


NORTHAMPTON POLICE DEPARTMENT Administration & Operations Manual		
Policy: Radio Procedures		AOM: S-102
Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards Referenced: [81.2.2], [81.2.4.a], [2.1.3.f], [81.1.2], [81.2.4.c], [81.2.4.d]		Issuing Authority <hr/> John Cartledge Chief of Police
Dissemination Date: 05/29/2002 Effective Date: 05/29/2002	Amended: 05/06, 09/08, 11/08, 01/09, 04/11, 09/14, 09/16, 09/18, 8/16, 8/25 Reviewed: 11/04, 05/06, 09/08, 01/09, 10/23, 8/25	

- I. Introductory Discussion.....1
- II. Definitions..... 2
- III. Policy.....2
- IV. Interoperability and Coordination.....3
- V. Incident Managemen.....3
- VI. Maintenance and Reliability.....4
- VII. Training and Compliance.....4
- VIII. Prohibited Practice.....5
- IX. Authorized Call Signs and Code Signals.....5
- X. Daily Sign On.....5
- XI. Emergency Button.....5

I. Introductory Discussion

- A. The Northampton Police Department’s communications system provides on-duty field personnel with the means for constant communication capability. The purpose of this directive is to establish basic communication procedures that are imperative in providing for the safety of both field personnel and the public.

- B. To establish guidelines for the use of Trunked radio systems within urban areas and VHF radio systems for wide-area coverage, ensuring optimal communication and operational efficiency for all personnel. This policy applies to all departments and personnel using radio communications within the organization, particularly those operating within city limits and those requiring wide-area coverage.

II. Definitions

- A. Trunked 700 MHz Radio System: A radio system that uses a shared group of frequencies and dynamically assigns them to users as needed. Typically used in urban environments where communication density is high.
- B. VHF Northampton Radio System: A conventional radio system that operates on fixed frequencies, known for its ability to cover large geographic areas, including rural and remote locations.
- C. Talk Groups: Different channels within individualized zones that can be changed by manipulating the 3-Position A/B/C Switch Zone Select and utilizing the 16- Position Selector Knob.

III. Policy

It shall be the policy of the Northampton Police Department to:

- A. Ensure 24-hour two-way radio capability, as well as telephone, cellular phone, and Mobile Data providing continuous communication between the Dispatcher and field personnel on duty. Radios are required to enable field personnel to maintain communications with the dispatcher for exchanging information, requesting assistance, receiving orders or instructions, and for responding to calls for service. [81.2.2] [81.2.4,a],[2.1.3.f]
- B. All patrol vehicles shall be equipped with radio communications equipment.
- C. Portable radios shall be available for use by all field personnel whether on foot patrol or when stepping away from their patrol vehicles.
- D. Ensure that the Northampton Police Department's radio operations are conducted in accordance with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) procedures and requirements. [81.1.2]
- E. All activity by departmental personnel should therefore be communicated/transmitted via radio communication. This shall include when personnel are temporarily out of service while on duty. The response to emergency requests or activated emergency alarm criteria (i.e.: officer needs assistance, officer-in-trouble, felony in progress, life-saving situation, etc...) shall be a priority response for all available and/or on-duty personnel.
- F. Utilize the Trunked Radio System (Urban Coverage): The Trunked radio system shall be the primary communication tool within city limits.
 - 1. Provides efficient spectrum usage, allowing a large number of users to share a limited number of frequencies.

2. Enhanced features such as encryption, talk groups, and priority access.
 3. Reliable coverage within the city, including inside buildings and other challenging environments.
 4. All urban-based units (e.g., city police, fire, EMS) will be equipped with Trunked radios.
 5. Users must be trained in the specific operation of the Trunked system, including emergency button functions, talk group navigation, and priority settings.
- G. Utilize the VHF Radio System (VHF PD RPTR). The VHF radio system is a communication tool for operations requiring coverage across large geographic areas, including rural and remote regions. More specifically, the VHF Radio System will be used when members are unable to communicate on the Trunked system. This is possible in some remote locations within city limits or when inside certain buildings.
1. Superior range and ability to cover wide areas with fewer infrastructure requirements (e.g., towers, repeaters).
 2. Better performance in hilly or forested areas where line-of-sight communications are needed.
 3. All units operating in rural, remote, or wide-area environments (e.g., rural patrols, search and rescue teams) will be equipped with VHF radios and or VHF system capabilities.
 4. Users must be trained in the operation of VHF radios, including frequency selection, signal propagation, and basic troubleshooting.

IV. Interoperability and Coordination

- A. Units operating on different systems must maintain interoperability.
- B. Motorola APX multi-band radios are capable of operating on both Trunked and VHF systems.
- C. Dispatch centers equipped to bridge communications between systems.
- D. Pre-established mutual aid channels or talk groups – i.e. “WMLEC”, “VHF PD RPTR”

V. Incident Management

- A. In the event of a major incident requiring both urban and rural units, a unified command structure will be established to coordinate communication between the Trunked and VHF systems.

B. Dispatch centers will manage channel assignments to ensure seamless communication across systems.

C. Urgent Wide Area Coverage

In the event that a Member of the Northampton Police Department leaves the Trunked Coverage Area (i.e. a motor vehicle pursuit outside city limits, or when utilizing a portable radio in a remote area, or potentially inside certain buildings) the member should switch the Talk Group to channel two (2) ‘**VHF PD RPTR**’. This will ensure that the member is has the most coverage functionality possible when leaving city limits and essentially function as our current VHF Radio. ‘**VHF PD RPTR**’ will be channel two (2) on both the mobile and portable radios.

