JAMAICA FIRE BRIGADE

TRAINING DEPARTMENT

COMMUNICATION AND MOBILIZATION

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INTRODUCTION

An emergency service such as the Jamaica Fire Brigade rely extensively on the communication process which enable us as communicators to receive information from persons in need of assistance, communication with personnel, other agencies and appliances in the field. Communication is a central force within a knowledge demanding world. It is the hub on which the Jamaica Fire Brigade revolves.

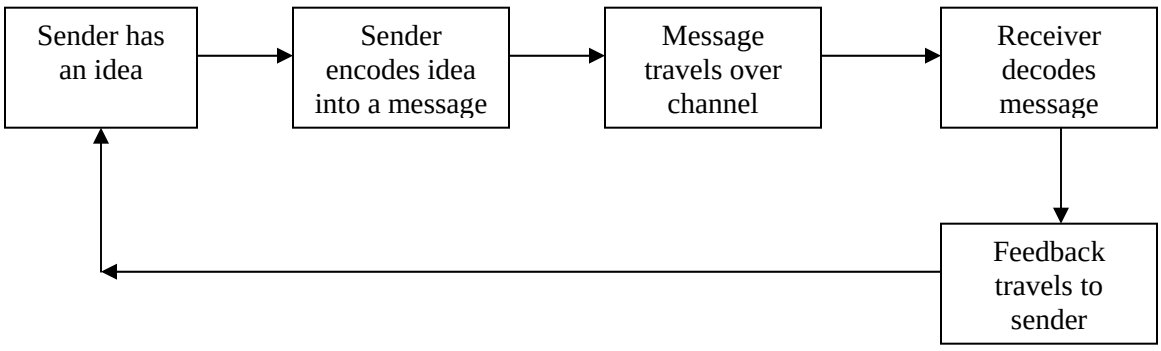
COMMUNICATION

Communication is more than just talking; it is the means through which you and your subordinates share knowledge, feelings, emotions, and ideas which can lead to understanding or misunderstanding

What Is Communication?

Communication can simply be defined as the transmission of information and meaning from one individual or group to another.

The Communication Process



Sender Has An Idea

The communication process begins when the sender develops an idea. The nature and form of this idea will be influenced by assumption based on the experience of the sender's experiences. The ability of the sender to accurately predict how a message will affect the receiver and skill in adopting that message

will depend on both communicators frame of reference. The best ideas in the world are therefore useless if they cannot be communicated clearly and concisely to others.

Sender Encodes An Idea Into Message

The term encoding means to convert an idea into words or jesters that will convey meanings. A major problem in communicating is that words have different meanings to different persons. When misunderstanding develops from miss meaning, it is called ***bypassing.***

Message Travels Over Channel

The medium over which a message is physically transmitted is called a channel.

Types Of Channel

i. Telephone
ii. Report
iii. Memo
iv. Announcement
v. Fax
vi. Pager
vii. Computer

Receiver Decodes Message

The translation of the message into meaning is called decoding. The communication process takes place only when the receiver comprehends the meaning intended by the sender.

Feedback

The verbal or non-verbal response of a message received creates a feedback. Feedback is a vital part of the communication process which helps the sender to know if the message was received and the extent to which it was understood.

FACTORS AFFECTING COMMUNICATION

1. Bypassing occurs whenever people miss each other with their meanings. Bypassing can lead to major miscommunication because people assume that meanings are contained in words. For communication to be successful, the receiver and the sender must attach the same symbolic meaning to their words and gestures.

2. Frame of Reference is another barrier to affect communication. It refers to biases and expectations to any communication situation. Because one frame of reference is totally different from everyone else's, one will see things differently.

3. Lack of Language Skill forms the graves of distortion in communication, no matter how great the idea is, it would not be understood or fully appreciated unless the communicator has good language skill. Each individual needs an adequate vocabulary, a basic command of grammar skills in writing and oral expression. Poor listening skills can affect the communication process.

4. **Distraction** includes emotional interference and physical distraction. Example – breaking up of a relationship, focusing elsewhere while a communication process is taking place and fatigue of the human body.

ACTION ONCE A REPORT IS MADE

1. A written record of the call to include time, data, nature of incident and the address or locations is made. Every effort should be made to get the name of the caller and directions to the given location.

