of names for symbols so we can understand each other exactly.

We define the following standard symbol names. As you will see, we use the common name for symbols, which should make speaking and copying symbols very straight-forward.

Some symbols have multiple common names:

- For symbols that have context sensitive names, we use the commonly used, context sensitive name
 - Examples: "." (period, decimal, dot) and "-" (minus-sign, hyphen, dash)
- For symbols that have multiple names that are not context sensitive, we pick one name and stick with it
 - Examples: "#" (pound-sign instead of hash) and "/" (slash instead of stroke)

Symbol	Voicing	Notes
	period	When at the end of a sentence
	decimal	When in numbers
	dot	When used in email, packet and internet addresses
,	comma	
:	colon	
;	semi-colon	
?	question-mark	
!	exclamation-point	
-	minus-sign	When in numbers
-	hyphen	When in words
-	dash	Elsewhere
+	plus-sign	
=	equal-sign	
@	at-sign	
#	pound-sign	
\$	dollar-sign	
&	ampersand	

Symbol	Voicing	Notes
*	asterisk	
1	slash	
\	backslash	
11	double-quotes	
1	apostrophe	When within words
1	single-quote	Elsewhere
•	back-quote	
%	percent-sign	
(left-parenthesis	
)	right-parenthesis	
[left-square-bracket	
]	right-square-bracket	
{	left-curly-bracket	
}	right-curly-bracket	
<	less-than-sign	
>	greater-than-sign	
_	underscore	
	vertical-line	
۸	caret	CARE-et
~	tilde	TILL-dee
0	degree-sign	

9 Groups versus Words

- Some parts of messages are not words.
 - Examples include call signs, numbers, abbreviations, email addresses, etc.
 - This example contains no words: 305B NW 1st St
- The generic term "group" is used to refer to combinations of letters, numbers, and/or symbols, typically separated by whitespace
 - The above example contains 4 groups: 305B, NW, 1st, St
- All words are groups, but not all groups are words
- Example groups: car, 53, WD-40, ARRL, W3CTK/2, radio, w3ctk@delcoares.net¹³, https://www.delcoares.net/
- Example words: car, radio

13 mailto:w3ctk@delcoares.net

10 Punctuation

- The messages we pass are often written by, and for, non-hams (third-party messages)
- · They include the usual punctuation symbols common to normal writing
 - Refer to the "Voicing Symbols(see page 17)" chart shown earlier for what we consider punctuation symbols
- When used as punctuation, voice symbols as they are encountered in a message
 - A "," (comma) after a word, or a "." (period) at the end of a sentence
 - This differs from ARRL NTS procedures
- Otherwise, treat punctuation symbols like any other symbol
- Example phrases containing punctuation:
 - Deliver blankets, cots, and pillows.
 - Spoken: "deliver blankets comma cots comma and pillows period"
 - Expected weather: rain and snow!
 - Spoken: "expected weather colon rain and snow exclamation-point"
- Example phrases without punctuation:
 - "The password is Ab:1,5!+"
 - "5!=6"
 - "Join the discussion on groups.io"

11 Message Passing Prowords

Prowords are special words or phrases used to facilitate message passing by voice. They allow the sending and receiving stations to be clear with each other, while still being as efficient as possible (using as few words as possible, avoiding repeats).

Prowords are NOT part of the message and are NOT written down when copying the message. This makes it critical that both the sending station and receiving station know the prowords and how they are used. The sending station must use the proper prowords or else the receiving station may write the word into the message. The receiving station needs to recognize the prowords, so they don't write them into the message.

Prowords can be grouped into four broad categories, depending on how they are used. We group them into these categories only because the prowords in each category have similar behavior and it's easier to teach them this way. The names of the categories are not important. Neither is knowing which proword is in each category. Knowing the prowords themselves and how/where to use each one is all that is important.

11.1 Control Prowords

• Define the start, end, or control the flow of the message

11.2 Clarification Prowords

- Always spoken **AFTER** a group
- Clarifies or emphasizes what was just said.

