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**COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS  
 FIRE SERVICE POLICY**

Policy No. 5321 Date Issued: February 2, 1998  
 Section: 5300 – Radio Procedures Date Revised: January 10, 2005  
 Accreditation Standards: None

**SUBJECT: PRIORITY AND EMERGENCY RADIO TRAFFIC ONLY**

APPROVED: [Signature]  
 Chairperson, Fire Service Users Subcommittee  
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 Michael J. McDougall, General Manager

When appropriate, radio transmissions on a Dispatch, Command or Tactical Net should be restricted to priority or emergency transmissions only. Typically a priority traffic only restriction is less serious than an emergency traffic only restriction.

**Priority Traffic Only**

A priority traffic only restriction should be used to keep the Dispatch Net free for initial dispatch of new incidents and to keep the channel clear for responding units and the Incident Commander to contact NetCom.

A priority traffic only restriction can be initiated by NetCom or at the request of an Incident Commander, Zone Coordinator or Duty Chief. Circumstances which may indicate a need for a priority traffic only restriction include: a high volume of radio traffic; multiple incidents; or a single escalating or high visibility incident causing a lot of radio traffic and/or phone calls. During a priority traffic only restriction, the Dispatch Net will be used to: dispatch and acknowledge new incidents; broadcast and acknowledge status changes; and request and acknowledge response upgrades. Inappropriate use of the Dispatch Net during a priority traffic only restriction includes: unit to unit conversations (even if incident related) and administrative (non-incident related) broadcasts.

To initiate a priority traffic only restriction, the Fire Dispatcher will use a single alert tone and broadcast, "All units, priority traffic only on the Dispatch Net until further notice." A priority traffic only restriction could last for several hours and the restriction should be rebroadcast as needed. The channel marker will be activated for priority traffic.

To resume normal traffic, use a single alert tone and broadcast, "All units, resume normal traffic on the Dispatch Net."

### **Emergency Traffic Only**

An emergency traffic only restriction should be initiated anytime the dispatcher is advised that a firefighter is down, in imminent danger and/or an operational retreat is ordered. An emergency traffic only restriction should also be initiated, regardless of the circumstances, at the request of the Incident Commander (IC).

During an emergency traffic only restriction, the only transmissions on the restricted radio net will be those related to the working incident. Other channels should be used as appropriate to manage all other radio communications. If the restricted radio net is the Dispatch Net, the initial dispatch of new incidents will continue to be broadcast on the Dispatch Net. After the initial dispatch is completed, other channels should be used to manage all other radio communications. This should keep the Dispatch Net clear for transmissions between NetCom and the IC (or whatever unit made the triggering transmission). If a unit other than the IC triggered the emergency traffic only restriction, immediately inform the IC of the situation.

To initiate an emergency traffic only restriction on the Dispatch Net, use a alert warble tone and broadcast, "All units, emergency traffic only on the Dispatch Net until further notice." To initiate an emergency traffic only restriction on any channel other than the Dispatch Net, simulcast an alert warble tone and the above "emergency traffic only" announcement on the affected radio net and the Dispatch Net. An emergency traffic only restriction typically lasts for minutes and the restriction should be rebroadcast as needed. The channel marker will be activated for emergency traffic.

To resume normal traffic, use a single alert tone and broadcast, "All units, resume normal traffic on the (radio net name)." Make sure to broadcast the "resume normal traffic" announcement on the same radio channels as the "emergency traffic only" announcement was broadcast.

### **Emergency Traffic Only Requested by IC**

An IC has the authority and responsibility to restrict a radio net to "emergency traffic only" any time a firefighter is in imminent danger. When NetCom receives a request from an IC to restrict a radio net in use for a particular incident, the dispatcher will use an alert warble tone and simulcast on all fire service radio nets, "All units emergency traffic only on the (radio net name) until further notice for (reason, i.e., evacuation, firefighter rescue.)" The dispatcher should then clear the restricted radio net for the IC to broadcast whatever instructions or announcements are necessary.

To resume normal traffic, the dispatcher will use a single alert tone and simulcast on all fire radio nets, "All units, resume normal traffic on the (radio net name).