

SAMOA FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES AUTHORITY



COMMUNICATION POLICY 2020

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ACRONYMS

CSD:	Corporate Service Department
DMO:	Disaster Management Office
ERN:	Emergency Radio Network
FB:	Fire Base
HR:	Human Resource
HZ:	Hertz
MCSD:	Manager Corporate Service Department
NECC:	National Emergency Call Centre
PTT:	Press to Talk
SFESA:	Samoa Fire and Emergency Services Authority.
UHF:	Ultra High Frequency
VERT:	Volunteer Emergency Respond Team
VHF:	Very High Frequency

DEFINITIONS

- Communication Division** Refers to the Division that is responsible in repairing and sustaining the good quality of ALL communication equipment's and the Emergency Radio Network (ERN).
- Communication** For the purpose of this Policy, it means the act or process of using words, sounds and signs, to express or exchange information, ideas and thoughts to someone else. It can be a message that is given to someone using: a radio, telephone call, video, writing, verbal, etc.
- Emergency** ¹Means an actual or imminent occurrence of an event which in any way endangers or threatens to endanger the safety or health of any person, which destroys or damages, or threatens to destroy or damage any property or endangers, or threatens to endanger the environment or any element of the environment and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes; *a cyclone, tsunami, flood, winds, storm, earthquake or other natural event. a fire, an explosion, a road, industrial or other accident. hazardous material incident where there is a major threat of life safety, explosion or fire, urban search and rescue and emergency medical response.*

¹ Refer SFESA Act 2007

Frequency	Is the number of radio waves that pass by per second - measurement hertz (HZ).
Member	Means employee of the authority as outlined in the Human Resource Manual of Instructions 2019.
Operation	Refers to any kind of action in effect or activated due to any emergency or non-emergency scenarios that requires activation of such actions or functions
Phonetic Alphabet	Used to spell words or when transmitting messages containing letters and numbers to avoid confusion and errors during voice messages
Pro words	Are words or phrases limited to radio telephone procedure used to facilitate communication by conveying information in a condensed standard verbal format.
Radio network	Is a group of radio stations operating and communicating on the same frequency at all times
Radio wave	Are a type of electromagnetic radiation with wavelengths in the electromagnetic spectrum
Repeater	An electronic device that receives a signal and retransmits it. Repeaters are used to extend transmissions so that the signal can cover longer distances or be received on the other side of an obstruction.
Transceiver	A device comprising both a transmitter and receiver that are combined and share common circuitry or a single housing.
Transmission	Process model in which the sender transmits information or message over a certain distance through a communication channel to a receiver in a different destination.
User	Used to refer to authorized personnel using and having access to the Authority radio network

1) INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Policy is to establish standard Protocols for the accessibility, utilisation and maintenance of the Authority's Radio Communications and any electronic appliance resources which will prevent the misuse of such crucial resources needed for daily operations of the Authority.

The Communications Policy provides Instruction and clear guidelines for use of the Radio Communication network by all staff of the Samoa Fire and Emergency Services Authority (SFESA)

These instructions will assist all users especially the Communication Division under the Corporate Service Department (CSD) to effectively execute their responsibilities which is to facilitate and support the employees of Authority in order to meet relevant aims and objectives of the Authority

Overall, the Communication Division is solely responsible for developing, maintaining, monitoring, and securing the Radio Communication network in conducting timely updates and upgrade reviews for the Authority

2) OWNERSHIP

The Authority owns and controls ALL the resources and equipment outlined under this policy

All Users must take responsibility, use and care for the resources they use daily to achieve their work under the Authority

The Communication Division managing the guidelines within this policy to ensure its being implemented and practiced by relevant SFESA staff.

3) ADMINISTRATION

This policy shall be administered by the Communication Division and Policy and Planning Division with permission from the Manager of Corporate Service Department. The context of this Policy is subject to change from time to time given any changes develop regarding roles and functions of the Communication Division.

4) PURPOSE

The SFESA Corporate Plan 2019-2021 core objective for Corporate Services Divisions (CSD) aims to provide effective and efficient support services to the entire Authority through the Communication division which requires proper management of the radio and telecommunication systems, ensuring there is accessibility and availability of the below;

- a) Communication services and equipment available at all times for the Authority

- b) The proper management of the radio Communication network which currently consist of 13 repeater sites, and another 2 Site Repeaters is planned to be installed soon; one in Savaii and one in Upolu. There are 8 repeater sites in Upolu and 5 sites in Savaii. Each repeater has two slots of frequencies or frequencies channel.

