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Information Management/ICT:

Use of Radio Communications

Version 2.3

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Authorised Professional Practice

These notes are aimed at learners completing their Initial training to meet the learning outcomes specified on the National Policing Curriculum. The primary source of content is the Authorised Professional Practice (APP) and the supporting evidence based research of “what works” in policing.

APP can be found at: <http://www.app.college.police.uk/>

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

These notes are for Pre-Join, Police Officers, PCSOs and IL4SC Phase 2. You should consider how the content applies in relation to PCSO powers, 'any person' powers of arrest Section 24A of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) and local force policy.

This chapter provides an introduction to police communications by radio and includes the standard keywords, expressions, protocols and operating methods required for the effective use of radios.

If you are studying this resource at home or in a public place please ensure others are not able to view the content.

2. Use of Radio Communications

2.1 Expressions of politeness

It is natural, particularly for officers who work together regularly, to want to speak in a manner that doesn't sound too brusque or formal. Politeness is dealt with first because it can permeate much of the language used over the radio and can result in inefficient communication. Nonetheless, the standard "polite" keywords can be used in conjunction with the usual radio communication keywords (which we will come to later) if you keep things brief.

In everyday usage, politeness is frequently expressed using wordy phrases, often with no particular meaning or purpose other than to sound less direct. For example:

- the bluntness of a command is softened by phrases such as "I wonder if you wouldn't mind ..."
- thanking someone might involve phrases like "That's very good of you..."
- apologies include expressions such as "I'm sorry but I'm afraid I didn't ..."

Such phrases are sometimes strung together making the communication even more long-winded and, though typical of normal conversations, is the opposite of what is demanded by operational radio communications which relies on accuracy, brevity, efficiency and professionalism.

It is not mandatory to use polite words at all - just good manners - so, where you feel it is necessary, use one of the three, brief standard terms, for example:

(Please) confirm no more units are needed

(Sorry) I am not available

Message all received **(thank you)**

Finally, when someone is polite to you, do not prolong the exchange by being even more polite back, for example by saying "It's my pleasure, don't mention it" - this only adds unnecessary transmission time.

2.2 The keywords and protocols

These are split into three categories:

- **The basic essentials.**

These are mandatory. Each keyword is to be used in the form given, although there is some flexibility to include them in short phrases if it makes the communication more natural.

- **Use as necessary.**

They are to be used in circumstances in which there is a greater than normal need for rapid, clear, concise, and accurate communication (such as major incidents and emergencies), and in situations involving officers who are not usually in communication with one another, such as combined operations with other forces or agencies. They are not normally required for routine communication between members of a talk group who are familiar with one another.

However, there's no harm in using any of these for routine matters.

- **Recommended.**

These keywords and protocols are not mandatory, but if used they will increase radio discipline and improve the efficiency and accuracy.

Keywords are shown in bold where appropriate in order to embed and contextualise them.

2.3 The terms 'exchange' and 'transmission'

Exchange refers to a complete conversation of any length between two parties, from the initiating call to the close. An exchange is ended by using the word **Out**.

Transmission refers to one speaker's turn within an exchange. A transmission is ended by the word **Over**.

2.4 List of the basic radio keywords

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Acknowledge (so far) | 13. Reading back |
| 2. Back-up | 14. Received |
| 3. Call you back | 15. Repeat (or "Say again") |
| 4. Code zero | 16. Repeating (or "I say again") |
| 5. Go ahead | 17. Sorry |
| 6. Negative | 18. Standby |
| 7. Not known | 19. Thank you |
| 8. Nothing more | 20. That is correct |
| 9. Out | 21. This is... (or "From...") |
| 10. Over | 22. Urgent call |
| 11. Please | 23. Will do |
| 12. Read back (so far) | 24. Yes, yes |

2.5 List of the 20 basic radio protocols

1. Standard call up
2. Standard response
3. Delaying or insisting on a response
4. Terminating a call
5. Indicating receipt of a message
6. Requesting a read-back; reading back

7. Confirming or correcting message content
8. Requesting a repeat; repeating information
9. Seeking acknowledgement
10. Seeking and providing clarification
11. Alphabetical and general numerical information
12. Units of measurement
13. Clock times and dates
14. Flagging items of information and the purpose of a message
15. Standard sequence: persons and vehicles
16. Affirming or negating
17. Seeking emergency assistance
18. Talk Group phraseology
19. Communicating with other agencies
20. Special operations

2.6 Making and maintaining contact

This section shows how to make the initial contact with (calling up) another officer or control room/communications centre staff.

- **Basic essentials**

Use the call sign of the person you are calling twice, then add your call-sign, then add **Over**

“Sierra four-five, Sierra four-five from (or, **this is**) Mike Whisky **Over**”

The purpose of the calling-up transmission is simply to establish contact. You should therefore keep this transmission to the bare minimum, so do not include any part of your message in it and do not continue the exchange until the person you are calling up has responded.

