

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

***NATIONAL
URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE
RESPONSE SYSTEM***

A Component of the National Response Plan
Emergency Support Function # 9



FEMA

**COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST
POSITION DESCRIPTION**

**National Urban Search & Rescue Response System
Communications Specialist Position Description**

General Requirements

1. Must be able to meet the physical requirements of the sponsoring agency with or without accommodations.
2. Must be available on short notice to mobilize within six hours of request and be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours for a response assignment of up to 10 days in austere environments.
3. Must be capable of improvising and functioning for long hours under adverse conditions.
4. Must maintain current inoculations for Diphtheria/Tetanus (or Tetanus only if there is a contra-indication to Diphtheria), Hepatitis A & B, Measles/Mumps/Rubella (if born after 1957), and Polio.
5. Must be able to function safely at heights and on or around rubble.
6. Must be aware of the signs, symptoms and corrective measures of critical incident stress syndrome.
7. Must understand and adhere to safe working practices and procedures as required in the urban disaster environment.
8. Must have a working knowledge of FEMA's US&R Response System, organizational structure, operating procedures, safety practices, terminology, knowledge of all task force equipment, and communications protocols.
9. Must have successfully completed the First Responder Operations Level for Hazardous Materials as per OSHA Standard 29 CFR 1910.120 Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response.
10. Must be currently certified in America Heart Association (or equivalent) Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation - Basic Life Support.
11. Must have a working knowledge of the Incident Command System including successful completion of the IS-100, IS-200, IS-700 and IS-800 on-line courses.
12. Successful completion of the DHS/FEMA US&R Orientation Course or equivalent.
13. Successful completion of Respiratory Protection training and quantitative fit test per 29 CFR 1910.134
14. Successful completion of the DOJ Emergency Response to Terrorism, Basic Concepts or equivalent.
15. Successful completion of the FEMA/US&R WMD Enhanced Operations
16. Successful completion of Awareness Level training per NFPA 1670 including;
 - Confined Space Operations
 - Water Rescue Operations
 - Structural Collapse Operations
17. Successful completion of GPS Awareness Level course. (Garmin V or equivalent)

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18. Must understand the needs of and provide support to their counterparts within the task force for specific operations, techniques and application of tools and equipment.
19. Must possess training and experience in personal safety in US&R environments.
20. The authority having jurisdiction shall assure that the individual meets or exceeds the required knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's).

Position Specific Requirements

The Taskforce Communications Specialist is responsible for managing, and maintaining, all communications and communications systems for their Task Force. The Communications Specialist reports directly to the Logistics Team Manager.

Description of Duties

The Communications Specialist is responsible for:

- Keeping the Taskforce Leader and Logistics Manager informed of the capabilities and/or limitations of incident communications
- Assessing overall communications needs, obtaining frequencies, and developing the Task Force Incident Communications Plan
- The installation, operation, and maintenance of the task force communications systems, including: radio, satellite, telephone, internet, GPS's and networks during incidents
- Coordinating communications with other entities, taskforces, and the Incident Support Team (IST) Communication Unit Leader
- Adhering to all safety procedures
- Accountability, preventive maintenance, and minor repairs of communications equipment.
- Maintaining appropriate records and reports
- Performing additional tasks or duties as assigned
- Maintaining the communications cache in an operational state at all times
- Developing requests for replacement, or repair, for consumable, inoperative, lost, damaged, or destroyed communications items.

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Position Requirements and Criteria

Individuals who meet the following requirements and criteria will be eligible to become Communications Specialists in the National US&R Response System. The intent of these requirements is to select personnel capable of managing the communications needs of the task force in the disaster environment. The requirements and criteria for this position are identified in the following categories:

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Abilities

Knowledge

The Communications Specialist must have:

1. Practical knowledge of basic electricity and electronics theory.
2. Practical knowledge of radio frequency, telephony, and satellite communications theory, including Project 25 requirements.
3. Knowledge of incident communications planning and frequency management.
4. Knowledge of standard radio protocols, operational discipline, and information security protocols.
5. Knowledge of, land mobile radios, wired and wireless telephone systems, wired and wireless LAN's, NIRSC equipment, Service Monitors, cables and connectors, GPS's, secure communications, and satellite systems.
6. Successful completion of the FEMAUS&R Communications Specialist Course.
7. Working knowledge of the capabilities and limitations of all task force communications equipment.
8. Successful completion of the COMT S258 course is desirable.

Skills

The Communications Specialist must:

1. Have skills necessary for operating task force communications equipment including: installation, operation, power requirements, frequency programming, antenna systems, and field troubleshooting/repair.
2. Have skills necessary to operate personal computers and basic software applications.
3. Have skills necessary for operating a Garmin V (or equivalent) GPS and topographic maps with compass.
4. Have skills necessary to work with or near radio frequency energy, electrical energy, and while working with antennas in hazardous environments or at significant heights.

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Abilities

The Communications Specialist must:

1. Be able to effectively organize and plan during chaotic, stressful, situations.
2. Be able to effectively communicate, both orally and in writing.
3. Be able to anticipate and plan for task force communications needs.
4. Be able to quickly evaluate key incident sites, and situations, to predict communications feasibility and limitations.
5. Be able to setup and operate/program, maintain communications equipment in a disaster environment.
6. Be able to climb and work at heights and place antennas and other equipment.
7. Be able to instruct task force members in equipment operations, limitations, capabilities, radio operation protocol, and safety.

