

Butler County Sheriff's Office

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TO: All 9COM Fire Departments
CC: Other users of the County Fire Paging Channel
FROM: Capt. Matt Franke
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In mid-December, the BCSO dispatch center (9COM) will be taking over dispatching responsibilities for the City of Hamilton (2COM). We'd like to give an overview of various items that will affect you, and answer some common questions.

Fire Dispatch Talkgroups

Today, 9COM has one fire dispatcher dedicated to managing the main fire dispatching talkgroup: SO FD MAIN. With the addition of Hamilton, 9COM will normally have two fire dispatchers with separate dispatching talkgroups.

The existing SO FD MAIN talkgroup will be renamed SO FD WEST, and will continue to be used by today's 9COM fire departments. The existing HM FD MAIN talkgroup will be renamed SO FD CENT (central), and will continue to be used by Hamilton. An SO FD EAST talkgroup is also being created, anticipating future growth.

At some point in the future, radios will be reprogrammed to reflect the new names. Since the existing talkgroups are being repurposed, reprogramming isn't required right now. Your radios will continue to operate without interruption, because only the talkgroup name is changing. No action is required on your part, except to understand how the new talkgroup names you'll hear on the air correspond to what your radio currently displays.

During some periods (e.g. low call volume, minimum staffing, or when a particular incident requires more dispatcher attention) 9COM fire dispatchers will have the ability to patch SO FD WEST and SO FD CENT together to create one virtual talkgroup. This will be accomplished in the dispatch center and no action will be required on subscriber radios. The only difference that would be apparent to end users is that you will begin hearing radio traffic from users of both dispatch talkgroups.

As a reminder, your BC FD talkgroup will continue to provide paged dispatches for your agency, allowing you to hear relevant pages via the trunked system without the need to listen to other traffic. These talkgroups would be unaffected by a patch of primary dispatch talkgroups.

Butler Regional Interoperable Communications System

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VHF Fire Paging Channel (09 V-FIRE 5D, 155.5500 MHz)

The City of Hamilton's fire stations will be converted to use the county's VHF fire paging channel to receive alerts from 9COM. This channel is currently used by 1COM (Oxford), 5COM (Trenton), 7COM (West Chester) and 9COM.

In order for this reconfiguration at the stations to take place, 2COM will begin simulcasting Hamilton fire dispatches on the county channel next week. As a result, and from this point forward, the county fire paging channel is going to be busier. In the future, even though SO FD WEST and SO FD CENT are separate talkgroups, their dispatches will both use the same VHF channel. This is the same as present day 9COM and 7COM dispatches using different talkgroups but the same VHF channel.

While this may seem less than optimal, it is the only way to accomplish alerting at this time. We are exploring alternative fire station alerting methods to reduce the load on the VHF channel, to free it up for its intended purpose: alerting voice pagers. These alternatives may provide enhanced capabilities for staffed fire stations and reduce channel load.

A busier fire paging channel will require a cooperative effort between dispatch centers and fire departments to limit transmissions to what is necessary and keep them brief. To do this:

1. 9COM is making an effort to shorten and standardize the way we format dispatches, to provide the necessary information when you need it. Additional information (e.g. patient history, directions, entrance instructions) can be saved until a unit is responding, and provided on the dispatch talkgroup. We still encourage chief officers and staff at volunteer agencies who have portable radios to acknowledge their runs. This saves the dispatcher from having to repeat your dispatch unnecessarily, and gives a contact to receive any additional information. Once acknowledged or when a unit is responding, the dispatcher will provide those details on the trunked system.
2. When 9COM adopted the fire announcement simulcast broadcast (see attached procedure) requested by fire departments, it was our intention to no longer "drop disregard tones" and instead make an announcement broadcast. Essentially re-dispatching a call to make a disregard announcement takes up valuable air-time unnecessarily. We're going to follow this more strictly. Once dispatched, responding fire and EMS personnel with VHF pagers should leave it in the monitor or "open" mode to hear all follow-up announcements, including upgrades, changes and cancellations made according to the procedure. If a run has been canceled, expect a simulcasted announcement broadcast.

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3. Beginning next week, 9COM will temporarily suspend the practice of broadcasting "notification tones" about meetings, work details and other non-emergencies. Fire departments will need to seek other methods for non-emergency staff notifications. After several months of the increased radio traffic, we will assess the volume of traffic and reevaluate to see if this practice can resume or if it will be a permanent change.
4. Currently, 9COM immediately retransmits every fire/EMS dispatch in their entirety during the evening hours. That practice will be suspended beginning next week. Note: Agencies that fail to acknowledge their run within the allotted time will still receive a second dispatch.

Our primary focus is reducing traffic on the VHF channel. On the 800MHz trunked system, it will be business as usual aside from talkgroup name changes and the possibility of a patched talkgroup. You'll still be dispatched, assigned firegrounds and interact with the dispatcher as you do today.

While the situation might seem challenging, we believe it will work with the above changes and continued good cooperation between dispatch centers and fire departments.