- **Use as necessary**

Introduce your own call-sign with **This is** (or **From**), particularly when communicating with officers from another force or agency:

“Sierra four-five, Sierra four-five **This is** Mike Whisky **Over**”

Call-sign is the term used for brevity to cover the various forms of identification used by different forces, including collar number, rank or name etc. Either “from” or “this is” is acceptable but “this is” is more appropriate as it refers unambiguously to the calling station. “From” may be used if it is the recommended form in your force, although “from” would be better reserved for referring to or distinguishing between third parties not directly conducting the exchange e.g. “Message from the duty inspector”.

Separating your call-sign from the other person’s call-sign in this way makes it easier for other members of the talk group to identify who is calling whom.

If the exchange involves only you and the dispatcher/controller, once correct contact has been established it is acceptable practice to leave out call-signs at the beginning of subsequent transmissions. In some circumstances, however (e.g. where a large number of units are active on the same talk group or where other forces or agencies are party to the exchange), it is advisable to continue to include call-signs throughout the exchange. If only one call-sign is used in a subsequent transmission, it is to be your own. For the sake of simplicity, call-signs are not included in some of the examples of non-initiating transmission given in these notes.

In some circumstances (e.g. when several operations are ongoing), it is helpful to include an indication of the message topic as follows:

“Mike Whisky, Mike Whisky, **(This is)** Sierra four-five - **fire in Queen Street, Over**”

2.7 Addressing more than one individual

- **Basic essentials**

List individual call-signs or use a general descriptive term in the initiating transmission:

“Sierra one, Sierra four, Sierra five; Sierra one, Sierra four, Sierra five **This is** Mike Whisky - are you able to assist in the town centre, are you able to assist in the town centre, **This is** Mike Whisky **Over**”

Or

“Any patrols, any patrols **This is** Mike Whisky - are you able to assist in the town centre, are you able to assist in the town centre, **This is** Mike Whisky **Over**”

2.8 Broadcast call to all talk group members

- **Basic essentials**

All Units (or other designation) (X2) + **This is** + your call sign + **Standby** for observations/circulation/information + **Over**

“All units, all units (**This is**) Mike Whisky - **Standby** for an observation message **Over**”

- **Use as necessary**

As above, an indication of the message topic has been included in the initiating transmission that will alert everyone to the fact that an important message is forthcoming concerning a person or object of interest.

2.9 Responding to a calling-up - if you are free to talk

- **Basic essentials**

The response transmission is identical to the initiating transmission.

“Sierra four-five, Sierra four-five, **(This is)** Mike Whisky **Over**”

“Mike Whisky, Mike Whisky, **(This is)** Sierra four-five **Over**”

- **Recommended**

To make it quite clear to the caller that you are waiting for the message, use **Go Ahead**

“Mike Whisky, **(This is)** Sierra four-five - **Go Ahead, Over**”

Go Ahead is appropriate when the protocol for the calling-up transmission has been properly followed. Do not use **Go Ahead** if the caller has (mistakenly) included message content in the initiating transmission, as in the following example:

“Mike Whisky, Mike Whisky, Sierra four-five - I’m driving towards High Street - Should I wait for backup? **Over**”

If you responded with **Go Ahead** to this transmission, it could be mistaken as an instruction to go ahead without waiting for backup. In such cases, respond by following the protocol given above, and then ask for the message to be restated, using a phrase such as “Transmit your message”, or “Your message please”:

“Sierra four-five, Sierra four-five **This is** Mike Whisky - Transmit your message **Over**”

2.10 Responding to a calling-up - if you are not free to talk

- **Basic essentials**

If you need a short pause before you can respond fully, use the keyword **Standby (+ unless urgent)**. This keeps the exchange alive and signals that there will be a brief pause before you resume the exchange.

“Sierra four-two, **(This is)** Mike Whisky - **Standby (+ unless urgent) Over**”

[Pause]

“Sierra four-two, **(This is)** Mike Whisky - **Go Ahead Over**”

If there is to be a longer time before you can continue the exchange say **Call You Back** (unless urgent):

“Sierra four-two, Sierra four-two, **(This is)** Mike Whisky **Over**”

“Mike Whisky, Mike Whisky **(This is)** Sierra four-two - **Call You Back Over**”

- **Recommended**

It is helpful to give a reason for a delay in continuing the exchange and a time, or some indication, when it might be resumed. If you have a reasonable idea of how long the wait will be, give the listener an estimate, e.g. “in five minutes” or “after 1530 hours when I’ve finished this statement-taking” etc.

“Sierra four-two, Sierra four-two, **(This is)** Mike Whisky **Over**”

“Mike Whisky, Mike Whisky **(This is)** Sierra four-two - **Call You Back** in five minutes **Over**”

2.11 Responding to Call You Back - if your call is not urgent

- **Basic essentials**

When you do not need to speak to the other person immediately, reply with **Received + Out**

“Mike Whisky, Mike Whisky (**This is**) Sierra four-two **Over**”

“Sierra four-two (**This is**) Mike Whisky - **Call You Back** in five minutes **Over**”

“Mike Whisky **Received Out**”

2.12 Responding to Call You Back - if your call is urgent

- **Basic essentials**

If you need to speak urgently to the other party, say **Urgent Call**. This indicates that the exchange must be continued without delay.