Therefore this policy was developed to meet the core objective of the Corporate Service Department through strengthening its Communication Division functions and responsibilities to the Authority. Below are the aims of this policy;

- a) To provide an efficient and effective information to its users that utilise the various communication devices
- b) To protect all equipment and resources under Communication Division against any unauthorized access, misuse and abuse.
- c) To ensure there is compliance by ALL users with all policies, procedures relating to communication equipment accessibility and security of various information relayed through communication networks

5) POLICY COMPLIANCE

It is the responsibility of the Fire Base (FB) and Communication Division to ensure that this Policy is followed and upheld by staff at all times. Any breaches of this policy will be regarded as a serious offence and User will face necessary disciplinary action as outlined in the Human Resource Manual of Instructions 2019.

6) AUTHORIZED ACCESS AND UTILISATION OF COMMUNICATION DEVICES

- 6.1 Only the Commissioner permits the use of any SFESA radio frequency by other members or support Agencies who are involved in any government operation.
- 6.2 All radio users are required to fill out a set of Request Forms² and have it signed by their perspective Assistant Commissioner before passing it to the CSD and the Communication Division for processing.
- 6.3 The Executives, Commanders and Principal level shall issue with their own Very High Frequency (VHF) portable radio to monitor the flow of daily basis within the Authority.
- 6.4 Authorized users are prohibited from using the radio network in any way that exceeds the limits of their individual authorization.
- 6.5 Users may use the radio communication at any time for an unlimited time as long as these conversation dose not interfere with their role in the Authority.
- 6.6 All users that will leave the country for an overseas training, annual leaves both local and abroad, medical check-ups or for whatever reasons for a period not less than one week, shall hand in their radios to the Communication unit before leaving the country.
- 6.7 All users are liable to pay the full costs of any Communication equipment's if lost or damaged under his/her care as set due to negligence which will be determined after the Communication division completes their inspection on the cause of damage. Some of these items and costs are outlined in **Table 1, Annex 1**.

7) PROCUREMENT OF COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

- 1.1 Procurement of all Communication equipment's of the Authority are the sole responsibility of the Communication Division within budget allocation from the Finance Division. Any extraordinary procurements not in budget have to be referred to guidelines of the Finance Division.
- 1.2 The purchase and replacement of any equipment including radio, antennas, microphones, and beacons or any asset must not be processed and endorsed by the Manager Corporate Service Department (MCSD) and Finance Division taking into consideration the formal advice from the Communication division recommending the purchasing of such equipment's.
- 1.3 To justify the need for procurement of any related communication equipment, Station Commanders, Stations Officers and relevant Users must put in writing a formal request for consideration and approval of the MCSD via their Output Manager then the request be transferred or passed to the Communication division. Once request is received by the Communication Division, they must

² Refer to Finance Policy and Procedural Manual 2019 for the request form

assess the request and provide the relevant recommendations supporting or declining the request before final decision and approval by the MCSD or the Commissioner.

- 1.4 If approval is given the Communication Division shall provide their usual assistance and services in procurement and installation of the purchased product.
- 1.5 All Communication equipment's must be registered by the Asset Officer in the Authority Asset register database

8) MAJOR AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS

From time to time the Authority is involved in major or special and operations³; the role of the Communication Division is to provide adequate resources to cater for the requirements of such operations.

- 8.1 The Communication Division must be informed within 24 hours prior to commencement of non-emergency operations for their preparations.
- 8.2 It is the responsibility of the Communication Division to check, register and record issued radio equipment's to users for each operation.
- 8.3 Users that were issued with a radio or any other communication equipment during any form of operation shall return these Items to the Communications Division at the end of each operation.
- 8.4 Maintenance of communication equipment's are the responsibility of the Communication Division which include; to service, fix, and charge carious devices to ensure the equipment's are ready at ALL times to cater for emergencies or other operations.

9) SIRENS

Sirens are a very crucial device installed in the authorized vehicles of the Authority. It is known as a warning signal which addresses the public about the responding services or vehicles responding to emergencies by the Authority which leads to the public giving way on the road for such vehicles. In another way it's a form of communication to the public to make way for the emergency responding vehicles.

- 9.1 The type of sirens devices are to be approved by Executive before purchases
- 9.2 Siren device on authorized vehicle be installed by the Communication Division
- 9.3 The staff registered as authorized drivers are responsible in activation of the sirens when needed.
- 9.4 The Communication Division is responsible for repairing and maintaining of the good conditions of Sirens when damaged. If damaged is caused by carelessness of the user, he or she will have to take responsibility and pay for the equipment.

