

**Arlington County  
RACES**

**Basic Operator  
Course – Unit 3**

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**ARLINGTON  
VIRGINIA**



**MESSAGE  
HANDLING**

**USING THE  
ICS FORM 213**

# OBJECTIVES

- WHY RACES uses the ICS Form 213
- WHAT is an ICS message?  
(How it *differs from an NTS radiogram*)
- CONCERNS for operational traffic
- HOW to send a message by VOICE
- HOW to send messages by PACKET.

# Practice Using the ICS Form and Procedures

- Emergency Stations and Team Leaders **must be proficient to set the example.**
- All RACES members **learn to use ICS form.**
- Practice on nets **and in exercises.**
- Because you cannot wait **until a served agency official hands you a message during a real emergency to learn how!**

# OPERATIONS NET – “OPNET” FUNCTIONS

Carrying traffic requested by served agencies only.

- **Tactical communications**: real-time info for immediate command and control purposes.
- **Record communications**: formal written messages sent by voice, data or CW, which is part of the official incident record.

# LOGISTICS Net – “LOGNET”

- LOGNET is a Directed Net.
- Purpose is to reduce congestion on OPNET.
- Inform general RACES members of:
  - Situation & safety briefs , periodic updates
  - Assess equipment and personnel available
  - Schedule duty assignments
  - Relay non-sensitive traffic to net liaisons
- Uses a local coverage repeater: 146.625- (107.2)
- (Sometimes called a “resource net” by NGOs)

# **WHY RACES DOES NOT USE THE NTS RADIOGRAM:**

- **NTS Radiogram form is NOT USED by Arlington County, or by state and federal agencies.**
- **Office of Emergency Management uses ICS procedures and formats.**
- **Originate all outgoing RACES messages on the ICS Form.**
- **Some incoming messages (Salvation Army & Red Cross) use NTS.**
- **Do NOT reformat incoming messages; handle all incoming traffic as received.**

# Why RACES Uses the ICS Form 213:

- Operational messages are routed directly, by the **MOST EXPEDIENT** method.
- Served agency messages *are sent directly* between OEM and deployed resources.
- ICS Form 213 is widely used by FEMA, SHARES, DHS, CAP, Coast Guard.
- Its use is straight-forward, a *common sense* sending protocol, similar to an email message.

# Why RACES Members Learn and Practice Message Handling:

- **Accurate, Brief, Clear messages, in plain language, provide efficient emergency communications**
- **Arlington RACES needs SSB and packet capability too:**
  - **Contacts with VA EOC and EMAC (mutual aid) jurisdictions**
  - **Traffic going beyond the National Capitol Region (NCR)**
  - **SSB ops are independent of repeaters**
  - **VA Digital Emergency Network (VDEN) operates 24 / 7**

# SIGNAL REPORTING IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

- **Loud & Clear (log as LC)**
- **Good Readable (log as GR)**
- **Fair Readable (log as FR)**
- **Weak Readable (log as WR)**
- **Weak Unreadable (log as WU)**

# When is a Formal Written Message **NOT** Used?

- Formal messages *are not needed* for most “Real-Time” Tactical Communications:
  - Direct conversations between third parties
  - Life-safety matters *when timing is critical*
  - Most routine task assignments
  - Most routine task completions
  - Most routine resource coordination
  - *Record routine exchanges as line-items in your ICS Form 309 Comm Log*

# A Formal Written Message Is Needed For “Record” Communications - ALWAYS

*Because incident reports are public documents,*

***USE A FORMAL MESSAGE FOR:***

- Station activation & closure
- Damage assessments
- Shelter and EOC status
- Situation updates
- Declarations
- Resource Requests
- ICS facility relocations

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# Operational Traffic

- **“Record” communications -- SITREPS (situation reports), resource requests, etc. must be signed by the agency originator, to identify responsibility & authenticity.**
- **Agency controller establishes priority. *If used, precedence follows the Message Number before the Group Count, on “admin line” 4.***
- **ICS Precedence:**  
***URGENT, IMMEDIATE, R (ROUTINE)***

# WHAT IS AN ICS MESSAGE?

- **Record Communications on behalf of served agency officials must be written in ICS Form 213 format or on the originating agency's approved form**
- **But don't fixate on the FORM!**
- **Be prepared to copy long messages.**
- **Learn to copy messages without relying on a FORM!**

