



Department of Emergency Response
And Communications
Cortland County 911
Public Safety Building; Suite 201
54 Greenbush Street
Cortland, New York 13045

200-001	Title- RADIO SYSTEM ETIQUETTE	
Effective Date December 11 th , 2013	References – Policy was written by the DOERC Policy Committee	
Next Scheduled Review		
Modified Date	CLASSIFICATION – POLICY STATEMENT	Approved By -

Cortland County Department of Emergency Response and Communications (DOERC) has set forth the following protocols for all users to follow in order to help ensure the safety of all users on the radio network.

1. **Ensure that all system users** (both field users and Communications Center staff) **are familiar with and trained in the proper radio procedures designed for their assigned duties** when using the Cortland County Land Mobile Radio Network (LMRN) and Interoperable Communications System.
2. **All communications regardless of nature shall be restricted to the minimum practical transmission time** and employ an efficient operating procedure. Transmissions of an excessive length on a trunked radio system can have the unintended consequence of busying the system for other users. All radios are set to “time-out” after 45seconds.
3. **Assume everything you say on the Cortland County Land Mobile Radio network is recorded, admissible in a court of law and available under the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL).** Audit trails are generated for all network transmissions.
4. **Cortland County uses the Incident Command System** and the Emergency Services Dispatchers rely on your use of it and the practice of a unified command.
5. **Pronounce words distinctly.**
6. **Attempt to make your voice a regular monotone.** The voice should be as emotionless as possible, emotion tends to distort the voice and render it unintelligible.
7. **Emergency messages require no expression, but a high degree of intelligibility.**

8. **When utilizing the radio system, use common sense and courtesy.**
9. **The FCC forbids profanity** (this is a violation of Federal Law Title 18) and any superfluous or extraneous transmissions.
10. Information that would jeopardize emergency operations or violate a victim's privacy if **known by non-emergency service providers** shall not be transmitted over the radio.
11. **When a unit transmits on the user's primary talk group/channel no channel name needs to be transmitted.**
Example: "Cortland from K91"
Is a typical transmission from a County Sheriffs Officer to the 911 Dispatch Center when the Officer is communicating on County Law..
12. **When a user is not on his/her primary talk group/channel the name of the channel shall be transmitted in the calling format.**
Example: "Cortland from K91 on Law TAC 1" or "Cortland from K91 on City Law"
*Is a typical transmission from a County Sheriff's Officer to the 911 Dispatch Center when the Officer is communicating on any talkgroup **OTHER** than County Law.*
13. When calling another unit/or Dispatch the user shall use the following format: who you are calling from you calling.
Example: "Fire Control from 1301" or "Cortland from 105" .
14. **Entire unit numbers and approved call signs shall be utilized at all times by radio users.**
 Correct: "Cortland this is 105"
 Incorrect: "Cortland this is 5"
15. **Previously used radio station call signs will no longer be used.** The Land Mobile Radio system has built in identifiers that are done automatically.
Example: "KEE-240", "KIA-999", "WPCV-245"
16. **Primary talkgroups are used to dispatch calls for service**, contact users assigned to that talk group/channel and coordinate day-to-day activities of each agency assigned to that talk group/channel. Specific tactical /operations will be conducted on the appropriate tactical/operations talk-group as assigned.

Primary talkgroups:	County Law
	City Law
	County Fire
	Interagency
	911 Priority
Tactical/Operational	Cville Ops
	Law Tac 1
	County Med
	Sheriff car to car

17. **Tactical (TAC) and/or Operations (OPS) Talk-groups** – Sometimes referred to as channels are used for tactical/operational communications between field units and occasionally the communications center. Tactical talk groups and OPS talk groups may be on the network (i.e. simulcast) or off the network local (i.e. low power simplex line-of-site). On larger incidents, separate and unique tactical and/or operations talk-groups may be assigned by the dispatch center for specific functions. **Assignments using county-wide talk-groups/channels are made by dispatch as requested by the Incident Commander/ Patrol Supervisor or designee.**
18. **Law enforcement and fire units that are responding to assist another agency shall be instructed to switch to that agency's primary dispatch talk group.**

Example: A sheriff patrol is responding into the city to assist a city police car on a domestic. The sheriff patrol shall change talk groups to City Law.

