



International
Association
of Fire Chiefs



National
Fire Protection
Association

Fire Officer

Principles and Practice
THIRD EDITION



Chapter 4 Fire Officer Communications (Fire Officer I)

Fire Officer I Objectives

- Describe the steps in the communication cycle.
- List the basic skills for effective communication.
- Identify ways to improve listening skills.
- Describe the ways to counteract environmental noise.

Fire Officer I Objectives

- Identify the key points for emergency communications.
- Identify types of reports and discuss their use.

Introduction

- Many fire officers wear a rank insignia that features a bugle, representing the fire officer's speaking trumpet.
- Communication skills are important, although the technology has advanced.

Introduction

- Communication skills are required to:
 - Provide direction to the crew members
 - Review new policies and procedures
 - Exchange information
 - Work with citizens, conduct tours, release public information, and prepare reports

The Communication Process

- Communication is a circular process.
 - It is effective when the receiver understands what the other person intended.
 - The message must make sense to the recipient.
 - The recipient must send back confirmation.

The Communication Cycle

- Message
 - Consists of written or spoken words
 - Can also be a stern facial expression with purposeful eye contact

The Communication Cycle

- Sender
 - The person or entity sending the message
 - Nonverbal clues influence the receiver's interpretation.

The Communication Cycle

- Medium
 - Method used to convey the information from sender to receiver
 - Influences the importance attached to the message

The Communication Cycle

- Receiver
 - The person who receives and interprets the message
 - Many opportunities for error

The Communication Cycle

- Feedback
 - Without some confirmation, the sender should never assume that information has been successfully transferred.

Use Active Listening

- Must be continually practiced to maintain proficiency
- Requires good eye contact, alert body posture, and frequent use of verbal engagement



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Use Active Listening

- Improvement techniques:
 - Do not assume anything.
 - Do not interrupt.
 - Try to understand the need.
 - Look for the real reason the person wants your attention.
 - Do not react too quickly.

Stay Focused

- Directed questioning can keep the conversation on the topic at hand.

Ensure Accuracy

- Must have up-to-date information on department policies and practices
- Must sometimes control what is discussed in the work environment

Keep Your Supervisor Informed

- Inform the chief officer of the following:
 - Progress toward goals and objectives
 - Matters that may cause controversy
 - Attitudes and morale

The Grapevine

- The fire officer can get clues from the grapevine, but should not use it to leak information.
- The fire officer may have to deal with rumors by providing accurate information.

Overcoming Environmental Noise

- Environmental noise: A physical or sociological condition that interferes with a message



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Suggestions to Improve Communication

- Don't struggle for power.
- Avoid an offhand manner.
- Keep emotions in check.
- Select words and tone carefully.
- Do not assume you're understood.
- Immediately seek feedback.
- Provide appropriate details.
- Watch out for conflicting orders.

The Direct Approach

- Requires:
 - Asking precise questions
 - Providing timely and accurate information
 - Giving clear and specific orders



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Key Points for Emergency Communications

- Be direct.
- Speak clearly.
- Use a normal tone of voice.
- Hold the radio about 2 inches from your mouth.

Key Points for Emergency Communications

- For a repeater system, allow for a time delay after keying the microphone.
- Use plain English.
- Use common terminology.
- Avoid being near other noise sources.

“Unit Calling, Repeat...”

- Radio messages must be accurate, brief, and clear.
- Be as consistent as possible.
- Recordings are an effective training tool.

Initial On-Scene Radio Report

- Describe what you have.
- State what you are doing.
- Provide directions for other units that will be arriving.

Using the Communications Order Model

- Standard method of transmitting an order to a unit or company
- Designed to ensure message is:
 - Clearly stated
 - Heard by the proper receiver
 - Correctly understood

Using the Communications Order Model

- Example communication:
 - **Command:** Ladder 2, from Command.
 - **Ladder 2:** Ladder 2, go ahead Command.
 - **Command:** Ladder 2, come in on side Charlie.
 - **Ladder 2:** Ladder 2, going to side Charlie.
 - **Command:** Ladder 2, that is correct.