“Sierra four-two (**This is**) Mike Whisky - **Call You Back** in five minutes **Over**”

“Mike Whisky, Sierra four-two - this is an **Urgent Call Over**”

2.13 Responding to an urgent call

- **Basic essentials**

In response to **Urgent Call**, you must signal that the exchange can continue by saying **Go Ahead + Over**

“Sierra four-two, Sierra four-two, Mike Whisky - **Call You Back** in five minutes **Over**”

“Mike Whisky (**This is**) Sierra four-two - this is an **Urgent Call Over**”

“Sierra four-two - **Go Ahead Over**”

2.14 Terminating the exchange

- **Basic essentials**

You indicate that the exchange is finished by **Out**.

“Sierra four-two, Mike Whisky - I’m busy doing something else at the moment
Over”

“Mike Whisky **Received**. Can you **Call Us Back** at a convenient time **(Please)**
Out”

- **Recommended**

If you have said all that you need to say, but are uncertain that the other party is ready to terminate the exchange, you can “hand over” the option of terminating by saying
Nothing More + Over

If the other party has nothing more to add, they terminate the exchange with **Out**

“Sierra four-two - the **address** you asked for is 128 Hilton Road **Over**”

“Mike Whisky **Received** -128 Hilton Road. **Nothing More Over**”

“Sierra four-two **(Thank you) Out**”

2.15 Overlapping exchanges

Overlapping exchanges (involving more than one conversation overlapping in the same period of time) should be avoided where possible. Do not fail to terminate the exchange (with **Out**) even if you have something more to say at a later stage.

However, overlapping exchanges are sometimes necessary. In such cases, introduce all transmissions after the initiating one with **This is +** your own call-sign. This helps to separate the exchanges from one another and enables all parties that are able to hear the exchange to recognise each speaker. It also reduces the need to ask for further confirmation of a speaker's identity.

2.16 Checking the message

One overriding aim of good radio practice is to ensure that messages are expressed clearly and unambiguously, and that they have been properly heard and understood. Failure to do so is poor radio discipline since it can take several transmissions (repeated exchanges) to clear up misunderstandings. This wastes officers' time, decreases operational efficiency, and in extreme cases can put officers in danger.

So, we now move on to describing the standards for checking that clear communication is maintained throughout an exchange. It is essential to follow these procedures, even in the most routine communications - developing good habits will reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings cropping up during high pressure situations.

2.17 Indicating that a message has been received

- **Basic essentials**

The keyword for indicating that you have heard a message is **Received**:

"Mike Whisky - we're on the way. Will report back when we arrive **Over**"

"Sierra four-five, **Received (Thank you) Over**"

A great variety of words and phrases have been in common use for this purpose, such as "copied", "thanks", "roger", "understood", "got all that" and many more. All of these must be avoided. "Received" shows the sender that you have heard the message; it does not guarantee that you have heard it correctly, or that you have understood it in the way that the other person intended.

- **Use as necessary**

It is helpful to repeat the message, or a summary of it, as a check for both parties that it has been understood correctly.

“Sierra four-five - he has a record of violence **Over**”

“Mike Whisky - received, record of violence **Over**”

Always use the routine read-back procedure as shown below for specific details such as numbers and names. Mistakes in read-back are corrected using the procedure, also shown below, as is the prompted read-back for particularly important information.

2.18 Reading back

Routine read-back

- **Basic essentials**

A lot of messages include specific alpha-numeric information such as telephone numbers and vehicle registration numbers, which can easily be misheard. To avoid misunderstanding, always read back such items.

“Sierra one-five (from) Mike Whisky - the telephone number you require is 0,1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 7, 8, 6, 0 Over”

“Mike Whisky **Received**, 0,1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 7, 8, 6, 0 Over”

Note that numbers should always be given in single-digit delivery and 0 is zero, not nought or oh.

Because reading back indicates that you have heard the message, the keyword **Received** may be omitted when reading back.

- **Use as necessary**

Repeat information of this sort using the phrase **I Say Again** (or **Repeating**):

“Sierra one-five - the telephone number you require is 0,1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 7, 8, 6, 0, I
Say Again, 0,1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 7, 8, 6, 0 Over”

2.19 Asking for acknowledgement or read-back

- **Basic essentials**

Check that the other person is receiving by saying **Acknowledge**:

“I’m going to check the alarm at the shop **Acknowledge** Over”

If the message involves detailed information or information that is particularly important, say **Read Back**:

“Mike Whisky - Could you put us on log number 5-8-2 of today’s date, and I’ve a list of other officers to be put on it. They’re 3-8- 4-2, 0-7-1 -3, 9-8-6-5, 5-6-6-8, **Read Back** Over”

- **Use as necessary**

When a message involves a large amount of information, segment the information into chunks and after each chunk say **Acknowledge So Far Over** or (preferably) **Read back So Far Over**:

“Sierra one-four, Mike Whisky - to get to the park you need to take the A4 and leave at the Padworth exit and then take the B6321, second exit off the roundabout.
(Please) Read back So far Over”

“Sierra one-four, Mike Whisky - do not use blue lights on approach to the park.
(Please) Acknowledge Over”

Use the full forms **Read Back So Far**, or **Acknowledge So Far** (and not **So Far** by itself).

