EMV EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT VICTORIA

Joint Standard Operating Procedure

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JOINT SOP	
Title	Incident Communications Planning
Version	v9.0
Purpose	The purpose of this Joint Standard Operating Procedure (JSOP) is to ensure effective communications plans are developed, implemented and reviewed for emergencies where multiple responder agencies are involved.
Scope	This JSOP applies to the development, implementation and review of Default and Incident Communications Plans, and the use of the Emergency Alerting System (EAS) Paging during periods of high emergency activity. The management of Communications Networks and call-taking and dispatch is out of scope. The principles within this document are agreed by responder agencies but may also be applied by non-responder agencies if appropriate.
Applicable Agencies	The following agencies will apply this JSOP due to legislative responsibilities or agency role defined within the State Emergency Management Plan: - CFA - DEECA (FFMVic) - EMV - FRV - VICSES - ESTA Other agencies may apply this doctrine as applicable.
Content	The procedural contents of this JSOP are: 1. Default Communications Plans 2. Incident Communications Plans 3. Multi-Agency Talk-groups 4. Emergency Alert System (EAS) paging The Schedules in this JSOP are: Schedule 1: Communications Plan Considerations

Responsibilities	The following personnel have responsibilities within this procedure:
	• Incident Controller (IC) • Communications Planning Officer • State Communications Planning Unit Personnel
Definitions	Common Emergency Management terms and definitions can be found in EM-COP under Library > Definitions.
	The following definitions apply to this procedure:
	Communications Planning Officer The suitably trained person within the IMT who is delegated the responsibility for the development and maintenance of the Incident Communications Plan.
	Default Communications Plan Pre-planned and agreed communications arrangements for use by responders at a multi-agency incident until an alternative Incident Communications Plan is approved.
	Emergency Alerting System Paging The Emergency Alerting System (EAS) is a dedicated alerting system used to alert and simultaneously mobilise CFA, VICSES and AV resources for both career staff and volunteer members.
	Incident Communications Plan A plan prepared for a specific incident detailing the methods of communication to be used at that incident.
	Local Mutual Aid Plans (LMAPs) The documents developed annually at Emergency Management Region level containing information, plans and procedures that are specific to the respective preparedness and response of the fire agencies within the Region.
	Multi-Agency Talkgroup A specific channel primarily for use for command communications.
	State Communications Planning Unit Provides coordination of communications for all Incident Management Teams (IMTs) across the state.

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PROCEDURE

1. Default Communications Plans

   1.1. Agencies are required to ensure that Default Communications Plans are prepared to cover their response areas.

   1.2. All relevant personnel should have knowledge of and access to the Default Communications Plan.

   1.3. Default Communications Plans should be documented in all relevant Local Mutual Aid Plans (LMAPs) in accordance with *Business Rule – Local Mutual Aid Plans – Bushfire Readiness and Response*.

1.4. Considerations that can be incorporated into a Default Communications Plans are outlined in *Schedule 1: Communications Plan Considerations*

1.5. Default Communications Plans should be reviewed as part of any readiness activities.

1.6. Default Communications Plans should be implemented at each multi-agency incident, until the IC determines the need to replace the default plan with a specific Incident Communications Plan.

1.7. A Communications Planning Officer should be deployed early in incidents to monitor the Default Communications Plan and develop a new Incident Communications Plan if required.

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2. Incident Communications Plans

2.1. The IC is required to ensure the development, implementation and regular review of an Incident Communications Plan as required.

2.2. An Incident Communications Plan is required to be incident-based, having consideration for all agencies involved and may include multi-agency talk-groups.

2.3. Considerations that can be incorporated into Incident Communications Plans are outlined in *Schedule 1: Communications Plan Considerations*.

2.4. Agency based communication protocols should be considered when developing an Incident Communications Plan e.g., allocation of radio channels outside of the default plan.

2.4.1. The IC shall ensure allocation of radio channels outside of Default Communications Plans and be agreed in conjunction with the relevant agencies.

2.4.2. The Communications Planning Officer will coordinate any changes to communication channels with the State Communications Planning Unit (where activated) to eliminate interference with any adjacent incidents.

2.5. The IC is required to ensure that the Incident Communications Plan is conveyed to all incident personnel and is conveyed in written form to all command personnel as soon as practicable.

2.6. Effective transfer of control from the incident ground to an ICC includes the effective transfer of communications from dispatch channels/fireground channels to incident channels where appropriate and should be undertaken in a timely manner to avoid excessive radio traffic on dispatch channels *(JSOP 03.15 Transfer of Control at Major Emergencies)*.

2.7. Incident Communications Plans and Incident Action Plans should ensure that strategies are put in place and outlined in these plans to ensure radio traffic is limited and appropriate to the incident structure. i.e., Operations, Divisions, Sectors, geographical barriers *(JSOP 03.03 Incident Action Planning)*.

2.8. When two or more neighbouring ICCs are active, Incident Communications Planning Officers need to be deployed to these ICCs to coordinate the communications activities due to the potential to interfere with each other.

3. Multi-Agency Talk-groups

    3.1. The use of multi-agency talk-groups is for communications between different agencies at the discretion of the IC.

    3.2. Multi-agency talk-group allocation requests will be actioned by contacting the Victoria Police Duty PSM (Police Shift Manager) who will allocate and advise of the appointed multi-agency talk-groups.

4. Emergency Alert System (EAS) paging

    4.1. Where there is significant risk of/or actual emergency events anywhere within the State e.g., Extreme weather and Catastrophic Fire Danger, EAS paging use should be limited to dispatch and operational safety messages to maintain service continuity.

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SAFETY

Protection and preservation of life is paramount. This includes:
- Safety of emergency response personnel
- Safety of community members including visitors/tourists

In the application of this JSOP, the following safety considerations apply:
- Incident Communications Planning Officers need to coordinate within their ICC and adjacent ICC to avoid interference with other emergencies.
- All personnel need to be familiar with protocols relating to safety communications processes i.e., Red Flag Warnings *(JSOP 03.11 Red Flag Warnings),* Field Information Updates *(JSOP 03.06 Incident Briefings).*
- Incident personnel need to ensure agreed communication methods are maintained.
- Agency personnel are to ensure they are briefed, can access and continually monitor the agreed communication methods for the incident.

REFERENCE

Related Documents	*Emergency Management Act 2013*
	Victorian State Emergency Management Plan
	Business Rule – Local Mutual Aid Plans – Bushfire Readiness and Response
	JSOP 03.03 Incident Action Planning
	JSOP 03.06 Incident Briefings
	JSOP 03.15 Transfer of Control at Major Emergencies
	JSOP 03.11 Red Flag Warnings
Environment	Nil

REVIEW	
Date Issue	23 October 2023
Date Effective	04 December 2023
Date to be Reviewed	October 2026
Date to Cease	N/A

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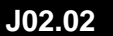**J02.02**

AUTHORITY		
The Emergency Management Commissioner has issued this JSOP under section 50 of the *Emergency Management Act 2013*.		
Approved	**Signature**	**Date**
Rick Nugent Emergency Management Commissioner	Signed Copy on File at the State Control Centre	23 October 2023
Endorsed	**Signature**	**Date**
Jason Heffernan Chief Officer, CFA	Signed Copy on File at the State Control Centre	23 October 2023
Chris Hardman Chief Fire Officer, DEECA (FFMVic)	Signed Copy on File at the State Control Centre	23 October 2023
Gavin Freeman Commissioner, FRV	Signed Copy on File at the State Control Centre	23 October 2023
Tim Wiebusch Chief Officer Operations, VICSES	Signed Copy on File at the State Control Centre	23 October 2023

Schedule 1: Communications Plan Considerations

When developing Default and Incident Communications Plans, consideration should be given to:

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a) Working in conjunction with all relevant agencies to develop required plans.

b) All agency personnel, support agencies and private contractors and the clarity about who the plan is applicable to.

c) Information and communications technology applications.

d) The most effective use of limited resources i.e., only use Regional Mobile Radio or trunked network for local fire group if no other options are available.

e) Identification of triggers and deployment of temporary communications solutions.

f) Assignment of radio channels, talk-groups, radio trunk numbers.

g) Interference issues associated with channel selection across geographical area, including aircraft interference.

h) Redundancy options.

i) Radio network availability and impacts.

j) Adjacent ICCs that may need to coordinate communications to reduce interference.

k) Locations of any known communications deficiencies.

l) Including provision for multi-agency talk-groups.

m) Telephone numbers (including mobile and satellite phones).

n) The use of paging.