Radio Reports

- Provide an instantaneous connection
- Can link all individuals involved
- Sender and receiver need to strive to make messages accurate, clear, and as brief as possible

Radio Reports

- Think first.
- Position the microphone
- Depress the key.
- Take a breath.
- Send a concise, specific message in a clear tone.

Verbal Reports

- Face-to-face is the most effective means of conveying information.
- A CAN report is effective when the magnitude or speed of the event requires maximum efficiency.

Verbal Reports

- During an emergency, radio reports should be directed back to the incident commander:
 - Once the task is completed
 - When a progress update is necessary
 - When additional resources are required

Written Reports

- Provide information related to fire department personnel, programs, equipment, and facilities
- Most departments require company officers to maintain a company journal or log book.

Written Reports

Fire Station 100 Company Journal						
out	in	inc#	address / comments			sign
	0700		Thursday, February 12 - A shift on duty. Captain Davis OIC			
			Engine	Quint	Medic	
			Cpt. Davis	Lt. Williams	Lt/PM Turner	
			AO Anders	AO Rollo	FF/PM Olliges	
			FF/PM Thompson	FF Grynski		
			FF Sorce (hold)	FF/HM Schultz		
			Status:			
			FF Kinders on Sick Leave			
			FF Sorce on involuntary hold over			
			FF Wirth on Exchange of Shift until 1900 with FF/HM Schultz			
			FF/PM O'Brien on Annual Leave			
			Vehicle #130654 at Maintenance			
			Vehicle #030112 running as Engine 100			
			Vehicle #110065 running as Medic 44			
			Portable Radio	Anders - 4	Rollo - 4	Olliges - 2
			Keys	Davis	Williams	Turner
			Controlled drugs	Thompson	xxxxxx	Turner
	0730		Paramedic Intern Bartlow (Community College) on Medic 100			Turner
0813	1011	0345	7111 Hogarth St. - Injury			Medic Olliges
	0820		FF Cegar detailed in from Fire Station 47			Ceg
	0830		FF Sorce off duty			Sorce
0855	0914	0456	9103 Cross Chase Rd - Trouble Breathing			Engine Anders
1122	1255	0499	4110 Green Springs Dr. #101 - sick			Medic Olliges
1141	1217	0512	8902 Harrivan Ln - Kitchen fire			Quint Rollo
1230	1645		Quint to Academy			Williams
	1300		12-lead monitor #1314 damaged on incident #0499			Turner
1314	1655		Facilities working on furnace			Davis
	1345		EMS3 delivers loaner 12-lead #1133 and picks up #1314			Turner
1355	1506	0701	10614 Hampton Rd - STEMI			Medic Olliges
1355	1422	0710	10614 Hampton Rd - STEMI			Engine Davis
1430	1450	0715	I-95 North at Franconia exit - MVC			Engine Davis
1455	1511	0733	6600 Springfield Mall - Injury			Engine Davis
	1815		Assistant Chief Arrow and City Manager in quarters			
1824	1930	1135	10400 Richmond Hwy - ALS			Medic Olliges
	1830		FF Wirth on duty			Wirth
1844	0020	1148	7401 Eastmoreland Ave - 2nd Alarm			Quint Williams
1909	2253	1148	7401 Eastmoreland Ave - 3rd Alarm			Engine Davis
	1922		Engine 44 filling Fire Station 100			Jones
			Friday, February 13			
0112	0223	0078	9788 Whispering Meadow Ln - stroke			Medic Olliges
0249	0311	0101	6600 Springfield Mall - Alarm Bells			Quint Williams

Courtesy of Mike Ward

Written Reports

- Morning report
 - Identifies personnel or resource shortages
- Monthly activity and training report
 - Documents activity during the preceding month

Written Reports

- Incident report
 - Required for every emergency response
 - Some incidents require an expanded incident report narrative.

