

COMMUNICATIONS UNIT LEADER

7510

(Revised 1996)

The Communications Unit leader is used on every incident either in the local command center or at the incident base. Today's technology calls for the Communications Unit leader to understand many elaborate communication systems.

COMMUNICATIONS UNIT LEADER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

7510.1

(Revised 1996)

The following are minimum responsibilities of the Communications Unit leader:

- Obtain briefing from the Service Branch director or Logistics chief.
- Determine the Communications Unit personnel needs.
- Advise on communications capabilities/limitations during preparation of the Incident Action Plan.
- Prepare and implement the incident Radio Communications Plan.
- Ensure that the incident communications center and message center are established.
- Set up telephone and public address systems.
- Establish appropriate communications distribution/maintenance locations within the base and camp(s).
- Ensure that communications systems are installed and tested.
- Ensure that an equipment accountability system is established.
- Ensure that personal portable radio equipment from cache(s) is distributed per the Radio Communications Plan.
- Provide technical information as required on:
 - The adequacy of the communications systems currently in operation.
 - The geographic limitation on the communications systems.
 - Equipment capabilities.
 - The amount and types of equipment available.

- Anticipated problems in the use of communications equipment.
- Supervise Communications Unit activities.
- Maintain records on all communications equipment as appropriate.
- Ensure that all equipment is tested and repaired.
- Recover equipment from relieved or released units.
- Maintain Unit Log (ICS 214).

COMMUNICATIONS UNIT LEADER'S 12-HOUR CHECKLIST

7510.2

(Revised 1996)

Briefing Information

Briefing Information

- _____ Agencies assigned
- _____ Anticipated # of personnel
- _____ Manpower and special equipment ordered
- _____ Location of ICP, base, camps, etc.
- _____ Office trailers:
 - _____ plans
 - _____ finance
 - _____ logistics
 - _____ ICP
- _____ Photocopy in camp
- _____ Communications:
 - _____ base radio
 - _____ HTs
 - _____ telephone
 - _____ mobile phone
 - _____ FAX
 - _____ computer
- _____ Radio technicians
- _____ Expanded ECC in place
 - _____ phone # _____
- _____ Access from base to line
- _____ Helibase location
- _____ Drop points located
- _____ Maps
- _____ Predicted weather conditions
- _____ Security problems
- _____ Potable water availability to unit
- _____ Sanitation, chemical toilets to units
- _____ Power source

ORGANIZATION

7510.3

(Revised 1996)

The Communications Unit leader, under the direction of the Service Branch director or Logistics chief, is responsible for:

- Developing plans for the effective use of incident communications equipment and facilities.
- Installing and testing communications equipment; supervision of the Incident Communications Center.
- Distribution of communications equipment to incident personnel.
- The maintenance and repair of communication equipment.

The Communications Unit leader prepares necessary plans for setting up and operating the communications center and for setting up the telephone system, and develops the Radio Communications Plan for each operational period (ICS 205).

Incident dispatchers receive and transmit radio and telephone messages among and between incident personnel and agencies external to the incident, and provide dispatch services at the incident level.

The message center receives, records and routes information and administrative and tactical traffic. Messengers are responsible for distributing hard copy material to incident personnel.

Communications technicians install the incident communications radio and telephone systems (install repeater, antennas), maintain an inventory of communications equipment, distribute and recover communications equipment from resources and test and repair communications equipment.

PERSONNEL

7510.4

(Revised 1996)

The number of personnel needed to perform the major functions and responsibilities assigned to the Communications Unit varies based on the general staff requirements and the size and complexity of the incident. The recommended minimum number of personnel needed for each 12-hour period of operations is presented in the Field Operations Guide, pages 2-4.

MAJOR PROCEDURES

7510.5

(Revised 1996)

The following are the major procedures followed by the Communications Unit leader:

Obtain briefing

1. Obtain a briefing from Service Branch director or Logistics chief and obtain:
 - a. The Incident Briefing Report (ICS 201).
 - b. A summary of resources dispatched to the incident.
 - c. Initial instructions concerning work activities.
2. Obtain the Incident Action Plan when it is available.