11.3 Qualification Prowords

- Always spoken WITHIN a group
- Defines a quality to allow precise copy

11.4 Introductory Prowords

- Always spoken **BEFORE** a group
- Alerts receiving operator to what is coming next

It is important to use each proword in the right place (before, inside, after a group) to avoid confusing the receiving station and slowing down the message transfer.

11.5 Control Prowords

"Control" prowords are used to control the message flow between the two operators. They can be used to:

- · Begin a message
- End a message
- · Separate parts of the message
- · Control the pace
- · Request repeats

The control prowords are:

- MESSAGE NUMBER(see page 22)
- ROGER(see page 22)
- BREAK(see page 22)
- STAND BY(see page 22)
- CONTINUE or GO(see page 22)
- NEWLINE(see page 22)
- MESSAGE ENDS or END OF MESSAGE (see page 23)
- SAY AGAIN or SPELL [PHONETICALLY] (see page 23)

11.5.1 MESSAGE NUMBER

· Indicates the start of a message

11.5.2 ROGER

• Acknowledged, i.e. "I heard and understood" (does NOT mean "yes")

11.5.3 BREAK

Interrupt

11.5.4 STAND BY

• Wait

11.5.5 CONTINUE or GO

• Used by the receiver to tell the sender to continue with the next set of five words/groups

11.5.6 NEWLINE

• Skip to a new line; paragraph break

11.5.7 MESSAGE ENDS or END OF MESSAGE

• Indicates the end of the message content

11.5.8 SAY AGAIN or SPELL [PHONETICALLY]

- Used by the receiver to request a repeat.
- Usually followed by one of the following qualifiers:
 - "WORD AFTER ..."
 - "Say again word after ..."
 - · Respond with group or part requested
 - "WORD BEFORE ..."
 - "Say again word before ..."
 - · Respond with group or part requested
 - "BETWEEN ... AND ..."
 - "Say again between ... and ..."
 - Respond with group(s) between blanks, observing limits
 - "ALL AFTER ..."
 - "Say again all after ..."
 - · Respond with all groups after the one specified to the end of the message, observing limits
 - "ALL BEFORE ..."
 - "Say again all before ..."
 - Response with all groups in the message to the group specified, observing limits
- If not followed by a qualifier, applies to the entire previous transmission

11.6 Clarification Prowords

Clarification prowords are used to clarify or emphasize something that was just said.

- They are ALWAYS spoken AFTER the relevant group(see page 19)
- Usually used for a single group (see page 19)
- Use proactively to avoid confusion and repeats

The clarification prowords are:

- I SPELL(see page 24)
 - I SPELL Examples (see page 25)
- I SAY AGAIN(see page 25)
 - I SAY AGAIN Examples (see page 25)

11.6.1 | SPELL

- ALWAYS spoken IMMEDIATELY AFTER the group to be spelled
- Use to indicate you are going to phonetically spell the group just voiced
- Use with ONE GROUP AT A TIME
- Use more liberally during bad radio conditions
- Use proactively with words that the receiving station might have difficulty spelling
 - Examples: unique words, chemical names, long or complicated words, ...
- Use proactively with words that may sound the same under noisy conditions
 - Examples: he/she/we/fee/bee/sea/...; five/fire; ...
- ALWAYS use with words that sound like other words but are spelled differently
 - Examples: to/too/two; be/bee; for/fore/four; see/sea; ...
- ALWAYS use with proper names
 - Examples: John Smith (use I SPELL on both)
- ALWAYS use with misspelled words
- ALWAYS use with all-letter groups that are not real words, but would be spoken like a word in normal conversation
 - · Examples:
 - "Quik" would be voiced like "quick", then spelled phonetically
 - "PackItForms" would be voiced as it sounds, then spelled phonetically
 - In this case, capitalization should also be used (see UPPERCASE and LOWERCASE on Qualification Prowords(see page 26)) because it makes it more readable.
- May be used with mixed groups that contain letters and symbols and are either real words or are normally pronounced like a word
 - Contractions: "they're", "aren't", "couldn't", ...
 - Possessive: "Jone's", "Jones'", ...
 - Hyphenated words: "well-being", "set-up", "twenty-two", ...
 - The "-" symbol is spoken as "hyphen" when used in words
- ALWAYS use for prowords that are part of the message
- ALWAYS use standard ITU phonetics(see page 15)