Written Reports

Civilians Rescued From Burning Home

Twenty-eight fire fighters responded to an early morning house fire in the Grandview district. The first 9-1-1 call was at 10:47 pm on Monday December 10, 2014, reporting smoke coming from a three-story townhome.

Metro County fire fighters arrived at 11:07 pm, encountered smoke and flames coming from the first floor windows at 1928 Braniff Boulevard. Two elderly females were found on the third floor. They were taken out of the building through a window via an aerial tower, treated by paramedic/fire fighters, and transported to University Hospital.

It took 17 minutes of aggressive fire suppression before Battalion Chief Devon Jones declared the fire “under control.” The first floor of the townhouse was extensively damaged, with heat and smoke damage to the adjacent townhouses.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation. Preliminary results show that the fire started in the kitchen. Smoke detectors were in the home, but batteries were removed.

The monetary loss has not been calculated.

Submitted by T. L. Gaines, Metro County Fire Department

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Written Reports

- Infrequent reports
 - Injury report
 - Property damage or liability report
 - Vehicle accident report
 - Response to a grievance or complaint
 - Work improvement plan
 - Request for other agency services

Written Reports

- Infrequent reports (cont'd)
 - Supervisor's report
 - Required by state worker's compensation agencies whenever an employee is injured
 - Submitted within 24 to 72 hours of the incident
 - Should include a chronological statement of events

Written Reports

SUPERVISOR'S ACCIDENT REPORT		Claims Management Inc. PO Box 342 Sacramento, CA 95812-3042 (916) 631-1250 FAX (916) 635-6288		DATE & TIME REPORTED:
WORKERS' COMPENSATION CLAIMS				
OSHA CASE NO:				
COMPANY Scotts Valley Fire Protection District	LOCATION 7 Erba Lane, Scotts Valley, CA, 95066	LOCATION CODE NO: 1100		
A. EMPLOYEE	NAME		JOB TITLE	
	DEPARTMENT Scotts Valley Fire Protection District 1100		<input type="checkbox"/> LOST TIME <input type="checkbox"/> NO LOST TIME	<input type="checkbox"/> FIRST AID
B. TIME AND PLACE OF ACCIDENT	DATE	HOUR	DEPARTMENT 1100	IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR
	IDENTIFY EXACT LOCATION WHERE ACCIDENT OCCURRED (<i>Be specific</i>)			
	JOB OR ACTIVITY AT TIME OF ACCIDENT (<i>Be specific</i>)			
C. WITNESSES - <i>List of Names and Addresses</i>				
Name		Address		
D. DESCRIBE THE ACCIDENT/ACCIDENT CAUSE - <i>Please be specific</i>				
E. UNSAFE ACT/CORRECTIVE ACTION TAKEN - <i>Include both employee and supervisor corrective actions to prevent future occurrences.</i>				
EMERGENCY - WENT TO THE DOCTOR <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		If yes, please fill out the following information: Name of Doctor: _____ Address of Doctor: _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> NON-EMERGENCY, BUT PLAN ON SEEING A PHYSICIAN Physician's Name: _____				

Courtesy of Claims Management, Inc.

Using Information Technology

- Most reports are completed using a computer and software.
- Resources available for reporting:
 - Computer
 - Printer
 - Network connection

Using Information Technology

- Types of software:
 - Operating system
 - Application program

Summary

- A fire officer must be able to process several types of information.
- Successful communication occurs when people develop mutual understanding.
- The communication cycle includes five elements: message, sender, medium, receiver, and feedback.

Summary

- An officer must be effective as a sender and a receiver of information.
- An officer needs to have up-to-date information.
- Fire officers should keep their superior officers informed.

Summary

- The direct approach entails asking precise questions and giving clear and specific orders.
- An officer should be as consistent as possible over the radio.
- Radio communications are essential for emergency operations.

Summary

- To create a report, the fire officer must understand the specific information that is needed.
- The most common form of reporting is verbal communication.
- Written reports vary in their purpose, formality, and frequency.