2. Audible and in some instances visible alarms are activated in the station to alert the emergency response crews. Other emergency services are also alerted.

3. Senior officers are informed of the receipt of the call and firefighting crews and appliances respond. This response should be within one minute from the receipt of the call. The number of appliances and crews' response depend on the type of incident report or the risk involved, ie. more appliances would respond to a school or hospital than to a rubbish fire.

4. An exchange of message between controls and the working units and additional manpower and equipment are mobilized until the situation is resolved.

MOBILIZATION ARRANGEMENT

The term mobilizing is commonly used in the fire service to denote all that is involved in determining correct attendances of the fire appliances, equipment and officers and dispatching them to fires and other emergencies. Of paramount importance is the face that mobilizing can only be efficient if it is served by a very fast and reliable communication system. This must not only facilitate the receipt of incoming emergency calls, but must also enable crews at the various fire station to be speedily alerted and dispatched.

TYPES OF ALARMS

The Fire Brigade receives reports on fires and other emergencies in a number of different ways. One of the most frequently used methods is via the telephone. Calls to the emergency number **110** will connect the caller to a central dispatch for emergency services who then connects the caller to the fire department. Some telephone calls are received directly on the regular lines at the station. Other types of alarms are:

Automatic Alarms These alarms are usually activated by heat or smoke detectors. In some instances, they alert the fire station in the area but usually trigger an alarm in a security company or other companies responsible for maintaining the device who then call the brigade. The activation of such alarm will sometimes activate an automatic sprinkler system.

Local Alarms Local alarms are the types usually seen in office, hotels, schools and other public buildings. They are activated by persons who discover a fire who then alert other occupants of the emergency. They do not alert the fire department but someone still has to raise an alarm by telephone.

Emergency Telephones These are placed strategically in a district. These telephones are connected directly to the fire station in the area and have clearly written directions on how to use them. These are not very common loally.

Verbal Alarms Alarms are made by persons who discover an outbreak of fire and personally alerts the fire department. The persons walk, ride, drive or run to the nearest fire station to make the report.

WATCH ROOM

The watch room of the fire service is the area which contains the equipment necessary for communication and mobilization. The watch room is continuously

manned for the receipt of emergency and other calls. When the watch room coordinates the functions of a number of stations, or acts as a central dispatcher, it is referred to a control room.

The responsibility placed on the watch room staff is great because the speed with which appliances, personnel and equipment are dispatched to the given address or location of incidents is dependent on the efficiency of the action taken by the watch room attendant.

The watch room is divided into three (3) sections:

Radio Section
Occurrence Section
Private Branch Exchange (PBX) or telephone section.

In a large control room there will be three (3) distinct sections for each function, but at a smaller station (sub-stations), the sections may be in one are represented by a radio, clock, station diaries, station switch, street index ad a telephone.

The **Radio Section** of the watch contains Very High Frequency (VHF) and in some instances Ultra High Frequency (UHF) radios as well as Citizens Band (CB) radios.

Other items in a typical radio selection are:

A clock
Telephone – emergency hot line (110)
Telephone log book for recording of telephone and radio message
Call out systems pagers for officers and technicians.

In a watch room setup as the divisional control room, there would also be direct lines (radio or telephone) to utility companies and a list of all call signs for officers, substations and appliances.

*** The clock is usually positioned where all personnel in the watch room can see it.**

The main item is the **occurrence section** of the watch room is “the occurrence log book”, in which all the different responses of appliances and personnel to incidents are recorded. Arrivals and departures of members are also recorded at the start and end of each operational shift, as well as other daily occurrence at the station. In addition to the logbook, other items in this section include:

A map displaying the **topology** (local geography) of the area(s) for which the station is responsible.
Street index, which lists the names of road and location of hydrants and other water supplies. The more detailed indices will also list the various risks on a *station ground.*

Hazardous Chemicals Response Guide Book
Station alarms
Automatic Fire Alarm systems
Control for emergency lighting

The private branch telephone exchange (PBX) section is usually found in larger stations where the watch room acts as the main control for a number of stations. The main telephone switchboard, in-house intercom and paging systems are located in this section.

