



Training Announcement

VOLUME XV • ISSUE II

FIREGROUND ESSENTIALS II: THE PORTABLE RADIO

Most firefighters have a love-hate relationship with the portable radio! When it works it's great, when it doesn't...well! In all honesty, we usually only think about the portable radio when it doesn't work—and we take it for granted all other times. It's a pain-in-the-neck when someone's constantly broadcasting the 'nice-to-know' information when all we really want is the need-to-know, and some guys just love to hear themselves talk. A little discipline goes a long way when it comes to knowing when and how to effectively operate the portable radio.

Moving on, the portable radio is really a life-saving device that we need to know how to operate and fully understand. It's a 2-way communication device that provides information to us, or communicates information from us, while we operate on the fireground. For the majority of firefighters operating on the fireground the radio simply provides information—in fact, during the more common types of responses there really isn't a lot that needs to be said on the radio—most firefighters never actually transmit over they radio they simply listen.

When it comes to transmitting information over the portable radio—knowing how to effectively communicate becomes critical. It's easy to key-up the microphone and transmit information from the kitchen to the bunk room but it's an entirely different operation when you're trying to transmit a request for another hoseline when you're barely holding your own in a basement fire. It's under those conditions that knowing how to calmly transmit information—clearly and effectively—becomes one of the most important skills you know how to perform.

This session will review the basics of the department portable radio. After a review of the components and accessories we'll review the basics of a daily radio check. Additional skills and review will focus on effective communication using the radio and your ability to operate the radio under realistic fire-ground conditions. The training stations will allow you to practice using the radio under some of the more difficult conditions found on the fireground.

Date: _____

Time: _____

Trainer: _____

Location: _____



Fireground Essentials II: The Portable Radio

I. The Portable Radio & Accessories

- A. The Radio Body
 - 1. Speaker
 - 2. Screen / buttons
 - 3. Dials / knobs / switches
 - 4. Microphone attachment point
 - 5. Emergency button
 - 6. Other
- B. The Battery
 - 1. Secure attachment point
 - 2. Release button
- C. The Antenna
 - 1. Operational requirement (will it operate without)
 - 2. Attachment point / style (screw in, plug in...)
- D. The Lapel Microphone
 - 1. Mandatory or optional
 - 2. Operation
- E. The Radio Strap
 - 1. Mandatory or optional
 - 2. Inside or outside jacket

II. The Daily Portable Radio Check

- A. Overall Condition
 - 1. Make sure the radio is clean
 - 2. Make sure knobs / dials / switches work correctly
- B. Attached Accessories
 - 1. Make sure lapel microphone is attached and functioning
 - 2. Make sure antenna is in place / tight
- C. The Battery
 - 1. Start with a fresh, fully-charged, battery
 - 2. If no extra batteries are available charge the radio at start of shift
- D. Settings and Operation
 - 1. Review common channel selections and ensure radio can be moved to those channels
 - 2. Make sure radio transmits correctly
 - 3. Position radio on desired channel for normal operations
- E. Set-Up for Day
 - 1. Place radio in ready position with gear
 - 2. Develop a daily donning routine to include the radio (radio strap, on/off, channel selection...at outset of response)

III. Portable Radio Maintenance

- A. Keeping it Clean
 - 1. Clean with a damp rag — don't saturate the radio
 - 2. Ensure charging connections are clean of debris to allow charging

Student Handout – 2 of 2



- 3. Fix/replace any damaged components (antenna, microphone, screen...)
- B. Keeping it Ready for the Next Response
 - 1. Always start with a fully-charged battery / replace battery after extended responses/use
 - 2. Ensure security of radio between responses — stowed with gear, worn throughout tour...
- D. Taking the Radio Out-of-Service
 - 1. Know the procedure for marking a radio out-of-service
 - 2. Ensure replacement radio is available for responses
- IV. Portable Radio Operations with Fire Gloves**
 - A. On/Off — practice turning radio on/off with fire gloves on
 - B. Transmitting
 - 1. Practice transmitting messages with fire gloves on
 - 2. Practice transmitting messages while blacked-out with fire gloves on
 - C. Channel Selection — determine ability to change channels with fire gloves on
 - 1. Attempt changing with fire gloves on
 - 2. Attempt changing while blacked-out with fire gloves on
 - D. Emergency Button Activation
 - 1. Attempt activating with fire gloves on
 - 2. Attempt activating while blacked-out with fire gloves on
 - E. Other — practice above operations while performing normal fireground operations (hose stretches, ventilation, searching, etc.)
- V. Operating the Portable Radio on the Fireground**
 - A. Starting point
 - 1. Radio on
 - 2. Correct channel
 - 3. Volume all the way up
 - 4. Properly positioned to operate
 - B. Always listen and **ACTIVELY** process information
 - 1. Was the message for you
 - 2. Does the message concern you or your operation
 - 3. Was the message non-important for your operation
 - 4. Continue...
 - C. When transmitting...
 - 1. Think before keying up
 - 2. Take a breath before keying up
 - 3. Quickly review your message
 - 4. Transmit slowly, clearly and concisely
 - 5. Ensure message was transmitted/received/acknowledged
 - D. Emergency Radio Operations
 - 1. Transmit a Mayday if needed
 - 2. Activate Emergency Button if needed
 - 3. Actively manage/deal with a non-functioning portable radio

Fireground Essentials II: The Portable Radio – Test



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STUDENT NAME: _____ INSTRUCTOR NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. **The speaker, screen, dials, knobs, and emergency button would all be considered part of the:**
 - A. Radio battery
 - B. Radio body
 - C. Radio strap
 - D. None of the above

2. **When it comes to the portable radio battery:**
 - A. Always start with a fully-charged battery
 - B. Start the shift by charging the battery if no spares are available
 - C. Change or charge the battery after extended runs
 - D. All of the above

3. **When cleaning the portable radio:**
 - A. Submerge the radio in a bucket of water to loosen debris and clean
 - B. Run the radio under the faucet to loosen debris and clean
 - C. Wipe the radio with a damp cloth to remove debris and clean
 - D. All of the above

4. **Determining that you can or can not change channels on the radio with fire gloves on should be done:**
 - A. Under real fireground conditions during a response
 - B. Under realistic fireground conditions during training
 - C. In the apparatus bay with your fire gloves on
 - D. All of the above

5. **When listening to the radio you should:**
 - A. Listen only when the message is directed to you
 - B. Actively process all information
 - C. Listen when you are not involved in other tasks
 - D. None of the above

6. **When transmitting a message over the portable radio:**
 - A. Key up to capture the radio and then think through your message
 - B. Think through your message before keying up
 - C. Speak as fast as possible to limit the use of the radio channel
 - D. All of the above

7. **Always ensure your message was:**
 - A. Transmitted
 - B. Received
 - C. Acknowledged
 - D. All of the above

8. **When transmitting you should always transmit slowly, clearly and concisely.**
 - A. True
 - B. False