Obtain unit work materials. In addition to the communications equipment, testing gear, and tools used by the Communications Unit which are normally supplied through the parent agency supply channel, the Communications Unit leader can obtain other incident supplies (e.g., pencils, papers) from the logistics supply kit.

Establish the initial location for the Incident Communication Center.

1. Contact the Facilities Unit leader to select and coordinate the appropriate location of the Incident Communications Center, if not preselected. If an ICP is not preselected, the Communications Unit leader should play a key role in selecting the ICP location. Some general factors to consider in selecting the location are:
 - a. The proximity to staff.
 - b. The proximity to the Resource Unit.
 - c. Available parking for Mobile Communications Center (MCC).
 - d. The size and complexity of the incident.
 - e. Access to power.
 - f. The placement of supplemental transceiver and antenna.
2. Ensure the availability of required equipment.
3. Verify the ETA of unit personnel.
4. Order the activation of radio equipment located within the Mobile Communications Center.
5. Ensure that unit personnel are assigned to operator positions (dispatcher, message center operator and messenger).

6. Ensure that the Communications Center has appropriate supplies (ICS 120, 213, etc.).
7. Notify incident personnel that the Communications Center is in operation, including the identification of and restriction on frequencies currently in use.

Establish incident message center.

1. Select the appropriate location for the message center immediately adjacent to the communications center.
2. Determine the message center's personnel requirements.
3. Verify the ETA of message center operators and messengers.
4. Assign message center personnel to perform the following duties:
 - a. Record any check-in data received in the communications center from other incident locations and in-person check-in.
 - b. Establish a message routing procedure to distribute written messages received from the communications center that cannot be handled directly by radio or telephone.
 - c. Establish a message board for display of notices and undelivered messages.
 - d. Establish a message routing procedure to distribute resource status change cards to the Resource Unit.

Participate in preparation of the Incident Action Plan.

1. Attend planning meeting.
2. Review strategies and control operations presented at the meeting to determine the feasibility of providing the required communications support.
3. Inform meeting participants of communication deficiencies (if any) to support specific strategies and control operations.
4. Provide required technical information on:
 - a. The communications systems currently in operation.
 - b. The communications equipment available for the incident.
 - c. The communications equipment capabilities.

- d. The anticipated problems in the use of communications equipment.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN PREPARATION

7510.6

(Revised 1996)

Based on the Incident Action Plan's objectives and control operations, develop plans for the incident communications systems.

Prepare the Incident Radio Communications Plan.

1. Attend the planning meeting.
2. Obtain the Division Assignment List (ICS 204).
3. Determine Radio Requirements (ICS 216).
4. Establish required radio nets.
5. Develop the Radio and Frequency Assignment Work Sheet (ICS 217).
6. Prepare the Incident Radio Communication Plan (ICS 205) for inclusion into the Incident Action Plan.
7. Complete the radio frequency portion of the Division Assignment List.

Prepare a Telephone Communications Plan.

1. The Telephone Communications Plan is not a formal written plan like that prepared for radio systems, but is designed to be a checklist for the Communications Unit leader to use in setting up the telephone system at the incident. Determine all locations to be serviced by telephone -- command post, base, message center, Logistics Section, camps, press and public information locations and any other fixed facilities.
2. Determine the numbers of incoming telephone trunks currently in service.
3. Determine additional trunk requirements based upon incident facility locations, strategies and control operations, and order as required.
4. Determine which telephone trunk should be used by which personnel and for what purposes. Assign specific telephone numbers for incoming calls and report these numbers to agency dispatch centers.
5. Establish locations for installation of additional telephone trunks and handsets and placement of telecopiers.

6. Determine location and use of public address equipment.
7. Identify any additional communications equipment (mobile telephone, portable land line service, portable microwave) required to implement the Telephone Communications Plan.
8. Provide information on available pay phone services.
9. Establish and post any specific procedures for use of incident telephone equipment.