Note: I SPELL is not used with unpronounceable, non-word groups (abbreviations, acronyms, amateur call signs, email addresses, etc.). Use the appropriate introductory proword instead. (See Introductory Prowords(see page 27).)

11.6.1.1 | SPELL Examples

- · You need to arrive at ...
 - Spoken: "You need to I SPELL tango oscar <pause> arrive at ..."
- · John Smith
 - Spoken: "John I SPELL juliet oscar hotel november <pause> Smith I SPELL sierra mike india tango hotel"
- Spelling misstake (mistaken or uncommon spelling)
 - Spoken: "Spelling misstake I SPELL mike india sierra sierra tango alpha kilo echo"
- Go to the Quik Stop ("Quik" isn't a word, but it is spoken like one)
 - Spoken: "Go to the Quik I SPELL quebec uniform india kilo <PAUSE> stop"
- The figures are correct ("figures" is a proword)
 - Spoken: "The figures I SPELL foxtrot india golf uniform romeo echo sierra <pause> are correct"
- They're close (sounds like "their")
 - Spoken: "They're I SPELL tango hotel echo yankee apostrophe romeo echo <pause> closed"
- Twenty-two units
 - Spoken: "twenty-two I SPELL tango whiskey echo november tango yankee hyphen tango whiskey oscar <pause> units"
- PackItForms (portmanteau, capitalization helps with clarity)
 - Spoken: "PackItForms I SPELL UPPERCASE papa LOWERCASE alpha charlie kilo UPPERCASE india LOWERCASE tango UPPERCASE foxtrot LOWERCASE oscar romeo mike sierra"
 - See UPPERCASE and LOWERCASE on Qualification Prowords(see page 26).

11.6.2 I SAY AGAIN

- Use # 1: To Repeat for Clarity
 - Used to clarify or emphasize or to help ensure receipt of what was just said
 - Say the group(s), then "I SAY AGAIN", then repeat the group(s), and then continue
 - Often, voice inflection is also used to communicate emphasis
 - Usually, limit repeats for clarity to on group at a time to aoivd confusion. However, in very bad radio conditions, repeating phrases or whole lines of a message can increase the chance for correct copy
- Use # 2: To Correct an Error
 - When you recognize you have made an error, stop, say "I SAY AGAIN", go back to the last group (or proword) sent correctly, and continue, starting with that correct group or proword

11.6.2.1 I SAY AGAIN Examples

- Do **NOT** go in there
 - Spoken: "Do not I SAY AGAIN not go in there"
- ... to bring water ...
 - Spoken: "... to water I SAY AGAIN to bring water ..."

11.7 Qualification Prowords

Qualification prowords are used to alert the receiving operator to a unique quality for the character(s) that follow. They allow precise copy, such as case-sensitive information (web addresses, passwords, chemical names, etc.).

- ALWAYS spoken WITHIN a group(see page 19)
- Typically, the group will have previously been identified with an Introductory Proword(see page 27)
- Implies that the following characters are going to be sent one character at a time, phonetically
- Remains in effect for the group until over-ridden or until the end of the group
- · Like the "Caps Lock" key on your keyboard

The qualification prowords are:

- UPPERCASE and LOWERCASE (see page 26)
 - UPPERCASE and LOWERCASE Examples(see page 26)

11.7.1 UPPERCASE and LOWERCASE

- Used to indicate that following characters should be copied in the appropriate case
- Used with ONE GROUP AT A TIME(see page 19)
- Remain in effect until the end of the group or until over-ridden by another Qualification Proword(see page 26) (think "Caps Lock")
- No default case is assumed: if you need a particular case, voice the corresponding proword

Not that case doesn't matter most of the time. In fact, some people routinely print in all capital letters. But sometimes case is critical (e.g. passwords, internet addresses).

