



**SARATOGA COUNTY**

# **EMS RADIO PROCEDURES**

**DECEMBER 2002**

## Table of Contents

TOPIC	PAGE
I. Introduction	1
II. EMS Radio Network	1
III. Administration	2
A. Oversight and Licensure	2
B. User Responsibilities	2
C. Rule and Procedure Making	3
D. Complaints	3
E. Discipline	3
IV. General Radio Procedure	4
V. Mobile and Portable Unit Operation	5
VI. Base Station Operation	6
VII. EMS Dispatch Operation	7
Appendices	
i. Area Hospital Frequency and Encoder Numbers	9
ii. Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch System (AMPDS) Codes	10

### FCC License Holder:

Saratoga County Office of Emergency Services  
25 West High Street  
Ballston Spa, NY 12020  
(518) 885-2232

### County EMS Dispatch Point:

Saratoga County Sheriff's Department  
County Fire and Ambulance Desk  
885-5522

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[www.saratogaems.org](http://www.saratogaems.org)

Copies available for download at the Council website.

## I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This manual is for the use of all participants in the Saratoga County EMS Radio Network. These rules and procedures will assure smooth operation of a functional EMS radio system. Radio system users must be familiar with, and abide by, these procedures.

## II. EMS RADIO NETWORK

- A. The Saratoga County EMS Radio Network includes five VHF high band frequencies, a County EMS Dispatch Center, a set of linked transmitter and receiver points, local base stations, mobile and portable radio units, and paging receivers.

1. The five frequencies are:

<u>Channel</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Short names</u>
1	155.340 MHz	"340"
2	155.400 MHz	"400"
3	155.715 MHz	"715" or "EMS Control"
4	155.925 MHz	"925" or "EMS Dispatch"
5*	154.355 MHz	"OPs, EMS OPs, or EMS Operations"

\*When a corps uses an additional frequency for local dispatch and corps communications purposes, the EMS Op's frequency may be placed either in channel 5 or 6.

- B. For operations by multiple users and to maintain familiarity in the event of a major incident, all mobile, portable, and base units approved for operation in the County EMS Radio system must utilize this channel configuration. Radios that employ alphanumeric channel designations without numbered channels must include the short name text in their channel labeling.
- C. Channels 1 and 2 are used for ambulance – hospital communications. A DTMF encoder opens hospital (and other) base stations. Appendix i lists primary frequencies and encoder numbers for local hospitals. Additionally, frequency 155.400 may be used for communications with out-of-county ambulances in a Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) when the use of 155.715 is not available. The County Communications Center is not capable of transmitting on ambulance – hospital frequencies.
- D. Channel 3 is used for communications between EMS and local government agencies. The Saratoga County Communications Center is identified on this frequency as "EMS Control". Law enforcement agencies often have this frequency available in vehicular radios. Most commonly, this frequency will be used for communication between EMS units at incidents that involve multiple EMS agencies. The frequency also can be used as a secondary dispatch channel when the primary frequency is overloaded.

- E. Channel 4 is the primary EMS dispatching frequency. All altering tones for corps dispatched by the County are transmitted on this frequency. The County Communications Center is identified on this frequency as "EMS Dispatch".
- F. Digital ANI (Automatic Number Identification) is a user option. DTMF (touch tone) ANI is prohibited on the five County Frequencies. Other forms of ANI, which are not digital, are also prohibited.
- G. The EMS Operations frequency 154.355 is for communications between vehicles and first responders, including first responder Fire Departments. Except in MCI situations, this is the only EMS frequency authorized for Fire Service use. Base stations are not permitted to transmit on this frequency.
- H. The Continuous Tone Coded Squelch System (CTCSS) is extensively used in the EMS Radio Network. The tone used in all radios is 123.0 KHz. All units must be programmed to transmit this tone on all frequencies. OES recommends that radios be programmed to receive with this tone on the EMS Dispatch (155.925) and the EMS Op's (154.355) frequencies. Use of the CTCSS for receive on other frequencies may limit functional use with out-of-county units and bases.

### **III. ADMINISTRATION**

#### **A. Oversight and Licensure**

1. The Saratoga County Office of Emergency Services is the Administrator of the County EMS Radio Network. The Director and his staff manage the operation of the Network, delegating the assignment of identifiers required for individual radio units to operate, scheduling of tests, and enforcement of these procedures to the County EMS Coordinator and his deputies.
2. The Director of Emergency Services is the point of contact for transactions with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Saratoga County is the official licensee of all EMS radio frequencies. No private person or corporation will be permitted to hold a license on any County radio frequency.