2.20 Responding to acknowledge or read back

- **Basic essentials**

The response to Acknowledge (So far) is Received (So Far)

The response to Read back (So far) is Reading back (So Far) + the information exactly as given + Over

“Mike Whisky - Reading back So far take the A4 and leave at the Padworth exit and then take the B6321, second exit off the roundabout Over”

“Mike Whisky Received. No blue lights Over”

Use the full forms Reading Back So Far, Received So Far (and not So Far by itself).

2.21 Indicating accuracy of understanding

The procedures outlined below are rather more detailed than common practice, but they must be followed. The extra few seconds taken in ensuring that information is accurately understood will result in a considerable saving of time and effort in the long run.

When a message has been read back correctly

- **Basic essentials**

When the other person has given a correct read-back, respond with **That Is Correct**

Received is not the appropriate response to a correct read back.

Use the full form **That Is Correct** (and not **Correct** by itself).

“Sierra one-four, Mike Whisky - the registered keepers of the vehicles are John Anderson, Peter Greenbaum and Martin Jones Read Back Over”

“Mike Whisky Reading Back John Anderson, Peter Greenbaum and Martin Jones Over”

“Sierra one-four **That Is Correct** Over”

2.22 When a message has not been read back correctly

- **Basic essentials**

When the other person has given an incorrect read-back, respond with: **Negative +** the information in its correct form

“Sierra one-nine, Mike Whisky - the registered keeper is John Anderson (**Please**)
Read Back Over”

“Mike Whisky - Reading back John Henderson Over”

“Sierra one-nine **Negative** John Anderson, Alpha November Delta Echo Romeo
Sierra Oscar November Over”

- **Use as necessary**

When only one item of information among several is incorrect, indicate the incorrect item by using the word **Correction**.

This term must be used carefully in the right context to prevent confusion or any ambiguity with the keyword **That Is Correct**. Clarity can be increased by avoiding passing information such as names in multiples.

“The registered keepers of the vehicles are John Anderson, Peter Greenbaum and
Martin Jones Read Back Over”

“Reading Back John Anderson, Peter Greenbaum and Martin James Over”

“Negative. I have a **Correction** to one name only. Martin Jones, that’s Juliet Oscar November Echo Sierra Over”

You may also use **Correction** to correct yourself in a transmission:

“The registered keeper is John Henderson, **Correction**, John Anderson Over”

2.23 Responding to a correction

- **Basic essentials**

When the other person has corrected your read-back, respond with **Received + (Reading Back) +** the corrected information.

“Sierra one-nine - **Negative** John Anderson, Alpha November Delta Echo Romeo Sierra Oscar November Over”

“Mike Whisky Received John Anderson Over”

“Sierra one-nine That Is Correct Over”

2.24 Repeating a message

- **Basic essentials**

If you did not hear a message or part of a message clearly, ask for it to be repeated by using:

Repeat (**Repeat** is preferred, but **Say Again**, which is in widespread usage, may to be used.)

“Sierra two-seven - **(Please) Repeat** (or **Say Again**) the address Over”

If you need only part of a message to be repeated, specify that part by using specific information markers or a general marker such as **All before** or **All after**.

2.25 Responding to repeat (say again)

When asked to repeat a transmission or part of a transmission, introduce the repetition with **Repeating** (or **I Say Again**)

“Sierra two-seven - **(Please) Repeat (or Say Again)** the address Over”

“Mike Whisky **Repeating** (or **I Say Again**) four-zero, forty, St Congan’s Drive, unit number four Over”

or

“Sierra two-seven - Simon Twelis, last known address 27 Bosworth Street Wallasey Over”

“Mike Whisky - **Say Again** (or **Repeat**) **All after** the **Name** Over”

“Sierra two-seven - **I Say Again** (or **Repeating**) last known address 27 Bosworth Street Wallasey Over”

From time to time, even though you have heard a message clearly, you may require further confirmation, explanation and so on. In such cases, avoid long winded expressions such as “I don’t quite understand what that means”, but use single-word requests like confirm/explain/clarify etc.

“Please **confirm** you want me to call on Mr Twelis Over”

“Please **explain/clarify** the last message Over”

The appropriate responses to a request for confirmation and the like are **That Is Correct** or **Negative +** the correct information.

“Mike Whisky - can you confirm Mrs Johnson will only be available after 2000 hours Over”

“Sierra four-five - **That Is Correct** Over”

“Mike Whisky - can you confirm Mrs Johnson will only be available after 2000 hours Over”

“Sierra four-five - **Negative** that should be 2100 hours Over”

2.26 Standard expressions - commonly occurring information

Spelling

- **Basic essentials**

All spelling and other alphabetical information is given using the “NATO” alphabet, also known as the phonetic alphabet. If you do not know this alphabet already, it is essential learning.