In a main control room, the activities of the persons working in the different areas are coordinated by a supervisor who reports to the Duty Officer or in cases of emergency, directly to the Watch Commander. At a sub-station, one person answers the telephone, operates, the radios and makes entries in the relevant logs.

STANDARD WATCH ROOM PROCEDURES

1. Persons assuming duties in the watch room must properly relieve the person going off before he/she can make any entry in the books. The person going off duty must close his/her entries and the relieving duty person must make an entry of the time and his/her identity. (eg. 0700 /hrs, Ffr. R. Stains relieved Ffr. P. Glooms off duties in the watch room or radio section as appropriate) in the occurrence book. **A watch room attendant should never leave the watch room until properly relieved.** No one is allowed to stand by for another, even for a short time unless an entry has been made showing that the person has been relieved,

2. The person going off must pass the relevant information relating to the availability of officers, appliances, stations, etc and specifically ensure that he/she knows who the Duty Officer and Watch Commander is.

3. When fire, emergency or special service calls are received. The Watch Room attendant should ensure that:

i. the correct address or location is ascertained, (ask for directions and landmarks)
ii. the nature of the incident and a telephone number is obtained from the caller

These must be recorded immediately. Note that fire calls are written in **Red Ink**. All other entries are written in **Blue** or **Black ink.**

4. Messages to sub-stations regarding fire, accidents and other emergencies should be transmitted within one minute of their receipt. Always ensure that turnout time correspond with the radio section attendant giving the time of call to

the occurrence section, or the responding station. The Watch Commander must be kept informed of the progress messages from the fire or other incident.

5. Time checks should be made between sub-stations and their main control at regular intervals each day, usually at 0900 hrs and 1730 hrs.

6. Two units are usually sent to hospitals, schools (with classes in session), hotels, service stations, etc. When the division has only one operational station, the closest station in the adjoining division is alerted as well.

7. When a unit is sent out to assist another unit or to cover the area, this unit should never be redirected to another call or out of the area unless so directed by the senior officer on duty.

8. Divisional heads, supervisors etc. must be informed of all fires, (at which Watch Commanders and other senior officers should be in attendance) all calls involving emergencies at hospitals, hotels, schools, chemical manufacturing plant and LPG installations.

9. When appliances including fireboats are reported “off action” and likewise when the appliance is returned to action, the entry must be noted in the occurrence book and the Watch Commander informed.

10. Requests for equipment, fuel additional manpower etc. by sub-stations must be treated as priorities and the Watch Commander informed immediately.

11. No one entry in the occurrence book should record the departure of an appliance and its return except in the instance where an appliance has returned from an incident and another call is received to which it must respond before the crew can be booked in.

NB Any breakdown in communication, whether radio or telephone, must be reported to the senior officer on duty at the time and to the communications department of the Brigade and to the Telephone Company as appropriate.

TELEPHONE TECHNIQUES

The telephone is usually the first line of communication between the members of the public and the Fire Brigade. To ensure its effectiveness and availability, it must be used properly. Members of the public who need the services of the Brigade usually dial the emergency number **110**. The operator will inquire which service is needed and when a service has been chosen, she connects the call to a direct fire line in the Fire Department. Persons who know the number for the

station will call direct. It is therefore important that ***telephone lines be kept open*** and are used for departmental purposes only. The following are a number of guidelines for proper telephone use:

1. Answer the telephone promptly, speak clearly and always be courteous. Attitude towards your work shows up in your voice. Be assuring and calm.

2. Identify your department / section

3. Speak closely and clearly in the mouthpiece in your natural voice. If you are in a conversation when the telephone rings, discontinue the conversation and ask to be excused before lifting the receiver to answer the call.

4. Keep a notepad, pen and data frequently used close at hand. Always write down messages, dates and times.

5. ***Never make a caller wait indefinitely.*** Ask whether he/she prefers to hold the line, leave a message or to call (or be called) later.

6. When you need to look up information that may require several minutes, tell the caller. Ask permission to return the call.