11.7.1.1 UPPERCASE and LOWERCASE Examples

- The password is pasSWOrd
 - Spoken: "The password is password I SPELL LOWERCASE papa alpha sierra UPPERCASE sierra whiskey oscar LOWERCASE romeo delta"
- Open the PackItForm
 - Spoken: "Open the PackItForm I SPELL UPPERCASE papa LOWERCASE alpha charlie kilo UPPERCASE india LOWERCASE tango UPPERCASE foxtrot LOWERCASE oscar romeo mike"

When in doubt, specify the case. But when case doesn't matter, avoid the extra time and complexity by ignoring case.

11.8 Introductory Prowords

Introductory prowords alert the receiving operator to a special type of group to follow, such as initial(s), figure(s), mixed groups, or amateur call signs... i.e. things which are not normally English words.

- Always spoken BEFORE the relevant group(s)(see page 19)
- · Implies that the next group is going to be sent one character at a time, letters phonetically if present

The Introductory prowords are:

- INITIAL(S)(see page 27)
 - INITIAL(S) Examples(see page 27)
- FIGURE(S)(see page 28)
 - FIGURE(S) Examples(see page 28)
- SYMBOL(S)(see page 28)
 - SYMBOL(S) Examples(see page 28)
- MIXED GROUP(see page 28)
 - MIXED GROUP Examples (see page 28)
- MIXED GROUP FIGURE(S)(see page 29)
 - MIXED GROUP FIGURE(s) Examples(see page 29)
- MIXED GROUP SYMBOL(S)(see page 29)
 - MIXED GROUP SYMBOL(S) Examples(see page 29)
- TELEPHONE FIGURES(see page 29)
 - TELEPHONE FIGURE(S) Example(see page 29)
- GPS COORDINATES(see page 30)
 - GPS COORDINATES Examples(see page 30)
- AMATEUR CALL(see page 30)
 - AMATEUR CALL Examples(see page 30)
- EMAIL ADDRESS(see page 30)
 - EMAIL ADDRESS Examples(see page 31)
- PACKET ADDRESS(see page 31)
 - PACKET ADDRESS Examples(see page 31)
- INTERNET ADDRESS (see page 31)
 - INTERNET ADDRESS Examples(see page 32)

11.8.1 INITIAL(S)

- · Identifies one or more letters to follow
- Used for non-word letter groups
- · Voice each letter phonetically
- Leave a pause after the last letter to help separate it from groups that follow

11.8.1.1 INITIAL(S) Examples

- James T Kirk
 - Spoken: "James <pause> INITIAL tango <pause> Kirk"
- ARRL handbook
 - Spoken: "INITIALS alpha romeo romeo lima <pause> handbook"
- EOC credentials
 - Spoken: "INITIALS echo oscar charlie <pause> credentials"

11.8.2 FIGURE(S)

- · Identifies one or more numerals to follow
- · Voice each digit separately

11.8.2.1 FIGURE(S) Examples

- · Send 5 dozen jelly donuts right away
 - Spoken: "Send FIGURE five <pause> dozen jelly donuts right away"
- 100 containers
 - Spoken: "FIGURES one zero zero <pause> containers"

11.8.3 SYMBOL(S)

- · Identifies one or more symbols to follow
- Voice each symbol separately

11.8.3.1 SYMBOL(S) Examples

- Replace all? with a value
 - Spoken: "Replace all <pause> SYMBOL question-mark <pause> with a value"
- This != that
 - Spoken: "This <pause> SYMBOLS exclaimation-point equal-sign <pause> that"

11.8.4 MIXED GROUP

- Indicates that a group containing at least two of the three types of characters (letters, numbers, symbols) will follow, beginning with a letter
- · Voice each character separately, letters phonetically
- Includes amateur calls with "/..."
- Mixed groups that contain letters and symbols and are commonly pronounced like words may be better handled with I SPELL
 - Words containing apostrophes: they're, aren't, ...
 - Hyphenated words: well-being, government-mandated, state-owned
 - Portmanteau words: PackItForms, spork, ...