General Operational Checklist

UPON ACTIVATION / AT TASK FORCE ASSEMBLY POINT

- Receive notification of assignment and instructions from the initiating organization.
- Establish communications with the appropriate supervisor.
- Monitor mission-related information from local sources such as radio and television.
- Review the personal equipment checklist.
- Ensure that you have personal daypack, ear plugs, and warm clothes for flight.
- Report to the assigned Assembly Point at the prescribed time.
- Forward an accurate Responder Information Sheet to the Medical Team Manager.
- Complete check-in procedures to include medical screening.
- Ensure that you receive any appropriate issue of gear (radio, functional vest, etc.) pertinent to the position.
- Participate in task force briefings and meetings as requested.
- Carry out assignments as directed.
- Must not be under the influence of illegal substances or alcohol for the duration of the deployment.

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AT POINT OF DEPARTURE

- ❑ Participate in task force briefings and meetings as requested.
- ❑ Carry out assignments as directed.
- ❑ Ensure that electronic equipment is turned off prior to boarding aircraft.

IN TRANSIT

- ❑ Review the FEMA US&R Field Operations Guide for information pertinent to your position description, operational checklist, operational procedures, and safety procedures.
- ❑ Monitor mission-related information from local sources such as radio and television.
- ❑ Review disaster related information, as it becomes available.
- ❑ Take advantage of available travel time for rest prior to arrival.
- ❑ Carry out assignments as directed.

ARRIVAL AT MOBILIZATION CENTER

- ❑ Participate in task force briefings and meetings as requested.
- ❑ Carry out assignments as directed.

ON-SITE OPERATIONS

- ❑ Ensure your physical readiness through proper nutrition, water intake, rest, and stress control techniques.
- ❑ Participate in the task force daily briefings and meetings as requested.
- ❑ Ensure use of all safety practices and procedures.
- ❑ Ensure proper equipment needs are met and equipment is operational prior to each work period.
- ❑ Carry out assignments as directed.
- ❑ Report any signs/symptoms of incident stress, injury, fatigue, or illness in yourself/coworkers to your immediate supervisor.
- ❑ Brief your shift replacement fully on all ongoing operations when relieved at work cycle rotations.
- ❑ Prepare appropriate reports (i.e. Unit Logs ICS-214, etc.).

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REASSIGNMENT/DEMOBILIZATION

- ❑ Participate in the task force daily briefings and meetings as requested.
- ❑ Prepare personal belongings for demobilization.
- ❑ Carry out assignments as directed.
- ❑ Ensure the return of all items issued to you during the mobilization phase.
- ❑ Upon return, participate in the task force mission critique and incident stress management activities.
- ❑ Submit comments to your supervisor for inclusion in the after-action reports. This should include reviewing pertinent position descriptions, operational checklists, and procedures for recommended changes.

Position Specific Operational Checklist

COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

UPON ACTIVATION / AT TASK FORCE ASSEMBLY POINT

- ❑ Contact your Task Force Logistics Team Manager and obtain permission to contact IST Communications Unit Leader and obtain your Initial Communications Briefing
- ❑ Ensure all communications equipment in the cache is ready for issue and use during transit
- ❑ Begin development of communications plan (ICS-205 and 205T)

AT POINT OF DEPARTURE

- ❑ Brief your task force with current communications plan including;
 - Initial/Convoy Communications Plan,
 - Methods/Mode of primary communications,
 - Methods/Mode of secondary communications,
 - Anticipated issues that may interrupt the mission, and
 - Schedule of Radio Checks/Personnel Accountability Reports
- ❑ Establish and maintain communications between your task force leadership and...
 - ...all task force responders/vehicles, and
 - ...your Sponsoring Agency
- ❑ Attempt to always have two means of maintaining Positive Communications until your task force returns to home base.

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IN TRANSIT

- ❑ Monitor, to maintain, Communications System
- ❑ Receive/Report Information from/to IST Communications Unit Leader
- ❑ Establish Communications with other responding task forces
- ❑ Collect Information related to Area of Operation, and interoperability with other responders

ARRIVAL AT MOBILIZATION CENTER

- ❑ Evaluate the local area and report to the Logistics Team Manager/Task Force Leader communications feasibility and/or limitations of the proposed Area of Operation
- ❑ Determine, and report, the area's of Simplex coverage
- ❑ Establish an initial repeater site to link the Base of Operations to the Incident
- ❑ Determine, and report, the area's of repeater coverage
- ❑ Establish/Assure a second "Wide Area" repeater site to cover the entire Area of Operation
- ❑ Determine, and report, the area's of Wide Area coverage

ON-SITE OPERATIONS

- ❑ Report and coordinate communications plans with the IST Communications Unit Leader for each Operational Period
- ❑ Prepare and revise communications plans as needed
- ❑ Brief the task force leadership on the revised communications plan
- ❑ Brief the task force prior to the beginning of each Operational Period
- ❑ Configure radios/equipment to revised communications plan
- ❑ Continue to maintain and improve your communications system

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REASSIGNMENT/DEMOBILIZATION

- Plan for demobilization
- Account for all communications equipment and plan for return to readiness
- Continue to maintain necessary communications during demobilization
- Advise Logistics Team Manager and Task Force Leader that your task force is retuning to a predeployment state of communications
- Insure all communications equipment is rehabbed for the next deployment.