# ICS Form 213 Message Form

- 1 - "To "line
- 2 - "From " line
- 3 - "Subject / Date / Time" line
- 4 - "Admin line" *We use the VA RACES Form 213 that includes Message Number, Priority, and Group Count.*
- 5 - "Message" field (ten 5-word lines)
- 6 - "Signature" line
- 7 - "Reply" field (ten 5-word lines)
- 8 - "Reply Date/Time/Signature" line

# 1 - "To" line

Name, Agency and Title of Recipient

VA RACES ICS Form 213 MESSAGE

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TO:

POSITION:

---

## 2 - "From" line

Name, Agency and Title of Originator

VA RACES ICS Form 213 MESSAGE

---

TO:

POSITION:

---

FROM:

POSITION:

---

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### 3 - "Subject / Date/ Time" line

Incident or Task Name, Date, Local Time

VA RACES ICS Form 213 MESSAGE

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TO:

POSITION:

---

FROM:

POSITION:

---

SUBJECT:

DATE:

TIME:

---

DATE format is DAY MONTH  
TIME is 24-hour LOCAL time  
(unless the served agency specifies UTC)

# 4 - Message Number and Group Count

precede "Message" Text (ten lines, 50 words)  
Plain language, no codes or jargon

**MESSAGE No:**

**Group Count:**

				5
				10
				15
				20
				25
				30
				35
				40
				45
				50

## 5 - “Signature” line

---

SIGNATURE:

POSITION:

---

Name and title of the originating official is essential for message authentication.

# 6 - "Reply" Block

(ten lines, 50 words)

**REPLY:**

**Group Count:**

				5
				10
				15
				20
				25
				30
				35
				40
				45
				50

# 7 – “Reply Date/Time/Signature”

---

**DATE:**

**TIME:**

**SIGNATURE/POSITION:**

---

# TRANSMITTING THE MESSAGE HEADERS

- *Precedence, if any, goes after the message number.*
- *After sending the line say **“Break for text, OVER.”***
- *If the receiving station requires a “fill” on anything sent up to this point,*
- *They use the prowords **“SAY AGAIN.”***
- *Otherwise they simply say **“GO...”***

# HINTS ON SENDING AND RECEIVING THE TEXT

- Pause briefly after each line of five words.
- Say **“BREAK”** after text and before sending SIGNATURE in case a fill is needed.
- To request a “fill” say:  
**“Say Again...**  
word before (or all before) ...  
word after (or all after) ...  
word (or all) between... and...

# Get out your pencil and paper!

*Copy along as I send the message headers:*

“TO, Initials, CHARLIE PAPA  
TANGO...Anthony, I SPELL, ALPHA,  
NOVEMBER, TANGO, HOTEL, OSCAR,  
NOVEMBER, YANKEE,... Barrero, I SPELL,  
BRAVO, ALPHA, ROMEO, ROMEO, ECHO,  
ROMEO, OSCAR.”

“Initials ECHO OSCAR CHARLIE,  
Fire Duty Officer.” -

# MESSAGE HEADERS

- TO: Cpt. Anthony Barrero
- POSITION: EOC Fire Duty Officer
- FROM: Cpt. Ronald L. Mastin, IC
- SUBJECT: I95 HAZMAT
- DATE: 2JUN
- TIME: 0530 L
- MESSAGE NUMBER: 6201
- URGENT
- GROUP COUNT: 50

# Now lets copy the "Message"

*Please copy along for practice, then check against this text.*

TRACTOR	TRAILER	CARRYING	40K	POUNDS
EXPLOSIVE	B	OVERTURNE D	LEFT	SHOULDE R
RAMP	I95	EXIT	170N	PERIOD
VSP	AND	CHEMTREC	NOTIFIED	PERIOD
EVACUATING	SHIRLEY	INDUSTRIAL	PARK	EAST
OF	I95	AND	RESIDENTS	IN
LYNNBROOK	EAST	OF	FLANDERS	AND
SPRINGFIELD	ESTATES	WEST	OF	FRONTIER
AND	NORTH	OF	PALOMINO	PERIOD
NEED	SHELTER	OPENED	LEE	HS

# The SIGNATURE

- Identifies the **ORIGINATOR** of the message.
- In **ROUTINE** traffic the Originator is often the **STATION OF ORIGIN**
- **Operational (served agency) traffic usually has a third-party signature, such as:**

---

## SIGNATURE:

Captain Bill Bennett

## POSITION:

Incident Commander  
Arlington County Fire Dept.

