

Start: 1954 L – Stop: 2016 L

Tactical Call Signs

1.1 OVERVIEW.

Thank you, Bob. Good evening everyone. Tonight's training topic is tactical call signs.

- a. What is a tactical call sign?
- b. How is a tactical call sign assigned?
- c. How should a tactical call sign be used in a radio net?

1.2 WHAT IS A TACTICAL CALL SIGN?

Tactical call signs are used to identify a specific location or function that may be staffed by different operators during a drill, exercise, or activation event. Tactical call signs allow an individual to contact a station or location without knowing the FCC call sign of the individual staffing the location, you only need to know the tactical call sign. Even if the operator at a specific location changes, the tactical call sign does not.

When assigning tactical call signs, it's important to ensure that the call sign has a meaning that matches the location or function of the station. For example:

- a. PINELLAS EOC: This is the Emergency Operations Center for Pinellas County.
- b. BOCA CIEGA HIGH: This is the emergency evacuation shelter located at Boca Ciega High School.
- c. CHECK POINT 1: This is the first checkpoint at a public service event.
- d. AID STATION: This is the medical aid station for a public service event.

1.3 HOW ARE TACTICAL CALL SIGNS ASSIGNED?

The assignment of tactical call signs will fall in to two general categories: The first category covers the partial or full activation of ACS in support of a drill, exercise, or emergency event that would require the deployment of individuals to evacuation shelters, hospitals, fire stations,

and other critical locations. The second category would cover non-emergency activities such as public service events.

When the activation is in support of a drill, exercise, or emergency event, individuals will normally be deployed to predetermined fixed locations within the county. Because we already know most of the locations that will need ACS operators during an emergency, tactical call signs for each location have been pre-assigned and are listed in the Pinellas ACS Emergency Communications Plan. If members are deployed to a location that is not listed in the plan, the NCS will assign the new location a tactical call sign in real-time.

Individuals who are not deployed and are operating from their home QTH will continue to use their FCC call sign when exchanging information on the net, unless, they are performing a formal role such as Net Control.

In contrast, the approach used to assign tactical call signs during a public service event is considerably different. Each event will likely have different support requirements and the number of ACS volunteers will vary from event to event. Therefore, the ACS point of contact for each event will create a list of the tactical call signs needed to support the event and provide the list to the ACS volunteers at the start of the event.

1.4 HOW SHOULD A TACTICAL CALL SIGN BE USED IN A RADIO NET?

Tactical call signs do not take the place of FCC call signs.

NOTE: *The FCC, Part 97.119, requires all stations to identify themselves at least once every ten-minutes and at the end of the station's last transmission. When using tactical call signs, users should end their last transmission by stating their tactical call sign followed by their FCC call sign.*

Example:

BOCA CIEGA HIGH: PINELLAS EOC this is BOCA CIEGA HIGH, one priority

PINELLAS EOC: BOCA CIEGA HIGH go ahead with you message

The two stations would continue the exchange, using only tactical call signs, until the receiving station acknowledges that the message has been received.

PINELLAS EOC: PINELLAS EOC, <FCC Call Sign>

BOCA CIEGA HIGH: BOCA CIEGA HIGH, WA1RYQ

By sending your FCC call sign at the end of the exchange you signify to the NCS that the exchange is complete and meet the FCC requirement for proper identification.

1.5 SUMMARY

Let me summarize with a few dos and don'ts.

- a. It's Important that we get in the habit of using Tactical Call signs during drills, exercises and public service events. These are great opportunities to practice proper net procedures.
- b. During drills, exercises, and emergency activation events use the Tactical Call signs listed in the communication plan.
- c. Consistently use the same Tactical Call sign assigned to each location. Don't refer to a location as BOCA CIEGA HIGH during one exchange and then use BC HIGH SCHOOL during the next exchange.
- d. Always used the correct phonetic alphabet during exchanges.

1.6 QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

I'd like to pause here for a minute and ask if anyone has a comment or question about tonight's presentation. If you have a comment or question, please provide me with your call sign, slowly, clearly, and phonetically so I don't make a mistake when I respond. And then ask your question or provide me with your comment.

This is WA1RYQ.

[PAUSING FOR QUESTIONS]

1.7 CONCLUSION.

That's all I have for this week's training session.

I'd like to remind everyone who is interested in Winlink training that a Winlink Training net is currently scheduled for Wednesday, August 18th, at 1930 hours local. This will be a mixed voice and data net with the voice segment taking place on the W4ACS repeater. A Winlink bulletin describing the planned net activities was sent to all registered ACS Winlink users on Monday.

Again, if you are interested in taking part in Winlink digital training, please send me an email.

I can be contacted via email at WA1RYQ@arrl.net. My contact information is also available on the Pinellas ACS Web site.

Now with that, I'll turn it back to Net Control.

1.8 QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS.

The following table contains a summary of the comments and questions provided by the membership during the presentation.

No.	Call Sign	Comments	Response
1	KC4SXO	When operating in the EOC wouldn't we use the EOC call sign rather than your personal call sign?	That is correct. Use the tactical call sign for the EOC and then the FCC call sign for the EOC.
2	W7WMS	Several shelters have similar tactical call signs. For example, DUNEDIN COMMUNITY, DUNEDIN, MIDDLE, DUNEDIN ELEMENTARY. Therefore, it is important to use the complete call sign.	
3	W8QFV	Would suggest using initials and phonetics. For example, DUNEDIN HIGH SCHOOL would be Delta Hotel Sierra. Do you concur?	Disagree. It would be best to use plain language tactical call signs. It will result in less confusion. That would eliminate the use of a crib sheet.
4	W4PXE	Normally in the EOC we would never have all shelters open. What we have done in the past is to make-up in real time a list of tactical call signs for each event and post them on a white board. The Tactical Call signs historically used are consistent with the statements made by W8QFV.	Open to discussion; however, if we change from plain text to something else, we need to update the communications plan to ensure consistency moving forward.
5	W8QFV	I think there should be some type of inter-shelter communications just in case the shelters are unable to communication with the EOC. Yes, worried about the worst-case scenario; for example, a CAT 5 storm,	Agree. Are you asking how we get information into the EOC if the radio link at the EOC fails?

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6	KJ4RUS	<p>Agree with your concern. I believe that if individual shelters need to communicate with one another, they will request the NCU station to send traffic direct.</p> <p>Now if the EOC was impacted and could no longer communicate via radio, the NCU would need to be transferred to an alternate NCU.</p> <p>If both repeaters go down, net will have to switch to simplex.</p>	
7	N4BCK	<p>Comment on the identifier at the EOC. To identify legally at the EOC, the control operator must periodically identify with personal FCC call sign and indicate that they are at the EOC station call sign.</p>	<p>Will need to look that up and confirm.</p>