A/Alpha - B/Bravo - C/Charlie - D/Delta - E/Echo - F/Foxtrot - G/Golf - H/Hotel -
I/India - J/Juliet - K/Kilo - L/Lima - M/Mike - N/November - O/Oscar - P/Papa -
Q/Quebec - R/Romeo - S/Sierra - T/Tango - U/Uniform - V/Victor - W/Whisky -
X/XRay - Y/Yankee - Z/Zulu

2.27 Numerical information

- **Basic essentials**

All numbers are expressed in single digits; 0 is “zero” (not “nought”, “nil” or “oh”):

One-two (12)

One-two-five (125)

One-two-five-zero (1250)

Avoid all other ways of giving numbers (such as “twelve fifty”; “one-two-fifty”; “one thousand two hundred and fifty”).

- **Recommended**

In order to make it easier for the listener to understand a long string of digits (e.g. 13235705), they should be given in pairs or other natural groups: one-three, two-three, five-seven, zero-five

“Could you ring Mr Watson on mobile number zero-eight-eight-eight-one, four-seven-six, zero-zero-one Over”

2.28 Units of measurement

Units of measurement refer to speed, distance, length, height, area, weight, etc. Either imperial or metric units may be used.

- **Recommended**

Include the units when giving measurements.

“The driver was timed doing more than eight-zero miles per hour (or mph)”

“He is described as about six feet two inches tall”

2.29 Time of day

- **Basic essentials**

Time is always expressed using the twenty-four hour clock. The numbers are delivered as single digits, and the unit of measurement “hours” is included:

Zero-nine-zero-zero hours (9am)

One-four-two-five hours (2:25pm)

Approximately two-three-five-five hours (5 minutes to midnight)

2.30 Dates

- **Basic essentials**

Dates are given in the sequence Day-Month-Year (dd-mm-yyyy). The day is expressed in single digits, and the month may be given using single digits (“zero-five”) or the name (“May”). Where it is included, the year is expressed in single digits:

“Absconded (on) two-zero November, re-arrested (on) two-nine November”

“Date of birth one-four zero-five one-nine-nine-two (14 May 1992)”, or “one-four May one-nine-nine-two (14 May 1992)”

- **Recommended**

In certain types of messages (for example, when expressing several dates in the same year, or when the dates are very recent or in the near future), it is not necessary to give the date in full each time. Even when it seems clear to you, however, there is a danger that the listener may misinterpret the year or the month being referred to.

Therefore, if omitting the year use a phrase such as “this year”; “last year”; “the same year”:

Always include the month. The month can be expressed as single digits, name, or an equivalent (such as “last month”), whichever seems most natural.

“First reported missing on zero-four June this year”

“First reported missing on zero-four zero-six this year”

“Absconded (on) two-zero November, re-arrested (on) two-nine November the same year”

“She was charged at Neale Street on one-three of this month”

2.31 Information ‘marking’

What is information marking?

“Marking” information is a simple procedure that can significantly increase the efficiency of communication. It helps both the speaker and the listener to focus on what is really important in a message. The marking word or phrase separates information of different types which might otherwise be confused, for example, street names from personal names; model numbers from vehicle registration numbers and so forth.

- **Basic essentials**

Mark any item of information that is particularly important, or when stringing together different types or large amounts of information.

Mark an item of information with a word or phrase that indicates the type of information which is to follow. In the following sections, specific keywords are suggested as information markers. More important than the exact words, however, is the marking procedure itself. Virtually any common and appropriate word will serve, and they will tend to occur naturally once you have developed the habit of routinely marking information.

Markers have been used in a number of preceding examples in these notes, like:

“Living at Address Glebe House, Ferry Way, Sandford”

“The **Address** is **Number** 1-5, Glebe House, Ferry Way **Town Name** Sandford”

“Please Say Again the **House name** Over”

“I say Again **House name**, Glebe House Over”

“She lives at **Flat Number** 2 **House Number** 2-7 Barrow Road, Cowley”

As the first example above shows, marking can be used to introduce the whole string of information (such as the address). In certain circumstances, however, it may be necessary to mark only those parts that you feel are likely to be confused or misheard (as in the second, third, and fourth examples above).

The types of information that occur most commonly, and which are therefore most likely to need to be marked, include:

- dates
- times (of day; duration, arrival, etc.)
- addresses and telephone numbers
- names (of persons, towns, roads, etc.)
- locations
- identification numbers (of vehicles, passports, bank accounts, etc.)

2.32 Numbers

These cover a wide range of types: telephone, registration, passport, National Insurance, bank accounts, and so on.

“He can be contacted on **area code** zero-one-two-two-four **telephone number** two-seven, two-three, six-one.”

“The stolen card is for **account number** one-seven, two-four, eight- nine, nine-nine, zero-three.”