# When to use the Proword “I Spell”

- **DO NOT** automatically spell familiar words or acronyms like “EOC” or “RACES” unless operating conditions are poor enough that it is needed.
- Necessary for proper names (there is no “common spelling” on emergency nets)  
“Jones, I spell JULIET OSCAR  
NOVEMBER ECHO SIERRA”
- To clarify homonyms, words which sound alike, but have different meanings, such as :  
“To, I spell TANGO OSCAR)”

# PUNCTUATION - 1

- Use “I Spell” when WORDS are used as PUNCTUATION.
- “PERIOD” Ends a sentence. *NOT spelled out when sending unless conditions are weak readable and require “fills.”*
- “DOT, I spell Delta Oscar Tango” for a single period within a text group (email address). Don't use to end a sentence, use PERIOD!

## PUNCTUATION -- 2

- “DECIMAL, I spell ...” used in figure groups only, (such as radio frequencies sent in a message text).
- “DASH, I spell DELTA ALPHA SIERRA HOTEL” for a hyphen.
- “ATSIGN, I spell ALPHA TANGO SIERRA INDIA GOLF NOVEMBER” for symbol “@” .

# Message Text Quality Control

- Formal “Record” messages **always should be CLEAR and SUCCINCT.**
- Written so that their meaning cannot be mis-interpreted or read in more than one way.
- Write out the message in full, using plain text only.
- If a telephone number is given **in the message TEXT**, it is sent as three groups:  
**Area Code, Exchange and 4-digit number.**

# WHAT ABOUT National Traffic System ARL NUMBERED RADIOGRAMS ?

- **ICS & RACES don't use ARL numbered radiograms!**
  - But you should still know what they are... in case you **RECEIVE** one.
  - They may be used in response to Red Cross DWI (Disaster Welfare Inquiry).
  - IF sent an ARL numbered radiogram the “number” is **SPELLED OUT!**
- ***NO Health & Welfare traffic on OPNETS – take to LOGNET.***
  - *W is an ARES task with Red Cross.*

# EXAMPLE OF ARL RADIOGRAM

**4566 W K3SRF ARL 6  
ARLINGTON VA FEB 22**

**PHYLLIS MATTHEWS  
1508 FIFTEENTH STREET  
LYNCHBURG VA 24501  
434-555-1212**

**ARL THREE VIRGINIA HOSPITAL CENTER  
ARLINGTON  
CHRISTA THOMAS**

**TO DELIVER, ADD ARL NUMBERED  
RADIOGRAM TEXT:**

**(ARL THREE)**

**AM IN *[VIRGINIA HOSPITAL CENTER  
ARLINGTON]* HOSPITAL.  
RECEIVING EXCELLENT CARE  
AND RECOVERING FINE.**

**CHRISTA THOMAS**

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# NTS / ICS TRAINING NOTES

- In ARRL-NTS practice, its considered unnecessary to say the line headers.
- NTS operators use “Initial X-Ray” to indicate the end of sentence.
- But in ICS we use the headers because the receiving station may be unfamiliar with the ICS message form.
- RACES / ICS stations use “PERIOD” to end a sentence for simplicity and clarity with our served agencies.

# OPERATOR NOTES:

- Don't give "op notes" while sending text
- Op notes, if needed, are given **AFTER** the signature and **BEFORE** saying "**Break**" *upon completion of the message...*
- Give Op notes at the same time you provide any "fills" requested by the receiving station of missed groups. If no fills are needed, give the Op Note before telling the receiving station how many listed messages remain to be sent.  
**"one more..."**

# Using the Proword “CONFIRM”

**CONFIRM?** (*recipient uses voice inflection in form of a QUERY*)

**“CONFIRM Echo Sierra Papa?”**

**THE SENDING STATION’S RESPONSE:**

**“WRONG, I Say Again Word After FIGURES ONE SEVEN ZERO NOVEMBER PERIOD, Initials VICTOR, SIERRA, PAPA, OVER ”**

**CONFIRM** (recipient’s statement that it is now correct): **“CONFIRM, GO”**

# Authentication

- **Originating station must work from a form bearing an ORIGINAL signature of the releasing authority to verify responsibility for message contents and enabling authentication.**
- **Messages to RACES staff at VAEOC may be signed by a RACES operator, such as to report “on station” or to “request to terminate.”**

# To Acknowledge Receiving Traffic

- If you do not require any fills acknowledge receipt to the relaying station, simply say:

“<your call> ROGER Number  
<Message Number> , OVER”

For example:

“Lee Center, Roger Number 6711,  
over.”

