



# Orange County Emergency Services

A Prepared, Coordinated, and Integrated Emergency Services System

E-911 | Fire Marshal | EMS | Emergency Management

DIRECTOR

**DATE:** June 21, 2024  
**TO:** All Emergency Services Personnel  
**FROM:** W. Kirby Saunders, Emergency Services Director *WKS*  
**SUBJECT:** **INTERIM DIRECTIVE – FIRE/EMS EMERGENCY, EVACUATION, MAYDAY**

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The Public Safety Communications Division has finalized division policy (C607) to implement changes to the procedures for emergency activations, emergency requests for assistance, mayday situations, and emergency evacuations. These changes were made collaboratively with the Orange County Fire/EMS Chiefs to implement best practices and uniform handling of emergency situations involving Fire/EMS units.

This interim directive is to provide guidance to all ES personnel who utilize a departmental 800 mhz. radio (field personnel) while a department-wide policy is in final development. Public Safety Communications staff should refer to latest version of SOP C607.

## **RADIO EMERGENCY BUTTON ACTIVATIONS**

Mobile and portable radios on the VIPER system are equipped with an emergency button that may be activated during life-threatening situations. The button is located on the mobile and portable radio chassis as well as the portable radio remote speaker/microphone. Emergency button activations will be treated as actual emergencies until verified to be otherwise.

### **Emergency Button activations where Command is not established**

- a. Whenever possible, communicate the need for emergency assistance using plain language. The emergency button should only be activated when in distress and plain language communication is not possible (trapped, unable to communicate, unsafe scene, held hostage, etc.).
- b. When pressed, OCES radios will revert to the “Emergency” talkgroup.
- c. ONE ATTEMPT at contact will be made by communications to unit to obtain a status check.
- d. If the activation is inadvertent/accidental, the unit will reply “**(Unit Number), accidental activation**” (or similar).
- e. If the reply from the unit is anything other than verbiage indicating the activation was accidental, law enforcement will immediately be dispatched to the unit’s location (if known). If the location is unknown, communications will attempt to confirm the unit’s

location using all available means. If unable to locate, the unit's Battalion Chief/Department Officer will be contacted for further direction.

- f. Once the situation is determined to be resolved, Communications will announce the return to normal radio traffic.

### **Verbal Emergency Requests for Assistance**

A verbal emergency request for assistance denotes fire and/or EMS personnel transmitting a verbal mayday or other emergency request for assistance with or without the activation of their radio emergency button.

- a. If conditions prohibit plain language transmissions, the responder will verbally transmit their unit number and "SIGNAL 33" as an indication emergency assistance is needed.
- b. Communications will acknowledge the receipt of the request while refraining from using terminology that may indicate an emergency in an unsecured environment.
- c. Communications will follow their procedures to immediately dispatch law enforcement to the unit location or last known/AVL location. If unknown, Communications will attempt to confirm the location. If unable to locate, the unit's Battalion Chief/Department Officer will be contacted for further direction.

### **Emergency Evacuation Signal**

The Emergency Evacuation Signal will be transmitted at the request/direction of the IC when the IC determines all personnel must evacuate a structure or hazardous area.

- a. Upon request of the IC to activate the Emergency Evacuation signal, the Telecommunicator assigned to the Fire/EMS OPS position will simulcast Alert Tone 2 for three (3) seconds, and;
- b. Broadcast "**All personnel operating at (incident location) – an emergency evacuation has been ordered. Apparatus on scene sound air horns according to procedure.**"
- c. The IC will ensure that Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) is conducted.
- d. Upon completion, the telecommunicator will announce the all-clear by issuing an alert tone and broadcasting "**The Emergency Evacuation is complete. All personnel accounted for.**"
- e. If the PAR indicates all personnel are not accounted for, the telecommunicator will revert to the mayday procedures outlined in their policy.

### **Resetting an Activated OCES Radio**

Once the emergency situation is determined to be resolved, Communications will announce the return of normal radio traffic. The end radio user will need to deactivate their emergency signal.

- a. To reset an activated radio, the user should press and hold the emergency button on the activated radio for at least two seconds until the radio is reset or power cycle the unit.
- b. Changing talkgroups or transmitting on an OCES activated radio may result in additional activations.