IMPLEMENT INCIDENT COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS **7510.7**
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- Notify cooperating agencies of the incident communications system affecting them.
- If necessary, reorganize the initially-established incident communications center based upon incident communications needs.
- Monitor implementation activities to ensure that the incident communications system is properly installed and is operational.

INCIDENT COMMUNICATIONS CENTER MANAGEMENT **7510.8**
(Revised 1996)

Ensure that the head dispatcher maintains direct supervision of communication center personnel by:

- Periodically checking work performance on assigned tasks of communication center personnel.
- Coordinating activities of communications center personnel (i.e. identify and resolve problems, establish priorities and maintain close coordination).
- Providing for the general welfare and safety of communications center personnel.

MANAGE THE CHECK-IN FUNCTION AT COMMUNICATIONS CENTER **7510.9**
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- Strike teams, task forces, and individuals may initially check in by radio at the incident.
- Whenever resources check in with the communications center by radio, obtain the following information:

1. Name and agency or resource description.
 2. Number of personnel.
 3. Check-in time.
 4. Dispatch assignment.
 5. Assigned incident location.
- Record the above items on the check-in list.
 - Identify assignment of the resource from the assignment list supplied by the Plans chief, if available.
 - Inform the resource of assigned destination and provide directions to the location, if necessary.
 - Provide check-in list or information to Resources Unit as soon as possible using a messenger assigned to Communications Unit.

INCOMING COMMUNICATIONS TRAFFIC

7510.10

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Record status and location changes.

1. Incident dispatchers will receive notification of status change information from individual resources, strike teams, task forces and division/group supervisors by radio. The three types of status for all resources are: assigned, available, and out of service.
2. Record the above information on a Status Change Card (ICS 210) and give the card to the RESTAT Unit.

Handle requests for logistics service and support.

1. Incident dispatchers will receive and record requests on General Message Forms (ICS 213) for service and support at the Incident Communications Center by incoming radio and/or telephone.
2. Review each request to determine the appropriate unit to handle each request by their function.
3. Handle each request for personnel and equipment resources.
 - a. The incident dispatcher will receive a request for status of resources and certain resource assignments.

- b. Analyze requests and select the appropriate organizational unit to take action. For example, the Facilities Unit is responsible for unassigned personnel, the Resources Unit is responsible for providing the status of tactical resources.
- c. Notify the appropriate unit.

INCIDENT COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM SET-UP

7510.11

(Revised 1996)

- Identify locations for equipment to be installed.
- Obtain equipment through the Supply Unit.
- Request communication services and equipment needed through the Service director or the Logistics chief.
- Install, test and certify that all components of the incident communications system are operational.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT

7510.12

(Revised 1996)

- Identify the kinds and numbers of communications equipment to be distributed to specific units from the Communications Plan.
- Schedule the distribution of equipment in accordance with the Communications Plan.
- Provide resources and unit leaders with appropriate equipment based on the Radio Communications Plan.
- Update the equipment inventory.

MONITOR COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM OPERATIONS

7510.13

(Revised 1996)

Periodically review communications system operation.

1. Receive notice of operational and technical communications problems.
2. Perform communications network tests.

Determine system problems.

1. Operational (poor radio discipline).
2. Technical (weak signal strength).

Determine appropriate solutions.

1. Operational problem (refer to the appropriate supervisor to correct the problem).
2. Technical problem (refer to the technician to correct the problem).

INVENTORY OF PORTABLE COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT

7510.14

(Revised 1996)

- Inventory equipment at the incident. The inventory should contain the following information:
 1. Equipment type.
 2. Make and model.
 3. Serial or agency number.
 4. Condition (operable or inoperable).
- Record the inventory information on equipment assigned to the Communications Unit.
- Record the inventory information on equipment obtained from other sources.
- Maintain the inventory information on equipment check-out from cache or other source.
 1. Location (not for equipment distributed to resources).
 2. Identification of assigned equipment.
 3. Assignment to an individual.