11.8.4.1 MIXED GROUP Examples

- Ford F150 truck
 - Spoken: "Ford <pause> MIXED GROUP foxtrot one five zero <pause> truck"
- W3CTK/2
 - Spoken: "MIXED GROUP whiskey three charlie tango kilo slash two"
- high-temp (OK, but may be better voiced with I SPELL)
 - Spoken: "MIXED GROUP hotel india golf hotel hyphen tango echo mike papa"
- abc-123/\$% (this is not a word, so the "-" is a "dash", not a "hyphen")
 - Spoken: "MIXED GROUP alpha bravo charlie dash one two three slash dollar-sign percent-sign"

11.8.5 MIXED GROUP FIGURE(S)

- Indicates that a group containing at least two of the three types of characters (letters, numbers, symbols) will follow, beginning with one (or more) number(s)
- · Voice each character separately, letters phonetically

11.8.5.1 MIXED GROUP FIGURE(s) Examples

- 2C
- Spoken: "MIXED GROUP FIGURE two charlie"
- 2/C
- Spoken: "MIXED GROUP FIGURE two slash charlie"
- 146.595 simplex
 - Spoken: "MIXED GROUP FIGURES one four six decimal one one five <pause> simplex"
- 14,135 people
 - Spoken: "MIXED GROUP FIGURES one four comma one three five <pause> people"

11.8.6 MIXED GROUP SYMBOL(S)

- Indicates that a group containing at least two of the three types of characters (letters, numbers, symbols) will follow, beginning with one (or more) symbol(s)
- · Voice each character separately, letters phonetically

11.8.6.1 MIXED GROUP SYMBOL(S) Examples

- -10 degrees
 - Spoken: "MIXED GROUP SYMBOL minus-sign one zero <pause> degrees"
- -32°F outside
 - Spoken: "MIXED GROUP SYMBOL minus-sign three two degree-sign UPPERCASE foxtrot <pause> outside"
- \$32 each
 - Spoken: "MIXED GROUP SYMBOL dollar-sign three two <pause> each"
- !,*28#
 - Spoken: "MIXED GROUP SYMBOL exclaimation-point comma asterisk two eight pound-sign"

11.8.7 TELEPHONE FIGURES

- Identifies a telephone number to follow
- Best to request that the message author include the area code for clarity

11.8.7.1 TELEPHONE FIGURE(S) Example

- 484-639-9393 or (484) 639-9393 or 484.639.9393
 - Spoken: "TELEPHONE FIGURES four eight four <pause> six three nine <pause> nine three nine three"
- +1-484-639-9393
 - Spoken: "TELEPHONE FIGURES plus-sign one <pause> four eight four <pause> six three nine <pause> nine three nine three"

11.8.8 GPS COORDINATES

- · Identifies a set of GPS coordinates to follow
- Used when a set of numbers, written as a pair of latitude/longitude values, contain one or more of the coordinate "marker" symbols:
 - ° (degrees), ' (minutes), " (seconds)
 - N (north), S (south), E (east), W (west)
- Voice the "marker" symbols where they appear
- But don't add them, if not already part of written message.
- Voicings differ from our usual, but follow standard usage
- Send as a single group, even if written across multiple "slots"
- You may need to make adjustments to fit the "5 words at a time" rule
- If the numbers look like coordinates, but don't contain any "marker" symbols, just send them as FIGURES