#### **B. User Responsibilities**

1. Each user is responsible to abide by these rules and procedures, as well as those of the FCC. Only radio equipment that is technically compatible with the County EMS Radio System may be used. Any user's equipment that causes interference or interruption must be removed upon request of the Office of Emergency Services (OES).
2. Each radio must be officially sanctioned by the OES, and given an identifier before being operated on County frequencies. Agencies or individuals wishing to obtain an identifier or authorization to operate on County frequencies should contact the County EMS Coordinator (see table of contents page).

3. Identifiers are not transferable. All reassignments of first responder and line officer radios require approval of the EMS Coordinator.
4. Users must assume that financial obligation for converting their radio equipment should it be necessary or required by the County. This includes the addition of and changes to allocated frequencies and/or CTCSS tones.

**C. Rule and Procedure Making**

1. The Office of Emergency Services created these rules and procedures, with input from users. The OES may amend these procedures from time to time.
2. The Director and his staff retain the right to address situations not specifically outlined in these procedures.

**D. Complaints**

1. Submit complaints, in writing, to the Office of Emergency Services. For mediation, the Director may refer the complaint to the County EMS Council. The Council will review the merits of the complaint and forward a recommended action to the Director.
2. The Crew Chief or a Line Officer may call the EMS Dispatch Desk Sergeant or Senior Desk Officer by phone to lodge a complaint or question the actions of a Desk Officer. Do not discuss a complaint or difference of opinion on the air. Unresolved problems with EMS Dispatch, or any other base station should be referred to the County EMS Coordinator by phone, by fax, by email, in writing, or in person. The EMS Coordinator or his delegate will discuss any complaints with the Sheriff's Department and relay findings or resolutions back to the complainant.
3. The Director and his staff have authority to cite individuals or corps for violations of the County Radio Procedures and FCC Rules. Violations may be reported to the FCC for disciplinary action.

**E. Discipline**

1. Failure to follow, or willful disregard of, these Radio Procedures may result in removal of the offending corps and/or individual users from the County EMS Radio system.
2. OES also reserves the right to remove mobile radios purchased under the Highway Traffic Safety Grant of 1976, from any ambulance corps, for violation of these procedures, or other inappropriate activity.
3. The Director, or his staff, may withdraw OES approved radio identifiers for inappropriate activity. Operation without an identifier authorized by the licensee is a violation of FCC regulations.

## IV. GENERAL RADIO PROCEDURES

- A. Think before transmitting. Monitor the selected frequency to assure it is not in use. Talk slowly, calmly, and decisively. Give clear, concise messages. Speak directly across the microphone.
- B. EMS Dispatch has minute-to-minute control and authority over County EMS radio frequencies. Users are expected to follow the directives of the EMS Desk Officer for control of radio traffic. This includes assignment to a secondary frequency (channel) for Dispatch communications after initial acknowledgement of a call.
- C. The only codes authorized for use on County EMS Radio frequencies are Dispatch Determinants, Response Priority, and requests for Advanced Life Support Personnel. Codes also may be used in communications with hospitals but are not recommended.
  - 1. Dispatch Determinants are assigned by EMS Dispatch using the Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch System (AMPDS). Appendix ii is a list of AMPDS determinants authorized for use in Saratoga County.
  - 2. Response Priority codes are adapted from international consensus on triage classification and authorized as follows:
    - “Priority 1” = HOT response using red lights and siren.
    - “Priority 2” = COLD response using no red lights or siren.
    - “Priority 3” = Standby or stage, do not respond to scene.EMS Dispatch will assign an initial Response Priority to correspond with the AMPDS Determinant according to the table in appendix ii. Users in the field should communicate a priority request whenever up or downgrading response or when requesting additional resources.
  - 3. Requests for Advanced Life Support personnel are authorized as a signal. This signal is based on the requesting agency's identifier prefix, i.e.: Signal 12 would be used by Ballston Lake to request an ALS provider.
- D. Agencies must assure that at least one person familiar with radio procedure monitors the Dispatch frequency and is available to answer radio traffic from start to finish of every call.
- E. Field transmissions should follow this format:
  - 1. Unit you are calling followed by your unit identifier:
    - "EMS Dispatch, this is 3861."
    - "1975, this is 1951."
  - 2. Await acknowledgement from unit called before continuing with a message:
    - "EMS Dispatch, 1251."
    - "EMS Dispatch on for 1251."
    - "1251 arriving on the scene."
    - "1251 on the scene at 2254."
  - 3. Do not acknowledge EMS Dispatch times (as at end of previous example).