D. Communicating With Interacting Agencies

1. Members of the Northampton Police Department shall have the capability to intercommunicate with the Northampton Fire Department, Department of Public Works, and Emergency Medical Service providers. [2.1.3,f] [81.2.4,d]
2. Members shall, via the Western Massachusetts Law Enforcement Communication (WMLEC) radio system, be able to interoperate with other local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, in addition to municipal fire and emergency medical agencies.[81.3.4]
3. The Northampton Police Department will also have access for interoperability via the national VTAC and UTAC frequencies.

VI. Maintenance and Reliability

- A. Regular maintenance of both Trunked and VHF radio systems will be conducted to ensure reliability. This includes checking infrastructure (e.g., towers, repeaters) and updating software/firmware on radios.
- B. Backup Systems
- C. Backup communication systems will be in place to ensure continued operations in the event of a system failure.

VII. Training and Compliance

All radio users will undergo mandatory training on the specific systems they are required to use. This training will cover the operation of both Trunked and VHF radios, as well as the organization’s policies on their use.

VIII. Prohibited Practice

- A. In accordance with FCC rules and regulations, the Northampton Police Department's radio system shall be used for official business only and the following practices shall be prohibited:
 - 1. Use of other than authorized call signs, except when authorized for a special detail.
 - 2. Use of other than authorized radio code signals.
 - 3. Lengthy conversations. Telephones should be utilized in cases where long conversations are necessary.
 - 4. Use of obscenity, sarcasm, or harsh or abusive language.

IX. Authorized Call Signs & Code Signals

- A. The personal identification numbers of field personnel shall be used for identifying officers during radio transmissions. A list of the personal identification numbers of field personnel shall be readily available to the Dispatcher. [81.2.4,c]
- B. A complete list of the authorized radio codes and call signs shall be made available to all personnel utilizing such codes during radio communications.
- C. Radio language in accordance with the NIMS standard shall be utilized in inter-agency communications.

X. Daily Radio Sign On

At midnight or as close to that time as is reasonably possible each day, the Public Safety Communications Center will announce the following:

“This is station WPXA23, owned and operated by the City of Northampton Police Department operating under the authority of the Federal Communications Commission.”

XI. Emergency Button

Purpose: To establish a protocol for responding to situations where the emergency button on a Motorola APX Portable Radio is activated, but no audio is transmitted, or, a response other

than “Accidental” is provided by the operator of the portable radio. This shall ensure the safety and well-being of the operator.

Members of the Northampton Police Department shall still request additional officers to respond to emergency situations as they have been trained. Furthermore, members should still utilize the “94” code when needing an immediate and expedited response. The emergency button policy is in place to establish specific protocols for dispatch when an officer is unable to use the “94” code or has an accidental emergency button activation.

A. Emergency Button Activation

1. When the emergency button on a Motorola APX Portable radio is activated, the dispatcher will immediately recognize the emergency status of the operator's radio.
2. The dispatcher will attempt to communicate with the radio operator using standard emergency communication protocols.
3. If the emergency button activation is accidental, the radio operator should respond with the word “Accidental” to ensure that dispatch and other officers are aware that the radio operator is not under duress **AND** press the emergency button an additional time for two seconds and you hear a long tone. This will clear an accidental emergency on the officer’s end. If the officer responds with any other word or phrase other than “Accidental”, dispatch will make two more attempts to receive the proper response as well as reminding the officer to clear out the emergency on the portable radio prior to logging the incident as an “Emergency”.

B. Silent Audio Response: If the emergency button is activated but no audio is transmitted:

1. The dispatcher will make two attempts to reach the operator verbally.
2. If no response is received, the dispatcher will immediately log the incident as a "Silent Emergency."

C. Dispatching Assistance:

1. Upon identifying an “Emergency”, or “Silent Emergency”, the dispatcher will:
2. Dispatch the nearest available units to the last known location of the radio operator.
3. Notify a supervisor or officer in charge of the “Emergency”, or “Silent Emergency” and provide details on the situation.

D. Assessing the Situation:

1. Responding units will proceed to the operator’s last known location, prioritizing their safety and preparedness for any scenario.

2. Upon arrival, units will assess the situation to determine whether the operator requires medical assistance, is unresponsive, or if there are other potential hazards.

E. Technical Check and Confirmation:

1. The radio involved in the Silent Emergency will be checked for any technical malfunctions or issues that may have caused the silent transmission.
2. A report will be filed to document the incident, including any findings related to the radio's functionality.

F. Post-Incident Actions:

1. A full review of the incident will be conducted to evaluate the response and to identify any necessary improvements to the procedures or equipment.
2. Training sessions will be held to ensure all personnel are familiar with the Silent Emergency protocol and the proper use of emergency buttons on Motorola APX Portable radios.

Conclusion

The activation of an emergency button with silent audio is a critical situation that requires immediate and thorough response. The officer should be aware that the emergency button is an additional tool that can be used in situations where the officer may not be able to speak, either due to injury, or as dictated by the incident. If the emergency button is accidental, the officer needs to only remember to reply to dispatch with the word "Accidental" and clear out the emergency on the officer's portable radio by pressing the button a second time.