11.8.8.1 GPS COORDINATES Examples

- 41° 24.20′, 2° 10.44′
 - Spoken: "GPS COORDINATES four one DEGREES <pause> two four decimal two zero MINUTES COMMA <pause> two DEGREES <pause> one zero decimal four four MINUTES"
- 41°24'12.2"N 2°10'26.5"E
 - Spoken: "GPS COORDINATES four one DEGREES <pause> two four MINUTES <pause> one two
 decimal two SECONDS NORTH <pause> two DEGRESS <pause> one zero MINUTES <pause> two six
 decimal five SECONDS EAST"
- 32.30 N, 122.61 W
 - Spoken: "GPS COORDINATES three two decimal three zero NORTH comma <pause> one two two decimal six one WEST"
- 32.30°, -122.61°
 - Spoken: "GPS COORDINATES three two decimal three zero DEGRESS comma <pause> minus-sign one two two decimal six one DEGREES"

11.8.9 AMATEUR CALL

- Identifies an amateur call sign to follow
- Voice each character phonetically

11.8.9.1 AMATEUR CALL Examples

- W3CTK
 - Spoken: "AMATEUR CALL whiskey three charlie tango kilo"

11.8.10 EMAIL ADDRESS

- · Indicates an email address to follow
- · Implies each character will be voiced phonetically
- Has the format of "<localpart>@<domainpart>"
 - Example: w3ctk@mail.delcoares.org¹⁴
- "@" is voiced "AT SIGN", "." is "DOT", "+" is "PLUS SIGN"

14 mailto:w3ctk@mail.delcoares.org

- Although discouraged and rare, <localpart> may be case-sensitive
 - Example: HermanMunster@... MAY be different from hermanmunster@...
 - · Use UPPERCASE and LOWERCASE when in doubt
- <domainpart> is always case-insensitive

11.8.10.1 EMAIL ADDRESS Examples

- w3ctk@delcoares.net¹⁵
 - Spoken: "EMAIL ADDRESS whiskey three charlie tango kilo <pause> at-sign <pause> delta echo lima oscar alpha romeo echo sierra <pause> dot <pause> november echo tango"
- Herman.Munster+inbox@TheMunster.TV¹⁶
 - Spoken: "EMAIL ADDRESS UPPERCASE hotel LOWERCASE echo romeo mike alpha november dot UPPERCASE mike LOWERCASE uniform novmeber sierra tango echo romeo plus-sign india november bravo oscar x-ray at-sign tango hotel echo mike uniform november sierra tango echo romeo sierra dot tango victor"

11.8.11 PACKET ADDRESS

- · Indicates a packet address to follow
- Implies each character will be voiced phonetically
- Has the format of: <callsign>@<bbscall>.#<region>.<state>.<country>.<continent>
 - · Looks like an email address, except contains "#"
- "#" is voiced "POUND SIGN"; see EMAIL ADDRESS for the rest
- Some parts may not be present (right to left)
 - <callsign>@<bbscall>.#<region>.<state>.<country>
 - <callsign>@<bbscall>.#<region>.<state>
 - ...
- · Packet addresses are NOT case-sensitive

11.8.11.1 PACKET ADDRESS Examples

- w3ctk@delco.#epa.pa.us.noam
 - Spoken: "PACKET ADDRESS whiskey three charlie tango kilo at-sign delta echo lima charlie oscar dot pound-sign echo papa alpha dot papa alpha dot uniform sierra dot november oscar alpha mike"

11.8.12 INTERNET ADDRESS

- Indicates an internet (e.g. "web") address follows
- Implies each character will be voiced phonetically
- Format:
 - <scheme>://<hostname>[:<port>]/<path>[?<query>]
 - https://www.google.com/
 - ftp://ftp.delcoares.net:21/
 - http://grz.com/The/Path/index.htm?name=Chris&call=W3CTK
- Notes:
 - Everything after <hostname> is case sensitive!

