

## **1. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

### **1.1 MISSION STATEMENT**

The Cumberland County 9-1-1 Communications System provides a central point of contact for the dispatch of public safety services for emergency needs. This includes, but is not limited to Emergency Medical Services, Fire Department and Police Services for incidents or events which originate within the political boundaries of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania.

To accomplish this mission, the County of Cumberland has provided the 9-1-1 emergency telephone number to access these services. Various Commonwealth of Pennsylvania statutes govern the operation of the 9-1-1 Communications Center. They include Act 78 of 1990 - The Public Safety (9-1-1) Telephone Act and Act 45 of 1985 -The Emergency Medical Services Act, as amended.

The County of Cumberland has licensed various radio systems from the Federal Communications Commission to provide radio communications that are essential in providing this mission. These radio systems shall only be used in a manner allowable by the FCC and only for those communications requirements considered essential in the providing of Public Safety incident or event mitigation.

This Communications Procedural Manual contains the requirements for operation and use of the Cumberland County Fire/Rescue and EMS Communications Systems.

1.1A It will be noted that many of the specifics pertain to the conduct of operations at the Cumberland County Communications Center. This material was purposely included in order to provide all concerned with full knowledge of communications responsibilities and procedures in the interest of improving mutual cooperation and understanding.

## 1.2

### **CONTROL OF COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS**

Purpose - Standard procedures will be used by all concerned for handling messages by radio and telephone. Use of standard procedures will conserve on-the-air time and will permit accurate, brief and rapid transmission of essential information. Careless procedure and lack of circuit discipline causes delay, confusion and unnecessary transmissions.

1.2A      *Operational Authority* – Authority of the Communications Center operations is limited to the authority delegated to us by the municipalities, federal and state regulations, or legislation.

1.2B      *Circuit Discipline* - The Communications Center Shift Supervisor/Shift Leader is responsible for maintaining circuit discipline; for handling radio and telephone messages rapidly; for determining the order of priority in which transmissions will be made; and for directing and controlling the use of all frequencies.

1.2C      *Operator Requirements and Violations* - The FCC has developed Rules and Regulations to govern the operation of radio systems. The Public Safety Radio Services include Local Government, Police, Fire and Special Emergency Radio Service which accommodates emergency medical operations. These radio services are generally governed by Part 90 of the FCC Rules and Regulations which set forth the technical, operational and administrative requirements for land mobile radio systems used for public safety purposes.

The following items in this section list the most important operating rules in the Public Safety Radio Services. They are not intended to cover all the Rules nor to quote them verbatim. The rules are subject to constant review and modification. Since the Commission can levy monetary fines and even suspend/revoke the licenses of radio system owners (including public safety systems) who violate its rules, users should always keep these Rules in mind.

1. *Radio operators are not required to be licensed by the FCC. Licensees are responsible for maintaining control and for the proper functioning and operation.*

2. *Communications involving the safety of life and/or property are to be afforded priority by all licensees.*
3. *Only such calls as are authorized by the Rules in the Public Safety Radio Services may be transmitted. False calls, false or fraudulent distress signals, unnecessary and unidentified communications, obscene, indecent and profane language, and the transmission of unassigned call signals are specifically prohibited. Radios are primarily authorized to transmit communications directly related to public safety and the protection of life and property and to official public safety activities. Enforcement of these regulations is left to the licensee.*
4. *Operators are required to listen to (monitor) the frequency on which they intend to transmit for a sufficient period of time to insure that their transmission will not cause harmful interference to others who may be using the frequency.*
5. *Each station must be identified by transmitting the FCC assigned call sign during each transmission or exchange of transmissions or at least once each thirty (30) minutes of the operating period. Licensees are allowed to use the identification method they prefer. They may also comply with identification requirements by using electronic devices that automatically transmit the station identification in Morse Code signals at the required time intervals.*
6. ***ALL RADIO TRANSMISSIONS MUST BE RESTRICTED TO THE MINIMUM PRACTICAL TRANSMISSION TIME.***
7. *Contents of any radio communications shall not be divulged to any person or party other than to whom it is addressed without the expressed permission of the Cumberland County 9-1-1.*

**MAXIMUM PENALTIES FOR VIOLATING FCC RULES AND REGULATIONS ARE A FINE OF NOT MORE THAN \$10,000, OR A PRISON TERM NOT TO EXCEED TWO YEARS, OR BOTH.**

## 1.2D

### Communications Center Status

The Communications Center will be at one of the following status levels. Any change in the status of the center will be announced whenever possible.

#### **STATUS “1” –**

Communications Center is operating under normal conditions

#### **STATUS “2” –**

Communications Operations has relocated to the back up center. Normal operations can be assumed with exception to the following:

1. Operational talk groups will be assigned as needed for priority incidents. ALL command traffic to the Communications Center will have to occur on Fire 1 or be relayed by telephone. The Communications Center will not be monitoring assigned talk groups.
2. All dispatching will be accomplished with the manual dispatch system (NON CAD). Incident numbers and times will be unavailable until such time CAD is back loaded.

#### **STATUS “3” –**

The Communications Center is working under extreme load.

Fire radio traffic should be limited to only necessary statusing for availability purposes when possible.