2.33 Spelling

“The flat is let in the name of a Mr Twelis **Spelling** Tango Whisky Echo Lima India Sierra”

2.34 Names

These include names of persons (first/given name; middle name; last name/surname); houses; streets/roads; towns/cities/villages/suburbs/estates; businesses; vehicles (make, model); buildings; churches; pubs; etc.

“A burglar alarm has been reported at the premises of **Business Name** Anderson Partners”

“The missing person is **Last Name** Dean **First Name** Shirley”

2.35 Location

In addition to specific items such as pub names, addresses etc. the general marker **Location** is useful:

“A disturbance reported at **Location** The Broadway Arms in street name Broadway”

- **Recommended**

Where information about location is involved (e.g. when referring to an incident, reporting the progress of a pursuit, or requesting back-up), provide **Location** first and give location information in the order general to specific:

“A disturbance reported at **Location** Sandford, High Street, House Number 2-4”

Location route number A 92, distance 3 miles north of the Ellon turn-off

Location Motorway M 25 between junctions 6 and 7

Location Smithwood Common, north-east corner

This recommendation applies to operational locations, and not the transmission of standard addresses. The standard postal sequence is appropriate for these, e.g. **Registered keeper** is Martin Jones of **Address** 3 Meadow Lane Dunstable

2.36 Marking the function of a transmission

- **Recommended**

In addition to marking information, if the function or purpose of your transmission is particularly important or likely to be misunderstood, it is good practice to mark the function at the beginning of the transmission. For example:

“**Question:** Is this the same person you arrested for possession of a firearm last week?”

“**Warning:** Be careful entering by the back gate as he is believed to have a large dog.”

“**Instruction:** Wait for the firearms team to arrive at the scene.”

“Information: The firearms team are expected at **Time:** one-six-zero-zero hours.”

“Request: Could you ask the Bronze Commander to contact Silver Control.”

Marking functions in this way can avoid potentially serious ambiguity. For example:

“From the duty inspector: can you treat it as a sudden death?”

This could either be a question, i.e. is it appropriate to treat it as a sudden death, or a request, i.e. please treat it as a sudden death.

2.37 Sequencing information

Giving and receiving descriptions of various types form a large part of radio messages and adopting a standard sequence for the various items within a description contributes to making communication more efficient. Sequencing serves several functions:

- It serves as a checklist that directs both the speaker’s and the listener’s attention to the key elements of information that need to be gathered and transmitted.
- It increases the predictability of the message, thus increasing comprehensibility.
- It provides ready-made markers for the individual items within the description.

There are national standard sequences for the two most common types of descriptions: persons and vehicles.

2.38 Person descriptions

- **Basic essentials**

The order of items in a person description follows the NASCH sequence: **Name, Age, Sex, Colour, Height**

- **Use as necessary**

The NASCH sequence by itself indicates the nature of each item but whenever the information is particularly important, or occurs within a long string of other information, mark each item within the sequence, including the different parts of the name.

For greater clarity, where an element of the description is not known, mark that element using the keyword **Not Known**:

“Mike Whisky, I require a persons check on **Last Name** Dean **First Name** Shirley
Age Not Known Sex female **Colour** IC1 **Height** five feet three inches”

2.39 Vehicle descriptions

- **Basic essentials**

The order of items in a vehicle description follows the **CoMMuTeR** sequence: **Colour**, **Make**, **Model**, **Type**, **Registration Number**

- **Use as necessary**

As with the NASCH sequence, also mark each item of the CoMMuTeR sequence whenever the information is particularly important, or occurs within a long string of other information.

As with the NASCH sequence, where an element of the description is not known, mark that element using the keyword **Not Known**.

2.40 Affirming and negating (saying ‘yes’ and ‘no’)

In everyday speech, there are many different ways of affirming and, to a lesser extent, negating. In order to ensure clarity and efficiency in radio usage, it is essential to limit the range of terms used.

Affirming

Affirming is required for expressing four quite distinct meanings, which are often confused:

- to indicate that you have heard and, by implication, understood the message
- to reply to a yes-or-no type question, e.g. “are you on your way?”

- to confirm a statement made by the other person, e.g. “did you say it was number two-seven?”
- to indicate that you will comply with an instruction or a request for action.

These meanings are expressed by different standard keywords.

- **Basic essentials**

For hearing/understanding - as described above, indicate that you have heard the message, by responding with **Received**

For yes/no questions and confirming statements made by the other person respond with **Yes, Yes** or **that is correct**

“Sierra one-five - are you able to turn out to the last incident Over”

“Mike Whisky - **Yes, Yes** but I haven’t been monitoring what’s happening. Can you repeat the details (Please) Over”

“Sierra one-two - Repeating are you state two Over”

“Mike Whisky **That Is Correct** Over”

The repetition of **Yes, Yes** helps to guard against the problem that “yes” by itself can easily be lost in rapid speech. **That is correct** is also, as you now know, the phrase for responding to a correct read-back.

