

## Radio Messages using ICS-213R

Formal messages, which are originated locally, are "record communications" which are public records and part of the formal incident log maintained by the served agency. The most important features of a formal message are: (a) the date and time of the message, (b) the originator or sender of the message, and (c) the intended recipient of the message. (d) the message body or content.

### Principles of Operation

Both the sending and receiving operators should have a common understanding so they work together effectively. The principles for the on-the-air protocol are:

- The content of the message is relayed in sequence: top to bottom, left to right.
- It takes longer to write a message than it does to read it. Therefore, the sending station needs to pace the reading of the message so that the receiving station has the time to cleanly and accurately write the message down or type it.
- The receiving station writes in block print, capital letters. Do not use script, as it can be very unreadable when the receiving operator is fatigued.
- Each exchange on the radio consists of the originating operator reading one item or sentence from the form over the air, the receiving operator writing down the item or sentence then reading the item or sentence back over the air, and if the copy is correct the originating station moves on to the next item or sentence.
- The originating operator should break up sentences into phrases of about five to six words and release the PTT (Push-to-talk) switch and listen for the response from the receiving station to ensure he/she has copied that portion accurately and is not requesting a repeat. The originating operator can pause for about two to three seconds listening for a response, and hearing none, can move on to the next phrase of five to six words.  
If the receiving operator has a good copy, he/she can say "Copy" or "Go ahead" to signal the originating station to resume reading the next phrase. This is especially helpful after copying unusual or difficult words. Skilled receiving operators will say "Copy" while writing the last words to cut down the overall time. The two operators can adjust this exchange according to how well they are passing the message.
- The originating operator should make an effort to spell out unusual names and words. He can do that by saying "I spell" followed by the spelling. The preferred phonetic alphabet is the ITU (International Telecommunications Union) phonetics, also known as the [ICAO \(International Civil Aviation Organization\) phonetics](#).
- Punctuations are important! In the message, the originating operator should say (pronounce) each punctuation, such as a period, comma or question mark. Do not say "X-ray" as a replacement for the period at the end of the sentence.
- If the receiving operator has a problem, that operator can request a "fill" (selected repeat of the missed item, short for fill in the blank) by saying "word before", "word after", "all before" or "all after" and call out the word or phrase to help locate the section. If you don't want to have to relay your entire message when the receiving party calls out "say again all after xxxx", make sure you take the time to pace the rate at which you say your message **the first time**.
- In an EOC environment, there is a lot of noise and distraction that makes receiving and copying a message difficult. If you didn't hear the transmitting station clearly, say **"say again"** to request that station retransmit his message. Do not say "repeat", as that is a military command proword for [artillery fire discipline](#) control to fire again on the same target coordinates, and is never used in radio communications except for that purpose.
- Because the originating operator already has the message already written, on readback, the receiving operator can read back the item or sentence rapidly.
- If the receiving operator copied the item or sentence incorrectly, the originating operator can assist the receiving operator getting it corrected by repeating and emphasizing the section that is in error.
- The end of message is marked by the originating operator saying the procedural phrase "End of message".

As the operators become more experienced, and if the communications link is free of noise, you can forego reading back the line to the originator and just acknowledge receiving the line by saying "Copy". Dates and times are examples of items commonly acknowledged by saying "Copy".

### On-the-air Radio Protocol

Sender start by saying: **Please copy a message. ICS format.**

Receiver: The receiving station creates a partial log entry in the incoming message log. **Ready to copy.**

Sender identify their Tactical Station ID, such as: **"Orinda CERT SAR Lead"**

Precedence is: **EMERGENCY, Priority or Routine**

Mode is: **Voice, Packet, Winlink, WebEOC**

ORIGINAL MESSAGE NUMBER: **If this is a reply, enter the original SENDER message number** from bottom of original form.