Use of local or company talk groups for incident mitigation must be done for single company and minor incidents. Only major incidents will be assigned an Ops talk group.

Fire stations (or local EOCs) are to be manned to receive low priority incidents by telephone. Radio dispatch of these incidents must be avoided unless staffing issues exist.

Incidents received from the public by the fire stations should be mitigated without Communications Center involvement. It is not necessary to have all incidents entered into the CAD System. Pseudo incident numbers can be applied locally as required by your in house reporting systems.

The Communications Center will reduce responses as needed to conserve resource use on low priority incidents or un-verified incidents.

**STATUS “4” –**

The Radio System has failed. The phone system remains operable.

Fire and EMS Stations are to be manned to receive calls and further instructions by telephone.

**STATUS “5” –**

The Communications Center is inoperable from both the primary site and the back up site.

Fire and EMS Stations are to be manned to receive calls from the public.

1.2E A *PRIORIT*Y message will be given the highest consideration over all other messages. However, the use of the *PRIORIT*Y category will be restricted to the type of emergency where life or personal injury is at stake or critical situations requiring immediate additional assistance.

1.2F In the event that any unit has priority message for the Communications Center, the unit shall call the Communications Center in the following manner:

EXAMPLE: Headquarters from Engine 1-65 - *PRIORIT*Y or Cumberland MED from Ambulance 1-65 - *PRIORIT*Y.

1.2G All Fire/Rescue and EMS personnel should continuously be aware of the need to conserve the radio use and should make a conscious effort to eliminate unnecessary use of radio by using non-radio voice commands at the scene and posting messages whenever possible.

1.2H Should radio communications fail, access to the Communications Center via cellular phone for Verizon Wireless customers can be accomplished by dialing \*021. Others should dial the normal numbers for telephone access.

### **1.3**

#### **TAPE RECORDINGS/RECORD RELEASE**

The County of Cumberland has a policy specific to the release of any record(s), written or otherwise, relating to matters pertaining to incident communications. This Release of Information Policy is located in Appendix VII of this Communications Procedural Manual. Review and/or duplication of the audio tape recording is subject to the provisions of this appended Release of Information Policy.

### **1.4**

#### **COMMUNICATIONS COMPLAINT/INQUIRY PROCEDURE**

All parties utilizing the Fire/Rescue and EMS Communications Systems of Cumberland County will adhere to the following procedures.

##### **1.4A**

Complaints or problems of a minor nature may be handled by telephone. If the situation cannot be cleared by this method, follow the procedures set forth in Section 1.4C of this manual. All complaints must be received from the Communications OIC or a Chief, depending upon the origin of the complaint. Communications Operators/Firefighters/EMS personnel will not make phone calls on complaint matters.

##### **1.4B**

All phone calls will be made in a professional manner. Neither party will tolerate no belligerence. If the call becomes out of hand, either party may terminate the call and resort to written action.

1.4C Incidents of a major proportion or those, which the complainant feels would best be handled by correspondence, will be done in writing. Those originating from the Communications Center will be sent by the 9-1-1 Coordinator to the Fire/EMS Chief of the company or department involved. Those originating from the field units will be sent by the Fire/EMS Chief to the 9-1-1 Coordinator. All information will be on appropriate department letterhead and signed by the appropriate representative.

1.4D All complaints should be answered in writing with advisement of decision rendered within 30 days by the party receiving the complaint.

1.4E Should the party registering the complaint feel that improper action was taken, he/she should submit a complaint to the Cumberland County Joint Fire/Rescue and EMS Communications Committee for further investigation and judgment.

1.4F The Communications Center will not be used as a place to discuss complaint issues. All complaints or inquiries will be made by telephone or in writing.

**1.5 CUMBERLAND COUNTY JOINT FIRE/RESCUE AND EMS COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**

1.5A The Cumberland County Joint Fire/Rescue and EMS Communications Committee will be comprised of two delegates each from the County Fire Chiefs Association and the County Volunteer Firemen's Association; three delegates from the Emergency Medical Services Council (one ALS and two BLS representatives); one delegate from the County Fire Police Association; and a Communications Supervisor. The 9-1-1 Coordinator and one delegate from the Communications Center will be considered non voting members of the committee.

1.5B The Committee will meet on a regularly scheduled basis on the first Monday of March and October at 1900 hours in the County EOC. Any business, which requires committee action, will be discussed at this meeting. Other meeting dates may be scheduled at the discretion of the Committee Chairman or 9-1-1 Coordinator. A minimum quorum of four voting members shall be necessary to conduct the committee meeting

1.5C The committee shall choose a chairperson and secretary at the March meeting.

1.5E Any complaints or requests received by the committee will be forwarded to the Communications Supervisor for action. Designation requests and other procedural requests may be dealt with as appropriate by the Communications Supervisor and 9-1-1 Coordinator. These actions will be reported at the next meeting. The committee will make recommendations as needed during their meeting on any issues presented.

1.5F The Committee will have the responsibility and the authority to recommend any policy or procedural changes that will effect a change in communications operations with subsequent final approval by the 9-1-1 Coordinator.

1.5G If any member of the Committee is directly involved with the complaint or is a member of the organization involved, he/she will not sit in on any action taken.