To indicate that you will comply with an instruction or a request for action, respond with **Will do**

“Sierra one-four - can you attend the burglary in the High Street Over”

“Mike Whisky - **Will do**. We should be there in five minutes Over”

Negating

Negating is less common than affirming in operational usage, nonetheless it does occur and is used to express the negative versions of the same four meanings outlined above and, as seen, uses the keyword **Negative**.

- **Recommended**

It is natural (and good practice) to provide an explanation for not complying with a request.

2.41 Calling for assistance

- **Basic essentials**

There are two levels of urgency to be used in calling for assistance. These are expressed by the following keywords. The higher level keyword is: **Code Zero**

This is to be used only for those situations in which an officer, a colleague, or a person who the radio user has a duty of care to is under immediate threat of **serious injury or worse** or there is an escaped prisoner.

The primary means of calling for urgent assistance is to activate the Emergency Button, and in certain circumstances it may not be possible, or advisable, to say anything. The phrase **Code Zero** is the speech equivalent of activating the Emergency Button and may be used, if necessary, in conjunction with taking that action. The phrase exists to be used wherever circumstances require it, e.g. in a partial system failure or when an officer is forced to use an alternative means of communication.

It may also be used, by others involved, to refer to an urgent call for assistance “We have a **Code Zero** from.....”, “Do a **Code Zero** now”

The keyword **Code Zero** is allied to the National Status Code numbering. It **must** be remembered that the essential information required when using the emergency button or the keyword **Code Zero** is LOCATION.

The lower level keyword is: **Backup**

This is to be used to alert other talk group members that a potentially serious situation may be developing and that they may be required to provide assistance at short notice.

2.42 Talk group phraseology

There are various activities associated with the talk group structure. At present, these are largely concerned with bringing together and separating talk groups, and with the joining and leaving of members. These actions should be announced to the members of the talk group(s) in the following manner **as necessary**.

- **Use as necessary**

The following example expressions incorporate the terms which have become common since the advent of digital operational radio and the talk group structure. Their use is clear therefore avoid using alternative words such as “alter”, “turn”, “go over”, “I’m changing” (for **Switch**); “joining up”, “putting together” (for **Patch/Combine**); “carry on”, “keep with”, “don’t leave” (for **Stay On**).

Change of talk groups

Switch to talk group X

Switching to talk group X

If the controller instructs the user to change talk group:

“Sierra one-five, this Is Mike Whisky - Please **Switch** to talk group Bravo-one-Primary Over”

“Mike Whisky received - **Switching to** talk group Bravo-one-Primary Over”

Requesting Change of talk group; **Leaving** talk group; **Joining** talk group.

If the user requests to change talk group and joins another talk group:

“Mike Whisky **This is** Sierra two-four - do I have permission to change from talk group Alpha-one-Primary to talk group Bravo-one-Secondary Over”

“Sierra two-four - **Yes, Yes**, you have permission to change from talk group Alpha-one-Primary to talk group Bravo-one-Secondary Over”

“Mike Whisky - Received now **Joining** talk group Bravo-one-Secondary Out”

“Mike Whisky, Mike Whisky **This is** Sierra two-four - **Joining** talk group Bravo-one-Secondary Over”

“Sierra two-four **From** Mike Whisky - I can confirm you have joined talk group Bravo-one-Secondary Over”

It is good practice to make contact on the talk group that has been joined in order to maintain user safety and efficient resource management.

Stay On talk group Y: **Staying On** talk group Y:

If the user is denied permission to change talk group:

“Mike Whisky **This is** Sierra two-four - do I have permission to change from talk group Alpha-one-Primary to talk group Bravo-one-Secondary Over”

“Sierra two-four - Negative, **Stay On** talk group Alpha-one-Primary Over”

“Mike Whisky - Received **Staying On** talk group Alpha-one-Primary Over”

As previously discussed, it is natural and good practice to provide an explanation for not complying with or granting a request.

Patching/Combining now talk groups X and Y talk groups X and Y now
Patched/Combined

Controller is going to **Patch/Combine** more than one talk group. This message must be broadcast to all talk groups involved:

Control: "All units, all units this is Mike Whisky - **Patching (Combining)** now talk group Alpha-one-Primary with talk group Bravo-two-Secondary Over"

Control: "All units from Mike Whisky - talk groups Alpha-one-Primary and Bravo-two-Secondary are now **Patched (Combined)** Over"

A pause between announcing the action and completing it will allow time for any unit to make representation that the action should not take place.

Separating now talk groups X and Y

Talk groups X and Y are now **separated**

When the controller separates the **Patched/Combined** talk groups. Again the message must be broadcast to all talk groups involved:

Control: "All units, All units this is Mike Whisky - **Separating** now talk group Alpha-one-Primary and talk group Bravo-two-Secondary Over"

Control: "All units from Mike Whisky - talk groups Alpha-one-Primary and Bravo-two-Secondary are now **Separated** Over"

A pause between announcing the action and completing it will allow time for any unit to make representation that the talk groups should not be separated.

