



Training Bulletin 2021-06

North Zone VHF Practice Days

The North Zone has scheduled three days in March as VHF practice days to exercise the VHF infrastructure, provide hands on conventional radio use during routine incident operations, and to identify issues with existing VHF infrastructure, coverage, and equipment. The goal of these practice days is to improve familiarity with VHF equipment operation, and expand user skills, knowledge, and abilities with the use of conventional radio process.

Schedule

There will be three dedicated for VHF practice, starting at 0800. Because of inconsistency in shift change among our departments, the drill will be ending at 0700 on the first and third days.

- 3/8/2021, 0800 to 0700
- 3/10/2021, 0800 to 0800
- 3/11/2021, 0800 to 0700

General Operations

At 0800 on the day of the practice, the primary dispatcher will make a general announcement over 3A using alert tone 1 that all new calls will be run on VHF. Any existing calls will remain on the RCS. Each radio dispatcher should monitor both the assigned VHF channel and the RCS talk groups.

Units will be operating on command and tactical communications plans. This means they will only be talking with us on the command channel and will talk with each other on the tactical channels. As we are not monitoring the tactical channels, this means we should hear less radio traffic. Because of the way VHF radio operates, the agencies will be divided differently than under normal operations. See below for the assignments.

When communicating with us, field personnel should be verbalizing the channel and tone they are on. This is not necessary to parrot back, but is in place to help us respond on the appropriate channel given the limitations of the RCS group.

At any time, any unit or IC may request the incident communications plan be returned to the RCS. This would be more likely to occur on structure fires or other first alarm incidents. Be sure to assign the correct RCS talk group.

At the end of the operational period, the primary dispatcher will make a general announcement using alert tone 1 that all new calls will be run on the RCS. Any existing calls will remain on VHF. Each radio dispatcher should monitor both the assigned VHF channel and the RCS talk groups until all VHF calls are closed.

Position Responsibilities

Call Taker

Because each call will be automatically dispatched and voiced once it is entered, the call taker will need to ensure that they change the primary tac channel on all incidents before entering the call type. Because of this change, the call taker is responsible to document the comm plan in the notes of all calls. The best way to do this is to use a shorthand comment of the 3 letter agency abbreviation, such as “/CBD”. The shorthand comments have all been updated.

Primary Dispatch

At the beginning of the drill, the supervisor will add XSD CMD 5 to the console patch with 3A and 4A. Samantha will broadcast alerts over all three channels. XSD CMD 5 will also be used in place of 3-Bravo and 4-Bravo for administrative radio traffic. Crews have been reminded to keep traffic short, and Samantha is set up to hold her announcements while the channel is in use. There will probably be an increase in units calling in for status changes because of this. 12A will remain the strike team travel channel.

Tactical Dispatch

As noted before, we will be communicating with units on the command channel, and they will communicate with each other on the tactical channels. In the event that field units are unable to communicate on VHF, they will utilize 3-Charlie for Coastal agencies, 3-India for Central agencies, and 4-Charlie for East agencies to relay information to us. For any calls involving lifeguards, be sure to patch 3C with the coastal VHF channel so that they will be able to communicate.

For air ambulances, field units will be talking with the airships on CALCORD. We won't be monitoring it, but they might have issues communicating because it does not have wide area coverage and they won't be able to communicate until they are closer, possibly even within line of sight.

RCS Upgrade

Recently, we have upgraded our VHF equipment as well as the interface with the RCS console. For the drill, you should be utilizing the new “Vhf Bkup” channels, to the left of the Patch / Multi-Select folder on the RCS console. These channels can all be steered by clicking on the down arrow, and then choosing the appropriate channel and tone you want to use. Note that changing these at one RCS console applies the change to all logged in consoles. Especially on the first day, make sure that these are all set correctly after restarting the computers on Sunday.

The correct channel and tone assignments are:

- NZ Vhf Bkup 1: XSD CMD 5, tone 4
- NZ Vhf Bkup 2: XSD CMD 6, tone 5
- NZ Vhf Bkup 3: XSD CMD 7, tone 4

In the event that you are communicating on one of the old VHF Links, note that the RCS talk groups “VHF 1” and “VHF 2” are referring to pieces of hardware and not actual channels. If needing to use the name of the channel while attempting to hail a unit, state, “North Comm, E211 on XSD CMD 6”. While VHF 1 is linked to XSD CMD 6, “VHF 1” will mean nothing to the field units. The links are still in the GIS office, but will potentially be relocated to the supervisor desk in the future.

Channel Assignments

Agency	Command	Tactical	Shorthand Comment
Oceanside	XSD CMD 6	XSD TAC 5, XSD TAC 7	OCS
Carlsbad	XSD CMD 6	XSD TAC 5, XSD TAC 7	CBD
Encinitas	XSD CMD 6	XSD TAC 5, XSD TAC 7	ENC
Solana Beach	XSD CMD 6	XSD TAC 5, XSD TAC 7	SOL
Del Mar	XSD CMD 6	XSD TAC 5, XSD TAC 7	DMR
Rancho Santa Fe	XSD CMD 6	XSD TAC 5, XSD TAC 7	RSF
North County	XSD CMD 7	XSD TAC 2, XSD TAC 6	NCF
Vista	XSD CMD 7	XSD TAC 2, XSDTAC 6	VTA
San Marcos - N	XSD CMD 7	XSD TAC 2, XSDTAC 6	SMCN
San Marcos - S	XSD CMD 6	XSD TAC 5, XSD TAC 7	SMCS
Pala	XSD CMD 7	XSD TAC 2, XSDTAC 6	PAL
Pauma	XSD CMD 7	XSD TAC 2, XSDTAC 6	PYR
Rincon	XSD CMD 7	XSD TAC 2, XSDTAC 6	RCR
San Pasqual	XSD CMD 7	XSD TAC 2, XSDTAC 6	SPI
Valley Center	XSD CMD 7	XSD TAC 2, XSDTAC 6	VCF
Escondido	XSD CMD 13	XSD TAC 8, VFIRE 26	ESC