4. Permission of EMS Dispatch is not required for communication between field units. If unable to contact a desired unit, users may request EMS Dispatch assistance.

## **V. MOBILE AND PORTABLE UNIT OPERATION**

- A. All radios must be approved by the Office of Emergency Services (OES) and given an identifier BEFORE being operated on County frequencies. Reassignment of radios issued to individuals requires prior approval. Identifiers and approval for reassignments are issued by the County EMS Coordinator (see table of contents page).
- B. Identifiers for mobile and portable units consist of a four-digit number, the prefix being the County EMS District Code:
  - 12 Ballston Lake
  - 13 Ballston Spa (Community)
  - 19 Clifton Park-Halfmoon
  - 21 Corinth
  - 22 Edinburg
  - 23 Galway
  - 57 General Schuyler (Schuylerville)
  - 31 Luzerne-Hadley
  - 39 John Ahearn (Mechanicville)
  - 38 Malta
  - 58 Moreau
  - 47 Providence
  - 56 Saratoga Springs
  - 59 Stillwater
  - 64 Waterford
  - 71 Wiltonand the suffix from the following series:
  - 50's – Ambulances (-59 is reserved for EMS Rescue/Utility Units)
  - 60's – Line Officers (maximum 4 units per agency)
  - 70's – First Responders (maximum 9 units per agency)
  - 81 – First Responder (maximum one unit per agency)
- C. A maximum of 2 First Responder Units per agency (70 and 80 series) may sign enroute to any call.
- D. Out-of-county EMS units may be granted permission by OES to operate on 155.925 with identifiers used on their home frequencies (examples: Colonie 641, Mohawk Ambulance 12). This will facilitate communications in mutual aid situations.

- E. Ambulance agencies that operate in Saratoga County may be granted permission to operate on 155.925 and 155.715 with identifiers used on their dispatch frequencies. Operation is authorized only for mutual aid requests, responses, and communications. Routine transmissions, such as notifying EMS Dispatch of local calls/ transports, are prohibited.
- F. OES staff units are identified as EMS-1 through EMS-7.
- G. Mobile units may not exceed 100 watts RF output. Saratoga County reserves the right to make periodic checks of RF output by a licensed technician at County expense.
- H. EMS Dispatch should be notified of any ambulance taken out of service or returned to service. The agency that operates the vehicle is responsible for timely notification of in/out service status. This applies to all corps, including those not dispatched by the County.
- I. Portable units are suggested to have a minimum 5 watts RF output.

## **VI. BASE STATION OPERATION**

- A. Local base stations may be authorized by OES for voice communications and alerting tones. Base stations require FCC licensure by Saratoga County.
- B. Alerting tones are assigned by OES to avoid duplication.
- C. Approval must be obtained from EMS Dispatch before all non-emergency announcements and tests of local base stations.
- D. The following transmissions are permissible:
  1. Any announcement about an emergency situation.
  2. Announcements of EMS classes, seminars, or drills.
  3. Work details to maintain EMS equipment/property.
  4. Announcements for non-scheduled meetings about corps business.
  5. To contact a corps officer for official corps business.
- E. The following transmissions are NOT permitted:
  1. Social functions of any kind.
  2. Transmissions triggered by automatic equipment, timers, relays, or other unmanned devices.
  3. Units in mobile service.



## VII. EMS DISPATCH OPERATION

- A. EMS Dispatch is operated around the clock by the Communications Center of the Saratoga County Sheriff's Department, 6010 County Farm Road, Ballston Spa, New York.
- B. The EMS Desk Officer will monitor and control traffic on County EMS frequencies. S/he will maintain discipline on the air and determine the order of priority on simultaneous transmissions. Desk Officers should be familiar with the procedures in this manual.
- C. The EMS Desk Officer is responsible for recording and forwarding requests for radio repair to the repair vendor retained by the County. Corps not using the County radio maintenance contract or vendor should contact their repair vendors directly.
- D. EMS Dispatch will serve as the point of contact for the OES Director and his Deputies. OES Staff may be contacted at the discretion of EMS Dispatch for questions or difficulties that arise in operating the EMS Radio Network.
- E. EMS Dispatch will notify the OES Director or his designee if the EMS Radio system becomes inoperable.
- F. A daily radio test for corps will be conducted by EMS Dispatch at or about 1800 hours. Crew call and all call tones will be transmitted for all corps dispatched by EMS Dispatch. Immediately before the test, the following announcements will be made:
  - 1. EMS Units out of service.
  - 2. Corps on Automatic Mutual Aid (AMA)
  - 3. Streets and roads closed.
  - 4. Hospitals on diversion.
  - 5. Special announcements.
- G. The nightly test may be canceled at the request of an EMS agency on a call, or at the discretion of the Desk Officer. In the event of test cancellation, announcements 1-5 above should be read at the earliest convenience of the Desk Officer.
- H. Desk Officers will identify the vehicle with which s/he is in contact. Each request from the field will be verified by the Desk Officer repeating the highlight of the message.
- I. Emergency calls are dispatched in plain English according to the following format:
  - " (agency name), stand by."
  - TONES ACTIVATED
  - " (agency), problem at address ,
  - Repeating for (agency), problem at address ."