Example: Homer Fire is responding to assist Preble Fire, in Preble, at the scene of a house fire. Homer Fire shall change talkgroups to "Preble Ops" when arriving on the scene.
19. **Use the Interagency talkgroup/channel when calling the 911 dispatch center IF the dispatch center does not routinely monitor your primary talkgroup.**
20. **Phonetic Alphabet** – A phonetic alphabet shall be used for spelling out unusual names, license plate letters and so forth. They are always transmitted as "Adam," "Boy," or "Charles not "A as in Adam," etc. Due to the variations of phonetic alphabets, no one phonetic alphabet will be required. Any phonetic alphabet that clearly identifies a letter is acceptable.
21. **Plain language shall be used for all radio communications.** The use of codes, particularly agency specific codes have been found to be a barrier in the transmission of information. The most negative effect of codes is a reduction in communications interoperability during multi agency response. There is only one acceptable code in Cortland; "CODE-9". This code is used to acknowledge emergency button activations in both Cortland and Onondaga radios.
22. **Obtain clearance (from dispatch) prior to transmitting lengthy messages,** such as descriptions of suspects or notifications. Break every so often to allow any other unit that may have an urgent message to transmit.
23. **After pressing the Push-to-Talk (PTT) button, await the end of the "talk permit" tone before speaking.** The conclusion of the "talk permit" tone means that you have the air at that instant and can begin delivering your message. If another unit has the air, or the network is busy, you will receive a "system busy" tone. If you receive a "system busy" tone, release the PTT button and await a "talk permit" tone. The system will automatically give you the air once the air is available for your transmission. At this time you should press the PTT again and then speak. Do not continue to press the PTT button after receiving a "system busy" tone. By doing so you will lose your place in the queue and will be put to the end of the queue list.

24. **Think before your speak** – DON'T press the Push-to-Talk button until you know what you want to say in your transmission.
25. **Make all transmissions brief and concise.** If you must transmit a lot of information, break it into several shorter transmissions, the radio system will automatically end transmissions that are over thirty seconds. Extended transmissions unnecessarily consume network resources and may result in other system users receiving a system busy.
26. **Don't use unnecessary words, such as "please" and "thank you".** These words waste valuable air time.
27. **All transmissions should be impersonal and professional.** Do not use words or inflections that reflect humor, irritation, sarcasm, or disgust. Additionally, do not make "catcalls" or play music and/or sound effects over the radio. This activity violates Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules and policies. Audit trails are generated for all network transmissions.
28. **Make only necessary transmissions**—you are sharing a limited number of radio frequencies with all other radio users including public safety agencies. You do not know when emergency communications are in progress on other channels talk groups and your unnecessary transmission may delay another radio user reporting or responding to an emergency event.
29. **Don't ignore a call to your radio.** If you cannot deal with the transmission immediately, ask the caller to standby and re-contact them as soon as you are able to. If you have not heard all of a transmission to you, never guess at the missing information. Ask the person to repeat or clarify the message before acknowledging you understand it.
30. **When calling into Dispatch via radio, users shall wait for acknowledgment by dispatch prior to transmitting his/her message.**
31. **Emergency buttons (orange button) should be utilized only when the user is immediate life or death danger. Once you activate your emergency button your talk group will AUTOMATICALLY change to the 911 Priority talk group giving you priority within the radio network and direct communication with a Dispatcher.** Every attempt by the user should be made to relay a location and the nature of the problem. If the activation of the button was accidental do not switch talk groups or your channel selector to another talk group/channel. The Dispatcher shall inquire on your status and location and you need to respond with your location and status is Code-9 if there is no emergency. Any response **other than Code-9** shall initiate additional and/or law enforcement units being sent to your last known location. Only reset your radio when the dispatcher tells you too. This is accomplished by holding the emergency/orange button down for 3-5 seconds. The user should hear a tone once the tone occurs key your radio on your primary talk to group to assure your radio has reset.

32. The Communications Center assigns additional talkgroups/channels for planned or scheduled events. Any event, known in advance, that requires additional communications resources needs to be cleared through the 911 center.

1. Alternate talk group/channel(s) will be assigned as available for the duration of the event upon request. Talk group/channel assignment is subject to pre-emption if required for reassignment to an emergency event.
2. Alternate talk group channels should be scheduled as far in advance as possible.
3. Agencies may be assigned On-Network tactical channels or operations talk groups or Off-Network talk groups. The use of TAC/OPS talk groups/channels must be coordinated through the Communications Center in order to prevent interference between multiple operations.
4. The Communications Center will be notified by the requesting agency or Incident Commander when the requested talk group/channel(s) will no longer be needed.
5. Agencies shall give the Director of Emergency Response and Communication no less than 5 days prior to a scheduled event in order for arrangements to be made for providing a dispatcher if the talk group is to be monitored by the Communications Center.

Scott Roman – Director DOERC