

Solano County Fire Chiefs Association GUIDELINES

Guideline Name:	County Radio Communications
Number:	01
Revision / Reviewed Date:	April 1, 2023

I. Purpose

This policy aims to provide Solano County Fire Agencies with guidelines for using radio frequencies during emergency incidents. Solano County Agencies will utilize this policy to facilitate the coordination of communication frequencies during emergency incidents. It is recognized that agencies dispatched outside of Solano County Dispatch may vary in protocols when using their radio frequencies. Once the Incident Commander determines that the complexity of an incident has expanded beyond their local PSAP center, Solano County Dispatch will be the central coordination center for resources and communication frequencies. Saint Helena shall be utilized as the central ordering point anytime unification of command has occurred with CAL FIRE.

II. Procedure

- A. All communications shall be clear text per California Firescope.
- B. All dispatch centers can issue department-specific Tactical and Command Frequencies. Any additional frequencies needed for the incident will be requested from Solano County Dispatch. Once an incident reaches a department-specific predetermined alarm, the Incident Commander shall develop a communications plan to accommodate mutual aid resources.
- C. SECA interoperability frequencies should be used for coordination between VHF, 700, and 800 users when possible.
- D. All Solano County fire agencies should have, at a minimum, the Mandatory list of frequencies outlined in MACS 441-1 in their mobile and portable radios. Agencies should be diligent in keeping up with bulletin updates for frequency changes.
- E. Solano County Dispatch Center:
 - 1. Solano County Dispatch or the responsible PSAP will assign an Incident Name and Tactical Channel to all First Alarm Assignments and all Vegetation Fires in the State Responsibility and Unincorporated Area. Other agencies are encouraged to practice the same procedures.
 - 2. If CAL Fire receives the call first, they will designate the Incident Name and frequencies to be used; if a local PSAP has duplicated this effort, the CAL FIRE communication plan and incident name will be used. This information shall be relayed to the responding units from Solano Dispatch.

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3. Solano Dispatch will issue tactical frequencies, starting with V-Fire 26 and descending, unless the incident includes a CAL FIRE response, and then V-Fire 22 will be assigned first. The Incident Commander may request a specific repeated frequency due to issues with non-repeated frequencies

F. All Other Dispatch Centers:

1. Solano County Dispatch will be the central coordination point for tracking VHF Tactical Frequencies in Solano County. If a VHF Tactical frequency is needed for an incident being managed outside the Solano Dispatch Center, the coordinating PSAP shall request an assignment of additional channels.
2. Dispatch centers shall notify Solano Dispatch when an incident in their jurisdiction goes to a second alarm for early notification and notice to Operational Area Coordinators. Incident Commanders could deliver the same information or request for tactical channel allocation by contacting Solano Dispatch on Solano Fire Main directly.
3. CAL Fire wants updates on fires in the SRA from the Incident Commander. Incident Commanders will communicate with St. Helena Dispatch directly when fires occur in or near the SRA or Mutual Threat Zone (MTZ). Opening up a direct line of communication will help expedite the request for resources and allow the responding resources to gain situational awareness.

G. Frequency Use:

1. Dispatch Channel: Channel utilized for dispatching resources to emergency incidents.
2. Command Channel: Channel utilized to communicate between the Incident Commander, Dispatch, and Command Staff. Additional Command Channels may be requested depending on the complexity of the incident and the staffing of dispatchers.
3. Tactical Channel: Channel utilized to communicate between command or operations and units on scene. This will allow for on-

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scene communications and coordination of tactical operations. Tactical Channels are assigned to incidents to remove unit-to-unit tactical communications from the Dispatch Channel. Additional tactical channels may be requested depending on the complexity of the incident.

H. Mutual Aid Incident

1. Communication Protocol for Multiple Alarm Incidents within Solano County:
 - a. All Fire Resources responding to mutual aid in Solano County will advise the requesting agency (PSAP) when they respond, continue monitoring the frequency until they reach the incident, and switch to the assigned tactical channel once on scene.
 - b. Solano County Dispatch will advise responding resources of the assigned Command and Tactical Frequencies, Incident name, and Staging Location. Resources arriving at the incident should check in at staging unless otherwise directed. Use face-to-face communications whenever possible to reduce radio traffic.
 - c. All Dispatch Centers in Solano County shall notify resources responding to a mutual/auto aid incident of any known hazards, such as power lines down, and receive acknowledgment of identified hazard.
 - d. Units responding on strike teams will utilize the CESRS Direct channel (No tones) for communications during travel.
 - e. Incident Commanders will communicate with LNU Dispatch (St. Helena) when incidents occur in the State Responsibility Area or Mutual Threat Zones. Incident size up, updates, and resource needs should be relayed. The primary dispatch agency or Solano County Dispatch should be informed of any resource requests made through CAL Fire.