¹⁵ mailto:w3ctk@delcoares.net 16 mailto:Herman.Munster+inbox@TheMunster.TV

11.8.12.1 INTERNET ADDRESS Examples

- https://www.delcoares.net/
 - Spoken: "INTERNET ADDRESS hotel tango tango papa sierra colon slash slash whiskey whiskey whiskey dot delta echo lima charlie oscar alpha romeo echo sierra dot november echo tango"

12 Techniques for All Messages

- Radio Techniques(see page 33)
- Speaking Techniques(see page 33)
 - Speed(see page 33)
 - Pauses(see page 33)
 - Prowords(see page 34)
- Message Prioritization(see page 34)
- Announcing a Message(see page 34)
- Sending a Message to One Station(see page 34)
- Sending a Message to Multiple Stations(see page 35)

12.1 Radio Techniques

- DO use only plain language
- DO use standard ITU phonetics(see page 15)
- DO use tactical call signs when appropriate, and identify with your FCC call sign every 10 minutes or at the end of an exchange
- DO listen for, and follow, instructions
- · DO make only necessary transmissions; avoid read backs
- DO be concise
- DO follow these message passing procedures
- DO complete all communication logs and message forms clearly, concisely, and legibly
- DO ask for clarification when you can't read a message, or you don't understand something
- DO use 24-hour local time, unless instructed otherwise
- DO transmit only facts, or information from an approved source or authority
- DO avoid transmitting personal, confidential, or sensitive information
 - names, phone numbers, patient information, body counts, etc.
- DO use standard ICS position titles, facility names, and/or tactical names
- DO pause 1 to 2 (or more!) seconds after keying up to avoid clipping
- DO leave gaps between transmissions to allow others to break in
- DO drop PTT when not speaking; avoid dead air and open mics

12.2 Speaking Techniques

12.2.1 Speed

- · After you say each word, pretend to write it down ("ghost write") before you go on to the next word
- This slows you down to a pace that the receiver can handle

12.2.2 Pauses

- Pause between groups(see page 19) to provide clarity and separation
- · Pauses provide clues that something different is coming
- · Pause aid in correct group copying, improving efficiency

12.2.3 Prowords

- ALWAYS use proper prowords
- Proactively use the I SPELL proword (as appropriate) to avoid repeats

12.3 Message Prioritization

- · Prioritize according to handling order, date, and time
 - · Handling order: Immediate, Priority, Routine
 - Note: ARRL Precedence: Emergency, Priority, Welfare, Routine
 - Note: Red Cross DWI (Disaster Welfare Inquiry) has Welfare precedence
- Use date to prioritize between same handling order
- Use time to prioritize between same dates
- Ultimately, the served agency decides the order; it's their message

12.4 Announcing a Message

- Step 1: Annouce quantity and handling order of messages ready to send
 - Examples:
 - "Net Control, I have 2 Priority messages for you"
 - "Net Control, I have 1 Immediate and 1 Routine message for you"
 - The receiver will prioritize versus other messages that may be waiting, then says: "go ahead" or "ready to copy"
- Step 2: If the message is a form, announce the form type before sending
 - This lets the receiver know what's coming so they can prepare the right form
 - If the form requires a routing slip (because it doesn't contain the radio routing information fields), also include "... with routing slip"
 - Examples:
 - "Message type is ICS-213¹⁷"
 - "Message type is ICS-213RR¹⁸ with Routing Slip"
 - The receiver readies the right form (and routing slip, if needed), then says: "go ahead" or "ready to copy"
- Step 3: Sen the message
 - See "Sending a Message ..." for details
- Step 4: Log the message
 - Log all of your communications activity on the ICS-214¹⁹ Activity Log

12.5 Sending a Message to One Station

 Say "My message number is ..." followed by your message number (phonetically) to signal the start of transmission

¹ https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/download/attachments/153158686/ics%20form%20213%2C%20general%20message%20%28v3%29.pdf?api=v2&modificationDate=1580314003031&version=1

⁸ https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/download/attachments/70254674/ ics%20form%20213rr%2C%20resource%20request%20message%20%28v3%29.pdf? api=v2&modificationDate=1547157244555&version=1

https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/download/attachments/70254674/ ICS%20Form%20214%2C%20Activity%20Log%20%28v3%29.pdf?api=v2&modificationDate=1547157244446&version=1