³ An example is Independence celebration, South Pacific Games, measles outbreak to name a few

10) AWARENESS AND TRAINING

It is the responsibility of the Communication Division to provide the relevant and appropriate training and awareness to all authorized users of the Authority based on identified capacity building needs, availability of resources and for new devices purchased by the Authority.

10.1 All operation Staff is required to understand and know how to use these equipments. It is the responsibility of the communications divisions to conduct training on how to operate or use these communication devices such as **voice procedures, Phonetic alphabet, radio operations, pro-words** and using **call-signs**.

10.2 The person who is in control of the Fire Base shall remind the users about using of the correct pro-words and code words during every conversation and operations at ALL times.

11) RADIO PROTOCOLS

The various radio protocol below are established and maintained by the Communication division as a technique for effective communication that all users must adhere to.

11.1 CALL SIGNS

Call signs are like codes that are used to refer to a certain person or location, landmark or building therefore names of certain individuals should not be mentioned during such conversations rather the call sign for the person will be used.

- i. The Communication Division is responsible for the construction and allocation of a suitable call sign for every user to follow and use during radio communications.
- ii. All officers are required to identify themselves by their assigned call sign name or vehicle number on every movement of vehicles as illustrated on **TABLE 2** in **Annex 2**
- iii. Military time shall be used in all transmission i.e. 2315hrs
- iv. Using of allocated call sign shall be enforced at all-times such as during operations and Exercises.

11.2 PRO WORDS

Frequently used words during communications. These are day to day words that ALL users must practice and utilise on a daily basis. A list of these pro-words and their definitions are attached to this policy as **Annex 3**.

11.3 RADIO CHECK

These protocols is to ensure that authorised users are utilising communication devices appropriately and that radio frequencies are correct as well as messages delivered on radio are clear and concise.

- a) All Stations radio base, vehicle (mobile) and portable radios have been tuned to the allocated SFESA frequencies.
- b) Each officers or users who have access to radio (base, mobile or portable) shall initiate a radio check daily prior to assuming their duties.
- c) The radio is to be used for official Authority business only, unnecessary communication will not be allowed.
- d) The shift Station Officer shall ensure that access is strictly limited to **authorized personnel/users** and is used for proper functions.
- e) Messages are to be clear, concise, and accurate so the transmission time is kept at a minimum in plain Samoan or English.
- f) Radio checks at the beginning of each shift should be conducted within the commencement hour:
 - i. Day shift, radio check to be completed by 10am
 - ii. Night shift, radio check to be completed by 6pm
 The **ONLY** exception for late radio checks will be in case of an emergency

11.4 TRANSMISSION PROCEDURES/PREPARATIONS

These procedures are to be followed by ALL users to ensure appropriate steps are taken to achieve effective and efficient communication through communication devices

- i. Stay cool, calm, and collected. Do not speak in an unnecessarily loud voice.
- ii. Listen carefully when using radio. Do not delay when answering or responding and do not ignore messages.
- iii. Give way to other officers when they talk where appropriate to avoid many people speaking at once.
- iv. After pressing the Press to Talk button (PTT) allow one to two seconds before speaking.
- v. Hold the microphone 5-10 cm away from your mouth and speak in a normal voice to avoid unclear transmissions.
- vi. Adjust your voice accordance with the reception status and nature of your message.
- vii. Summarize your message to convey before dispatching
- viii. If the channel is occupied, you should start your communication only after the current communication is out, “**except**” when you need to take an urgent call then you can use the pro-word **break**.
- ix. Do not interfere with communication of other stations by transmitting radio waves, if the transceiver is in use.

11.5 RADIO SILENCE

In the case of emergencies, Fire Base will execute a **Radio Silence order** for all non-emergency communications for the duration of the emergency incident. An example of a radio silent order would be: **to all stations THIS IS THE FIRE**

BASE, RADIO SILENCE IS NOW ENFORCED for ALL UNITS STANDBY.OVER. Upon completion of emergency which required radio silence, a notification for cancellation of radio silence must be made known right after the incident.

11.5.1 NON-RESPONSE TO RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

After calling an officer, vehicle or station, and the radio operator receives no answer, the operator should continue the attempt 3 times, if the call requires an immediate response, another officer will be dispatched.

11.5.2 PROHIBITED COMMUNICATIONS

To ensure official communication on the radio network, users are prohibited to:

- i. Conduct unofficial conversation
- ii. Excessive testing
- iii. Obscene language

12) PHONETIC ALPHABET

The standard phonetic alphabet shall be used for the spelling of words or when transmitting messages containing letters. It is a special technique that have been developed for pronouncing letters and numbers. For example vehicle registrations **LTA 05** will spell out- **LIMA TANGO ALPHA -ZERO FIVE**. The purpose of practicing the phonetic alphabet is to avoid confusion and errors during voice transmission. This phonetic alphabet is outlined in **Table 3, Annex 4**.