## WHEN YOU ARE DONE WITH THIS MESSAGE:

- If the traffic just sent is the only message or last message you have to send, then say:  
**“END, no more, Over”**
- If you have one or more messages to send, you say:  
**“Break, More to Follow, Over”**

# DELIVERING THE MESSAGE:

- **Read the TEXT and SIGNATURE of the message to the recipient.**
- **If leaving the traffic on an answering machine or with a third party (not the final recipient) give your callback telephone or other method of contacting you.**

# PRIVACY AND PROFESSIONALISM

- **RACES personnel must NOT discuss disaster information when media is nearby.**
- **Names are not used in messages except to identify the agency contacts.**
- **Refer media requests to the agency's Public Information Officer.**

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## Packet operational considerations: *Refer to VDEN SOP*

- Use “ST” command (send traffic) as opposed to “SP” which means to send private.  
“ST FXEOC@WC4VAC”
- **Subject line** should identify drill or incident:  
“SITREP HAZMAT INCIDENT I-95 EXIT 170N”
- Packet messages are still in ICS format.
- With itemized forms send ITEM NUMBER followed by CHANGED information, **do not repeat any unchanged data previously sent.**

# ICS Form 213 Packet Message

ST FXEOC@WC4VAC

[TO] CPT ANTHONY BARRERO, EOC FIRE DUTY OFFICER

[FRM]: CPT. RONALD L. MASTIN, IC

URGENT I95 HAZMAT 2JUN0530EST

[BT]

TRACTOR	TRAILER	CARRYING	40K	POUNDS
EXPLOSIVE	BRAVO	OVERTURNED	LEFT	SHOULDER
RAMP	I95	EXIT	170N	CHEMTREC
VSP	AND	CARRIER	NOTIFIED	X
EVACUATING	SHIRLEY	INDUSTRIAL	PARK	EAST
OF	I95	AND	RESIDENTS	IN
LYNNBROOK	EAST	OF	FLANDERS	AND
SPRINGFIELD	ESTATES	WEST	OF	FRONTIER
AND	NORTH	OF	PALOMINO	X
NEED	SHELTER	OPENED	LEE	HS

[BT]

[SIG] BY AUTHORITY MASTIN / KE4SKY

# Operational considerations - 1

- **Connect to any VDEN BBS, network auto-forwards**
- **Do not connect directly into the VAEOC**
- **Traffic sent to VAEOC should be addressed to a specific office or agency when possible**

# Operational considerations - 2

- Stations send a check-in message once operational and
- a termination message upon closing their station:
  - Tactical call sign, Operator call sign
  - Time activated (or closed)
  - ID of served agency being supported, name and title of communications official in charge
  - Route (home BBS) by which messages may be responded to.
  - Available communications and relay capabilities:
    - HF, VHF, UHF, packet, Internet e-mail, fax, etc.

# Operational Considerations

## Working with served agencies

**INCOMING  
MESSAGE**

# EOC / RACES MESSAGE FLOW

*Verify with  
coordinating  
agency*



### RADIO OPERATOR

Transcribes onto  
message form\*  
*\*Press hard you are  
making 4 copies*

### LOGGER/ RECORDER

Time stamps /  
enters in log,  
keeps bottom  
pink copy, pass  
others to EOC  
Message  
Controller

### MESSAGE CONTROLLER

Assigns priority,  
Assigns to agency

### RECIPIENT

Reviews message,  
keeps top copy (white  
original) canary copy  
sent to coordinating  
agency. Draft reply,  
coordinate as needed.  
indicate method of  
dispatch, sign reply.



### RADIO OPERATOR

Transmits reply,  
returns to logger.

### LOGGER

Passes  
message to  
Operator and  
**records time  
transmitted**

### MESSAGE CONTROLLER

Close Received Log  
Keep Goldenrod Copy  
Initial reply, record time out  
to RACES Logger

**OUTGOING  
MESSAGE**

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