



MONTGOMERY COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD.

DIVISION OF OPERATIONS DIRECTIVE

September 27, 2005

NUMBER: 05-05

TO: MCFRS Personnel
FROM: Division Chief Philip Guercio 
SUBJECT: Maintaining Radio Communications

The ability to communicate with all units is critical to the safe and efficient operation of the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service. When a fire/rescue unit is in any status except "Available in Quarters," its unit officer must maintain radio communication with PSCC at all times on the assigned talk group or channel. In the situations described below, units must make every effort to follow the guidance provided.

1. The radio system does not provide coverage in an incident operational area.
 - a. When resources permit, try to maintain communication by leaving a crew member in an area with coverage to relay messages via the talk-around channel (7 Oscar), as needed.
 - b. If communications cannot be maintained because of operational demands, and the crew is entering an area of known radio communication problems, a crew member must notify PSCC that it is entering an area known to have communication problems and may not be available by radio while in that area. When the unit moves back into an area with radio coverage, a crew member must notify PSCC that the unit is now available by radio.
 - c. If a unit realizes unexpectedly that radio coverage is unavailable, a crew member should move back into an area of radio coverage and try to reestablish contact. If this cannot be done because of operational demands, the OIC must notify PSCC that it is back in radio coverage as soon as practical, once radio communication is again possible.

2. EMS unit(s) conducting a patient consult or transport notification with a hospital will be on a talk group other than their assigned talk group for the duration of the consult or notification.

The EMS units must remember to switch back to the assigned talk group when the hospital consult is complete to minimize the possibility of missed messages.

3. A unit is assigned to an incident or detail outside Montgomery County.

Maintaining communications with PSCC is desirable, and every reasonable effort should be made to do so if radio coverage and resources permit.

4. A unit is assigned to a detail within Montgomery County, but maintaining communication would be disruptive or impractical (e.g., the crew is attending a classroom training session, a funeral detail, etc.).

If practical, and if it will not negatively impact the current assignment, designate a crew member to monitor communications with PSCC for the unit(s) assigned to the detail.

Units must maintain radio communication with PSCC at all other times, including, but not limited to:

1. After an EMS unit arrives at a hospital and is transferring a patient to the hospital, or is restocking the unit in preparation for a return to service;
2. When a unit is conducting routine activities (e.g., inspections, area familiarization, shopping for dinner, etc.) in an area of known communication problems.

A crew member must be assigned to maintain communication with ECC by remaining in an area of radio coverage, and relaying messages to the out-of-coverage units using the talk-around channel (7 Oscar), or by other means as needed.