13) PHONETIC NUMBERS

Phonetic numbers is similar to the phonetic alphabet except it is the technique used when numbers must be transmitted digit by digit, except exact whole multiples of thousands. Pronunciation of numbers is illustrated in **Table 4 and Table 5 in Annex 4**.

ANNEX 1

TABLE 1: ITEMS AND ESTIMATED COSTS

EQUIPMENT	COST in NZD
Portable radio w Display 1 DP4601e Antenna, belt clip, std battery - limited keypad	\$1,372.00
Portable radio no display 0 DP4401e Antenna, belt clip, std battery	\$1,236.00
Portable Display DP4801e Antenna, belt clip, std battery and full	\$1,508.00
Mobile radio	\$1,032.00
DP3000 series IS battery	\$132.00
Mains power supply	\$287.00
6 slot Multi charger	\$950.40
Single desk top charger	\$39.20
Antenna Mopole VHF	\$99.85

ANNEX 2

TABLE 2: CALL SIGNS

STATIONS/POST	CALL SIGN
SFESA Head Quarter - Apia	Fire Base
Station Faleata- Upolu	Faleata Station
Station Asau - Savaii	Asau Station
Station Maota- Savaii	Maota Station
National Emergency Call Centre	NECC
Commissioner SFESA	Fire One (1)
Assistant Commissioner Operations	Oscar One
Assistant Commissioner Fire Safety	Foxtrot One
Commander Fire Safety	Foxtrot Two
Manager Corporate Service Units	Sierra One
Principal Finance	Sierra Two
Principal HR	Sierra Three
Principal IT	Sierra Four
Principal Policy	Sierra Five
Commander Training	Tango one
Commander Mechanic/maintenance	Mike One
Commander Emergency Medical Response	Echo One
For person taking over/assisting commander	Echo Two
Commander Communications	Yankee One
For person taking over/assisting commander	Yankee Two
Search and rescue Team	Romeo One
2IC	Romeo Two
Station Commanders	
Station Commander - Apia	Charlie One
Station Commander - Faleata	Charlie Two
Station Commander - Maota	Charlie Three
Senior Station Officer Asau - Savaii	Charlie Four

ANNEX 3

PRO WORDS

Roger / Copy:	Receiving a transmission / messages satisfactory
Standby:	Transmission ended but still available to respond
Over:	End of (transmission/messages) a reply is required
Out:	End of transmission, no reply is expected
Go ahead:	Message continue
Say again:	Request to repeat the last transmission
Read back:	Message confirm request
Wait / Break:	Wait for up 5 seconds before replying
Wait out: wait	Longer than 5 seconds
Disregard:	Discount or do not use the last message (transmissions).
Radio check:	How's this transmission received
Out to you:	End of transmission to you need no more reply, other transmission to follow
Nothing heard:	No respond has received from other station
Close down:	Request for temporary closing down of a station (outpost) or a departed vehicle.
Unknown:	Station/ call sign: station identified is not known
No duff:	Exercise/operation call off

ANNEX 4

TABLE 3: PHONETIC ALPHABET

A- ALPHA	H-HOTEL	O- OSCAR	V-VICTOR
B- BRAVO	I- INDIA	P- PAPA	W-WISKEY
C- CHARLIE	J-JULIET	Q- QUEBEC	X-X-RAY
D- DELTA	K-KILO	R-ROMEO	Y- YANKEE
E- ECHO	L-LIMA	S-SIERRA	Z- ZULU
F- FOXTROT	M-MIKE	T- TANGO	
G- GOLF	N-NOVEMBER	U-UNIFORM	

TABLE 4: PHONETIC NUMBERS

NUMBER	PHONETIC	SPOKEN AS
0	ZERO	ZERO
1	ONE	WUN
2	TWO	TOO
3	THREE	TREE
4	FOUR	POWER
5	FIVE	FIFE
6	SIX	SIX
7	SEVEN	SEVEN
8	EIGHT	AIT
9	NINE	NINER

TABLE 5: PHONETIC NUMBERS

NUMBER	SPOKEN AS
12	WUN-TOO
27	TOO-SEVEN
90	NINER-ZERO
156	WUN-FIFE-SIX
1500	WUN-FIFE-ZERO-ZERO
1998	WUN-NINER-NINER-AIT
4000	POWER-ZERO-ZERO-ZERO
39000	TREE-NINER-ZERO-ZERO-ZERO
753210	SEVEN-FIFE-TREE-TOO-WUN-ZERO

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