



ACT Rural Fire Service
Standard Operating Procedure 5.4
Mobile Data Terminal

5.4
Communications

Purpose

The purpose of this SOP is to provide direction on the use of Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) for RFS operations and routine business. The MDT will be used in conjunction with the Service radio network (TRN) to maintain situational awareness for Brigade Officers, other Units, Comcen and the RFS Duty Officer (RFSDO).

Operating Procedure.

The TRN network remains the primary method of communication for all RFS units. The MDT will supplement but not replace any of the functions currently undertaken via the radio. As such all movements, incident dispatch and status changes will first be sent via the radio and then backed up through the use of the MDT.

Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL)

The ESA Communications Centre (COMCEN) Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system requires the physical location of Units in order to recommend it as the closest most appropriate and available Unit for dispatch to incidents. The MDT is a GPS resource tracking system, it tracks and updates the Units location, which allows a Unit's location to be sent and seen on the CAD system.

All RFS Units are to radio their movements (both operational and day to day) to Comcen, to supplement the MDT data and allow the RFS Duty Officer, Brigade Officers and other Units to be aware of Service Unit's movements.

Example:

Routine message *“Comcen, Comcen, Hall 10 leaving Hall station mobile in the Wallaroo area”*

Operational message *“Comcen, Comcen, