

Emergency Callouts 101

What is a callout?

A callout is the process by which EMCOMM members are contacted to support served agencies in an emergency. Callout procedures may be used as part of EMCOMM exercises.

Callouts can occur at the Section, District or County level and should ONLY be initiated by the SM, SEC, DEC, EC or AEC for the district or County. In a real emergency, these officials act in response to actual or anticipated requests for communications support by served agencies.

Each EMCOMM member is expected to be prepared to respond as effectively as possible to a callout. No one is expected to ignore personal responsibilities to family or employer, nor unnecessarily risk their welfare.

Initial Operation:

As soon as you arrive on site, ask for the person in charge and introduce yourself as the emergency communicator assigned to serve that location. The person-in-charge will be busy, so spend only a moment explaining that you are there to set up a communications station for that location, and to ask where he/she would like you located. Be prepared to suggest an appropriate location - one that can serve as an operating table and message desk; has feed line access to the window, outdoor or roof access to power and telephone, and is far enough away from the command center to avoid disturbing either the command or communications center.

Move your equipment into position. Hopefully, you've arrived as a team of two or more, so that a person can start setting up while the other persons are moving some of the equipment in. The first priority would be to set up a 2M portable station to establish essential contact with the net. Use the lowest power setting that produces reliable contact. Proceed to set up the rest of the equipment needed. As more of your communications setup becomes operational you can check into other nets and begin compiling a list of stations that are reachable directly or via a relay station.

Paperwork needed at the site:

Some of the things you should have with you when you operate in the field:

- #1 Message forms or sheets to compose messages, such as the ARRL Radiogram.
- #2 Log sheets to track incoming and outgoing messages.
- #3 Notepad for writing notes. Spiral bound steno type recommended.
- #4 3M Post-its notes for making notations on items.

Long term operations:

If you expect to operate from the location for an extended period of time, establish a message filing system so that you can retrieve the messages as needed. Some of the "portable office" type that can hold several hanging folders and has a tray on top for pencils, a mini-stapler, scissors and scotch tape would be very useful to organize and file the messages. You should also look for and establish a break area, rest room facilities and a sleeping area.

Notification of shutdown:

The notification for shutting down operations may be given over the air by the NCS or bulletin station. The shutdown is usually preceded by notices giving a heads up; stating that shutdown of operations is coming. Be sure you confirm the shutdown order. A rumor in the break room is not a sufficient conformation to start tearing down your station.

Shutdown and cleanup:

Upon receiving notice of a shutdown, the station should begin securing the messages, the message desk, equipment and other materials. Make sure you leave the area you operated at in as good or better condition than you found it. Your served agencies will appreciate that.

Debriefing Input:

As part of the preparation for after action debriefing, the following information should be noted:

- #1 What time critical events occurred. It is useful in the post-mortem analysis to determine time frames for activation, setup, transit, etc.
- #2 The hours of operation.
- #3 What was accomplished. Often, the list of accomplishments needs to be relayed to those who weren't there at the scene/operating location.
- #4 What was good. Jot down the things that went well. Often, in the heat of the moment, we forget that there were things that went well, and we are focuses on what we did wrong.
- #5 What needs improvement. This is fairly easy to track, as we remember easily the items we struggled with the most.
- #6 Thank those who turned out and were involved. Even a simple verbal thank you goes a long way, compared to hearing not a single word.