Send us your questions and we'll do our best to respond and share the information with everyone. We'll be posting this and future updates to: butlersheriff.org/radio

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Title: Fire Announcement Broadcasts and Echoing Messages

1. Purpose

- a. The response of the dispatcher, upon receiving a message from the field, should confirm understanding of who transmitted the message and its meaning. Echoing messages allows the source to verify that their message has been understood properly, and allows other units to hear the information clearly.
- b. Many fire and EMS departments in Butler County are alerted by VHF pager on the SO FD PAGING channel. These personnel often respond to the station or scene with only this pager as their conduit for additional information. Commands given and acknowledged on 800MHz are not heard by personnel with only pagers.
- c. A paging icon called "Announce SO FD" has been established on radio consoles at the Butler County Sheriff's Office. It will allow dispatchers to make an announcement broadcast to users on both 800MHz and VHF.
- d. This policy seeks to:
 - i. make sure transmitted information has been received and understood
 - ii. establish consistency in acknowledging and repeating back status changes, important commands and information that will affect the response or safety of fire and EMS personnel
 - iii. ensure that important repeated information is transmitted to users with radios on 800MHz and responding personnel with VHF pagers

2. Definitions

- a. As used in this policy:
 - i. "SO FD MAIN" refers to the primary dispatch talkgroup on 800MHz for all fire and EMS personnel dispatched by the Butler County Sheriff's Office
 - ii. "SO FD PAGING" refers to the VHF paging frequency used to alert fire pagers and stations
 - iii. "size-up report" refers to a message from one of the first arriving units, providing a brief description of the scene or situation, which may include details like:
 1. Nothing showing, or investigating
 2. Smoke showing (Light, Medium or Heavy and location)
 3. Fire showing (Light, Medium or Heavy and location)
 4. Fully involved

3. Policy

- a. When the following types of messages are received, the default response will be:
 - i. "clear on the call" echo
 - ii. "responding" or "responding routine" echo
 - iii. "on the scene" echo
 - iv. "transporting to ____" echo
 - v. "available" echo

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- vi. “establishing _____ command” announcement broadcast
 - vii. scene size-up report announcement broadcast
 - viii. “requesting (type) talkgroup” announcement broadcast
 - ix. “cancel” responding units announcement broadcast
 - x. declare “mayday situation” announcement broadcast
 - xi. request “mutual aid” or specific unit announcement broadcast
 - xii. establish “staging area” announcement broadcast
 - xiii. “notify responding units” announcement broadcast
- b. An echo response:
- i. confirms the transmitted information has been received and understood by repeating the information
 - ii. does not require broadcast of the current time.
 - iii. Example:
 - 1. Engine 211: 9COM, Engine 211 on the scene
 - 9COM: Engine 211 on the scene
- c. Fire Announcement Broadcast
- i. Upon activation, the “SO FD” paging icon will:
 - 1. transmit a short tone on SO FD MAIN and SO FD PAGING to bring attention to the following information
 - 2. allow the dispatcher to immediately make an announcement on SO FD MAIN and SO FD PAGING
 - ii. To activate, the dispatcher will:
 - 1. Click the “SO FD” paging icon
 - a. The icon is not locked, therefore it is not necessary to use the ‘scissors’ safety release button on the toolbar
 - 2. Key up with foot pedal, headset button or general transmit
 - 3. Begin speaking after the icon displays a green check mark, indicating the conclusion of the tone.
- d. Examples of situations requiring a fire announcement broadcast:
- i. a unit providing a size-up report and establishing command:
 - 1. Chief 112: 9COM, Chief 112 on the scene, establishing Maple Creek Command. We have a working fire on the first floor of a two story residential structure.
 - 9COM: (Announce tone) Attention all units responding to 6951 Maple Creek, Chief 112 has established Maple Creek Command with a working fire on the first floor of a two story residential structure.
 - ii. a unit requests a talkgroup after the initial dispatch

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1. Medic 102: 9COM, Medic 102 requesting a Fireground assignment for this incident

9COM: (Announce tone) Attention all units responding to the IGA at 3743 Hamilton Cleves Rd, respond on Main and use Fireground 7
- iii. an incident commander requests or cancels some or all responding units
 1. Chief 112: 9COM, Maple Creek Command, the fire is contained. Engine 112 will remain on the scene; all other units can cancel or go in service.

9COM: (Announce tone) Attention all units on the scene or responding to 6951 Maple Creek, the fire is contained with Engine 112 remaining on the scene; all other units can cancel or go in service per Maple Creek Command.
 2. Chief 130: 9COM, Chief 130, we'll need Rescue 131 for extrication and have the Oxford engine continue for manpower

9COM: (Announce tone) Chief 130 requesting the response of Rescue 131 and have Oxford's engine continue for manpower
- iv. an incident commander declares a "mayday situation"
 1. Command: 9COM, Princeton Road Command, we have a mayday situation with a firefighter trapped on the second floor. Assign a mayday talkgroup and send a full alarm response from the City of Hamilton.

9COM: (Announce tone) Princeton Road Command has a mayday situation with a firefighter trapped on the second floor, requesting a full alarm response from the City of Hamilton. All units, Fireground Mayday 16 has been assigned.
- v. an incident commander requests mutual aid or additional resources
 1. Command: 9COM, Princeton Road Command, send us a Medic from Hamilton and a Tower from Liberty Township

9COM: (Announce tone) Princeton Road Command requesting a Medic from Hamilton and a Tower from Liberty Township
- vi. an incident commander issues a command for a staging area
 1. Command: 9COM, Hamilton Richmond Command, have all the responding units from Hanover and Wayne stage at Bogan Elementary

9COM: (Announce tone) Attention all units from Hanover and Wayne Townships responding to

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5289 Hamilton Richmond Road, stage at the
Bogan Elementary School per Hamilton
Richmond Command

- vii. an incident commander requests the dispatcher “notify responding units” for any other reason

- 1. Command: 9COM, Hamilton Richmond Command, notify responding units that a power line is blocking the roadway south of the scene and to respond from the north

- 9COM: (Announce tone) Attention all units responding to 5289 Hamilton Richmond Road, a power line is blocking the roadway south of the scene. Respond from the north, per Hamilton Richmond Command.