2.43 Communicating with other agencies

Where more than one agency is involved in an incident, difficulties can arise in communication between them. By following the guidelines in this section you will help to ensure that your communication is clear and efficient. Remember that in inter-agency communication, whilst this may make your transmissions longer than they would otherwise be, **clarity is more important than brevity**.

- Maintain strict communication discipline. Always use all the procedures and keywords given in the preceding sections (including those marked “Use as necessary” and “Recommended”).
- Even though other agencies may be using different procedures, keep strictly to Police National Standards in your own messages. Do not modify them to try to fit in with the other speaker(s). This will make it easier for them to understand you.
- Make sure that you fully understand what the other person is saying before continuing the exchange or acting on his/her message.
- Take care to announce clearly when you join or leave a talk group. When joining, identify initially yourself by: Rank + Name + Force + Call sign.

“Kilo Whisky 2-3 Bomb Disposal Unit, Kilo Whisky 2-3 Bomb Disposal Unit, this is PC Jones, Kent Police, call sign Charlie Alpha 2-4”

- As stated, the protocol refers to the introductory stage in joining a multi-agency or multi-force talk group. Subsequent transmissions may include less information e.g. the given call sign may be sufficient to clearly identify the individual concerned. If however, there is likely to be confusion with the call sign of an existing talk group member, another form of address can be negotiated.
- Give the name of your force in full and not in abbreviated form (for example, “Greater Manchester Police”, not “GMP”; “Metropolitan Police”, not “the Met”).
- It is good practice to include your force name every time you identify yourself, particularly if the talk group includes a number of participants from several services.
- It will often be important to give a location - this should be done early in the exchange and as clearly and concisely as possible. Ensure that you follow the guidelines concerning the use of markers given above.
- The advice for constructing clear messages given previously is particularly relevant in inter-agency communication. Be careful to avoid using abbreviations, acronyms, jargon and technical police terminology. Whilst these may be familiar and clear to you they could be unfamiliar to, or have different meaning for, officers of other agencies.

2.44 Special operations

The National Standards are designed for routine communication in day-to-day policing, but certain specialised, non-routine operations have their own codes of practice and special terminology, such as surveillance and firearms. The National Standards are designed to supplement and complement these special practices, and if used appropriately there will be no conflict between the two. However, it is important not to use the terminology of special operations in routine communication - this can cause misunderstanding because such terms may not be familiar to officers without specialised training. Therefore:

- In communication during special operations, use the National Standards whenever the specialised procedures and vocabulary do not state otherwise.
- In routine communication, avoid wherever possible the procedures and vocabulary required for special operations.

2.45 Communication best practice - summary

The National Standards presented in these notes cover those aspects of radio usage that are most important for ensuring that communication is clear, rapid and efficient.

In addition to the keywords and procedures given, the general principles are that you should seek to be professional and develop discipline and best practice in the absence of any other specific rules. Radios are a “tool of the trade”.

In summary, think about how to construct your messages, and think about what to avoid.

- Radio usage is not social media usage - avoid informal, casual language
- Seek to be clear and avoid wasting time
- Conciseness is a characteristic of best communication practice
- Use sufficient words to make your meaning clear, and no more
- Ensure each transmission serves a single, easily recognised purpose
- Seek or give manageable amounts of information per transmission
- Adhere to the standards
- Be particularly careful about how you phrase questions. Make them simple and direct, for example:

- Is he known to have a weapon in the house?
- Was she observed entering the premises?
- **Avoid** less direct or more complicated forms of question like:
 - Using a statement to act as a question: “So he’s known to have a weapon in the house?”
 - Making a statement and adding a question tag on the end: “She was observed entering the premises, yeah?”
 - Adding a suggested answer to the question: “Where was the vehicle headed: was it going towards the harbour, was it?”
 - Asking two questions at once: “Did you get the witness’s name, what was it?”
 - Using voice intonation alone to signal the purpose of a message “He was seen leaving the factory?” (Where, for example, the word “factory” spoken with a rising tone is the only indication that this is a question). “Was he seen leaving the factory?” is a more reliable construction.
 - Composing messages with several functions. “Can you still see him? Well if you can be careful not to go too close yet as he’s got a history of assault. The Charlie Alpha vehicle will be with you shortly.”

3. Revision Questions

- What is the difference between an exchange and a transmission?
- Which three categories are the keywords and protocols split into?
- What are the basic radio keywords?
- What are the basic radio protocols?
- What mnemonic would help you to remember the required order of a person description?
- How would you describe a vehicle using the **CoMMuTeR** sequence?
- How do you terminate an exchange?
- What word/s would you use if you are not free to talk or you need a short pause before you can respond fully?
- What are the two different calls for assistance and when would you use each one?
- What is a talk group?

4. Key Legislation

- There are no key pieces of legislation applicable to this topic.

5. E-learning

In addition to this book the following e-learning is available via the College of Policing Managed Learning Environment (MLE):

- National Standards for Radio Communications - Airwave Speak
- Radio Terminal Communications Module One
- Radio Terminal Communication Module Two

The MLE is regularly updated with new learning programmes and materials.