DO NOT SAY	**SAY**
Who is calling?	May I tell him who is calling
Who is this?	Please, may I take a message for him?
What's your name?	Do you wish to leave you name and number?
He hasn't arrive at the office yet	He's not in office just now but may I help you?
He hasn't come back from lunch yet	He's not in but I'll be glad to take a message

RADIO OPERATING GUIDELINES

It is very important that the Brigade maintains communication by radio between all stations, mobile units and portable uses so that each can pass information and instructions quickly in a clear, precise manner. To achieve this aim, radio operators must adhere to the established procedures which are standardized instructions laid down to achieve this objective. The following definitions are presented as an ***aid memoir*** for frequently used radio operating terms:

RADIO NET	A group of stations operating on the same frequency
TYPES OF STATIONS	There are three (3) types of stations: fixed, mobile and portable
CALL SIGN	A call sign is a combination of letters and figures used on a radio network for the purpose of identification.
USERS	Individuals of a particular organization using the equipment and procedure established.
CALLER	Persons making call
RECEIVER	Person receiving call
RELAY	Passage of information from one source to another
CODE	Coding is used to conceal the identity of a person, location or object. They are also known as **transmission codes.**

CONTROL

In any radio network there must be one station responsible for the general Conduct and signaling and this function is normally performed by the main Control. The control operator on any radio channel is responsible at all times for maintaining radio discipline. By being firm, clear and concise the control operator can do a great deal especially during busy periods to speed up radio traffic and achieve maximum use of airtime. Out-station users must at all times accept the discipline imposed by main control operators and never proceed with transmission of a message without first asking main control for permission to proceed.

Most main control of fire service radio schemes operate at the ***duplex*** mode which enables operators to hear incoming messages while outgoing transmission is in progress. All mobile and other outstation radio equipment operate in the ***simplex*** mode. The work "*over"* is used to indicate to the receiving station that the caller is about to switch from *'transmit"* to *"receive"*.

Main control operators must always conclude each period of transmission by broadcasting what is knows as the "general clearance". The general clearance indicates that the previous users have finished for the time being and that the channel is now free for other callers waiting to use it. The operative word in the

general clearance is the word “out”. For example “H.Q. out”, transmitted instead of the word “over”.

Congestion on radio channels is often aggravated by unnecessary repetition of call signs and procedural phrases as well as failure to use standard message and abbreviations. The following standard terms are used to save time and should be used consistently by al radio users.

Over used at the end of any transmission if an answer is required or expected.

Out Used at the end of a transmission if no answer is required or expected. When used by the main control in the general clearance, the word “out” signifies that the channel is open for further traffic.

Received Used to acknowledge receipt of a transmission and signifies that the transmission of message has been received, is understood and will be complied with.

Repeat Used when the recipient has not understood some or all of the message.

I Spell Used for spelling out a word, abbreviation, letter or series of letters. The spelling should be done using the **NATO** phonetic alphabet.

Messages relating to fires and other emergencies and messages conveying instructions should always be repeated to indicate that they have been received correctly.

TRANSMISSION OF TEXT MESSAGE

All messages sent by radio must be as brief as possible and those to be written down by recipients must be transmitted at slow dictation speed. Where appropriate, the phrasing of message should conform to standard form prefixed by necessary identification call signs. Priority attention should only be requested for **EXTREMELY URGENT** messages. The method of obtaining it is by using the word ”priority” in the preliminary call. Eg. “H.Q. from mobile 48 priority, over”. If all radio transmissions are kept short as possible, there should rarely be any need for a priority caller to break into another station’s transmission but where necessary, it should be done while the main control is transmitting.

When it is necessary for outstations to speak to each other direct, eg. mobile to mobile, permission to do so must first be obtained from the main control. Once

permission has been given and the message is complete, the initial caller must end with the word “out”.

When a message is not understood, the receiver should reply with the word “repeat” indicating that the transmission should be repeated in full. When only part of the transmission is involved, the following should be used:

Repeat/Check word after/before
Repeat/Check all after/before

In case of very short messages, it is usually simpler and quicker to request repetition of the whole message rather than a part of it. In the case of long messages, the transmitting station should occasionally pause to check that the message is being received.

SIGNAL STRENGTH REPORTS

Radio checks of the network are performed each day at a set time. For various reasons including loss of electrical power, individual stations may need to perform unscheduled checks. When reporting the quality of signals received, it is not necessary to use phrases other than the following:

“Loud and clear”
“Loud but not clear”
“Breaking”

When reporting noise or interference, operators should use their own plain language description which in the case of interference from another radio station, should include any general information (especially call signs or names) which might assist in tracing its origin.