- Say field name (or number), followed by field value
 - Or use another, previously agreed-upon plan
- · Pass fields in logical chunks, according to the form
 - By row? By column? By section?
 - If the form has sections, say the section name as you enter that section
 - Shoot for sending five items at a time (depending on how complicated each field is)
 - For short text fields, send up to five fields at a time
 - For longer text fields (such as the message body in an ICS-213²⁰), send five words at a time
 - Some heavily user forms (ICS-213²¹) have a preferred field grouping for maximum efficiency
- · Pause after each group
 - · Receiver's opportunity to request fills
 - Receiver responds with "Go" or "Continue" when ready for more
- Say "End of message" to signal form transmission complete
 - Receiver responds with "My message number is <their message number>", followed by "<their FCC call sign>"
- Say "<your FCC call sign>" to end the process
- · Log the message

12.6 Sending a Message to Multiple Stations

- Announce the quanity and priority of message for ...
 - "All stations, all stations, stand by for one priority message"
 - "All shelters, all shelters, stand by for one routine message"
- (Optional) Poll for readiness of all stations
- Select a pacing station
 - "Mountain View, will you be my pacing station?"
- Send the message to the pacing station (see "Sending a Message to One Station)
- Poll all other receiving stations
 - Each receiving station responds with requests for fills (if any), followed by <their message number> and <their FCC call sign>
 - Log all receiving station message numbers and call signs

 $^{{\}tt 0}\ https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/download/attachments/153158686/$

² https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/download/attachments/153158686/ ics%20form%20213%2C%20general%20message%20%28v3%29.pdf?api=v2&modificationDate=1580314003031&version=1

13 Techniques for Handling Third Party Messages

- Third Party Spoken Messages (see page 36)
- Third Party Written Messages (see page 36)

13.1 Third Party Spoken Messages

- For simple verbal message, handle verbally
 - Example: Most messages between shadows are simple, spoken messages
 - "Ask Steven to call Jenny 867-5309"
- Use your judgement
 - If message is longer or more complicated
 - Such as: a complicated message that needs to be delivered exactly
 - Or if it needs routing information for delivery outside the radio room
 - Such as: a message to be delivered to an ICS position in an EOC
 - · Or if the message should be tracked
 - Such as: the third parties may need to refer to it again
 - Then write it down on the appropriate form²², handle as a written message
- Log all third party spoken messages on an ICS-214²³

13.2 Third Party Written Messages

- Third party written message always use an appropriate form
 - General messages on ICS-213²⁴; resource requests on ICS-213RR²⁵, etc.
- If the message is not on the appropriate form:
 - · Best: Ask the author to use the correct form
 - If they don't have one, provide it to them²⁶
 - · Next best: Transcribe the message to the form, asking the author to clarify as you go
 - Check spelling and other details
 - Worse case: Staple the original to the new form only if necessary
- If the form doesn't have radio routing information, use a radio routing slip
 - Radio routing information: message numbers, date, time, to/from position/location, operator information
- If the handling order, to location or to position is unknown, use the recommended routing cheat sheet
- The basic process of passing the message is the same, regardless of form
 - · Generally, left to right, top to bottom
 - Group fields in the same section together
 - If the form has section, say the section name when starting a new section
 - · For message text. send five words at a time
 - Some forms may have a specific technique

²² https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/display/DelcoARES/Forms+-+FEMA+ICS

² https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/download/attachments/70254674/

https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/download/attachments/153158686/ ics%20form%20213%2C%20general%20message%20%28v3%29.pdf?api=v2&modificationDate=1580314003031&version=1

https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/download/attachments/70254674/ ics%20form%20213rr%2C%20resource%20request%20message%20%28v3%29.pdf? api=v2&modificationDate=1547157244555&version=1

²⁶ https://confluence.quakersoftware.com/display/DelcoARES/Forms+-+FEMA+ICS

ARES/RACES of Delaware County Pennsylvania -	Message Handling Procedures