- J. First calls will be alerted with crew call tones, second and subsequent calls, as well as requests for ALS (Signal) will be alerted with all call tones. Special requests (such as lifting assistance, manpower, etc.) are also alerted with all call tones. Agencies may request temporary use of all call tones for first calls by contacting EMS Dispatch.
- K. In the event there is no response from the corps of jurisdiction, EMS Dispatch will follow the Saratoga County EMS Mutual Aid Plan (MAP) for reactivation and mutual aid.
- L. Agencies that are on Automatic Mutual Aid (AMA) will be activated with an all call tone at the time a Mutual Aid agency is dispatched into their district. This notifies the agency of jurisdiction and serves to request a First Responder to the scene.
- M. All mutual aid should be requested through EMS Dispatch. The Mutual Aid Preference (MAP) form on file with the Office of Emergency Services predesignates the specific agencies to be sent. It is not necessary to name agencies requested unless specifically deviating from the MAP on file. Stand-by assignments to cover districts will be made when requested.
- N. During a mutual aid call, agencies not requested should not respond. Calls notifying EMS Dispatch of availability during a mutual aid situation are not appreciated. When many agencies require activation, tones may be banked together, with information given at the completion of tones.

## Appendix i

### ***AREA HOSPITAL FREQUENCY AND ENCODER NUMBERS***

<b>Hospital</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Encoder #</b>
Saratoga Hospital	155.400	453
Glens Falls Hospital	155.400	561
Emma Laing Stevens Hospital	155.400	571
Mary McClellan Hospital	155.400	572
Nathan Littauer Hospital	155.340	172
Amsterdam Memorial Hospital	155.340	281
St. Mary's of Amsterdam	155.340	282
Ellis Hospital	155.400	462
St. Clare's Hospital	155.400	464
Samaritan Hospital	155.400	412
St. Mary's (Troy) – Seton Hall	155.400	413
Albany Medical Center	155.340	018
St. Peter's Hospital	155.340	015
Albany Memorial Hospital	155.340	014
Albany VA Medical Center	155.340	016

### ***LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES***

R.E.M.A.C	155.340 155.400 155.715	001
Warren County Sheriff's Department	155.400 155.715	566
Rensselaer County Sheriff's Department	155.400	414

## Appendix ii

### *Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch System (AMPDS) Codes*

<b>Saratoga County EMS Dispatch</b> <i>rev. 2-01</i>			
<b>Priority Code</b>	<b>Response Level</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Suggested Response Mode</b>
<b>3</b>	Standby/xpt	BLS	COLD
<b>2</b>	<b>A</b> (Alpha)	BLS <sup>1</sup>	COLD
<b>1</b>	<b>B</b> (Bravo)	BLS <sup>1</sup>	Closest BLS – HOT All other units/ambulance – COLD
<b>1</b>	<b>C</b> (Charlie)	ALS <sup>2</sup>	Closest BLS – HOT ALS – HOT All other units/ambulance – COLD <sup>3</sup>
<b>1</b>	<b>D</b> (Delta)	ALS <sup>2</sup>	All units – HOT
<b>1</b>	<b>E</b> (Echo)	ALS <sup>2</sup>	All units – HOT
NOTE: Omega response not used in Saratoga County (Dispatch any Ω determinant as Alpha) <sup>1</sup> Fire assist applies to B, C, D, and E calls. Fire also goes to <u>all</u> traffic accidents (A-E). <sup>2</sup> Response levels Charlie, Delta, and Echo require ALS, if available. <sup>3</sup> if the ambulance carries ALS gear or AEMT, response mode should be HOT. • For questions, contact Mike McEvoy, EMS-1 at (518) 383-8608			