PHONETIC ALPHABET

The **NATO** phonetic alphabet arid, other aids towards clearness of speech should be thoroughly memorized and used as necessary by all radio operators.

PHONETIC ALPHABET		
A ALPHA	**J** JULIET	**S** SIERRA
B BRAVO	**K** KILO	**T** TANGO
C CHARLIE	**L** LIMA	**U** UNIFORM
D DELTA	**M** MIKE	**V** VCIJ'OR
E ECHO	**N** NOVEMBER	**W** WHISKY
F FOXTROT	**O** OSCAR	**X** X-RAY
G GOLF	**P** PAPA	**Y** YANKEE
H HOTEL	**Q** QUBEC	**Z** ZULU
I INDIA	**R** ROMEO	

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR RADIO USERS

1. Messages of a confidential nature should not be transmitted by radio. Transmissions on the Fire Brigade's radio network are not secure against unauthorized monitoring by members of the public and others. Therefore, messages and other transmissions should be strictly confined to the business at hand.

2. Adhere strictly to radio operating procedures and accept without question requests and instructions given by main control operators. Give priority to units working at fires or other emergencies.

3. When drafting messages, be brief and adhere to standard message phraseology and content. Decide what is to be said before commencing transmission as hesitation causes confusion and wastes time.

4 Make sure you know which channel you are supposed to be working on and check that your set is in fact switched to the coned one. ***NEVER SWITCH TO ANOTHER CHANNEL WITHOUT INFORMING CONTROL***.

5. Messages should be read clearly and distinctly at such a speed that they may be heard easily and if necessary, written down. When broadcasting to a number of stations, the second reading may be at a slightly higher speed.

6. Important or unusual words should be spelt out using the **NATO** phonetic alphabet and special care should be taken when transmitting numerals.

7. Whenever you are called, indicate immediately that you have heard, even if you must give the instruction "stand by". If a message addressed to you calls for a reply which may take time to prepare, answer at once, "I will call you back".

8. Speak closely into the microphone, keeping your voice at an even level. Do not operate the transmit switch until the microphone is close to your mouth,

nor turn your head away whilst transmitting. Do not shout or gabble. Keep you voice pitched normally, emphasizing your consonants and avoid letting you voice drop at the end of the sentences. Remember *RSVP – Rhythm, Speed, Volume, Pitch.*

9. When transmitting messages speak in convenient, fairly short phrases with a slight pause between each phrase.

10. After using a hand microphone, replace it carefully in its holder and ensure that the transmitter is not left permanently on (microphone which depress in the send position). This could cause confusion because it may either block or cause serious interference on the radio channel.

11. Always observe the engage signal (piptones or flashing LED) unless your message is urgent, in which case, use the priority procedure.

12. If you suspect for any reason that your equipment is not working correctly, report it to control as soon as possible.

SRL	**DO'S**	**DON'T'S**
1.	Listen before you speak.	Do not blow or whistle in the microphone.
2.	Always hang up the microphone.	Do not cut in on the net work.
3.	Always keep messages short and to the point.	Do not press microphone switch except when you wish to speak
4.	Always speak into the microphone and not away from it.	Do not leave radio unattended.
5.	Always end each message with "over".	
6.	Repeat messages for confirmation	
7.	Always answer calls promptly and relay correctly.	

TYPES OF MESSAGES

The drafting and dispatching of messages from fires and other incidents is a very important aspect of the service work. Control rooms must be kept regularly advised as the status of an incident changes. The senior officers have to be kept informed of these situations as they develop so that they can initiate the appropriate action as necessary. A standard message procedure is adapted to minimize delays in the passage of information. The standard message and their sequence would be as follows:

Attendance message	Inform control on arrival at the given address or location.
Assistance message	An assistance message is a message asking for additional appliances, equipment and/or personnel or for special information. Whenever lives are in danger or persons trapped, a message reporting the fact and requesting an ambulance must be sent immediately on arrival.
Informative message	An informative message gives details of an incident and/or the progress of operations.
Fire sound	Information that the fire has been contained (is under control)
Stop message	No further mobilization is required for that incident. Usually, the start of cooling down operations and the withdrawal of appliances.