TEST/REPAIR EQUIPMENT

7510.15

(Revised 1996)

- Perform periodic test of communications equipment to identify poor performance and/or malfunctions.

- Identify equipment requiring adjustment and repair by testing the equipment or from reports by incident personnel.
- Perform adjustment/repair of equipment as necessary.

RECOVER COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT

7510.16

(Revised 1996)

- Receive communications equipment from resources being released at the staging area.
- Collect communications equipment from incident facilities when the equipment is no longer needed.
- Collect and receive communications equipment from incident personnel when the equipment is no longer needed.

UNIT LOG

7510.17

(Revised 1996)

The Unit Log (ICS 214) will be started by the Communications Unit leader as soon as the leader arrives at the incident. The Communications Unit leader will keep the Unit Log up-to-date and turn it in to the Service Branch director or the Logistics Section chief at the end of each operational shift. The Unit Log is used to record:

- Events that occur in the Communications Unit.
- The Communications Unit staff.
- Major needs or changes to the unit.
- Breakdowns of equipment.
- Thefts or losses.
- Orders or time frames that cannot be met.

DEMOBILIZATION

7510.18

(Revised 1996)

The following are procedures that the Communications Unit leader must accomplish during the demobilization process.

- A. Demobilization concept for the Communications Unit:

1. The Communications Unit will be providing a service to the Demobilization Unit.
2. The Communications Unit will also be demobilized:
 - The unit may be last to go.
 - All documents will be correctly accounted to the proper unit.
 - Return or distribute any unused or excess supplies (leveling).

B. Closing down satellite Communications Unit.

1. Coordination is required by the Logistics chief and the Planning Section to ensure that orderly closure of satellite units.
2. Ensure the orderly closure of multiple units.
 - When several camps are used for an incident, close each one when no longer needed.
 - Consolidate any supplies and personnel from closed camps at the base.
 - Maintain enough help to utilize excess and/or return to supplier (leveling).
3. Maintain a system to account for personnel and supplies moved from closed camps.

C. Provide a list of resources and supplies recommended for release.

1. The Logistics chief will need to brief the Communications Unit leader on the following:
 - Demobilization Plan.
 - Priorities for release.
 - Procedures.
 - The return of all radio caches.
2. The Communications Unit leader must prepare lists anticipating demobilization workload. The list should include:
 - What equipment can be reduced.

- Which supplies are surplus.
- Which people are no longer needed.
- What are the release priorities of the unit's staff.
- Inventories.
- Department-specific standards on returning radios and equipment.

D. Reductions of Communications Unit function.

1. Discuss any reduction with the Logistics chief.
2. Have schedules developed for discussion with the Logistics chief.
3. Have inventories up-to-date for accountability.
4. Have the unit fully staffed to meet needs addressed in the Demobilization Plan.
5. Make sure satellite units' personnel and equipment are coordinated into base unit.

E. Returning unit to pre-incident condition.

1. Check on departmental regulations with Facilities Unit leader.
2. Reserve personnel to clean up and repair the area.
3. Document unusual conditions that could lead to claims or lawsuits.
4. Leave the area as close to its original condition as possible.

F. Release all personnel assigned to the Communications Unit to the Demobilization Unit.

1. Prepare a list which shows resources (type, quantity, location, time of release, name and home base).
2. Make sure that the Communications Unit can close down within the time frames stipulated in the Demobilization Plan.
3. Have the Logistics chief personally inspect progress and accomplishments prior to release (i.e., ensure that all documents are in order, accountable items are properly released).

4. The Facilities Unit leader and the Communications Unit leader must check the unit sites for damage.
5. Have subordinate personnel's evaluations completed for review by the Logistics chief.
6. Submit all radio logs and property records to the Documentation Unit after review by the Logistics chief.

G. Notify the Logistics chief of Communications Unit closure.

FORMS AND/OR FORMS SAMPLES: RETURN TO ISSUANCE HOME PAGE FOR FORMS/FORMS SAMPLES SITE LINK.

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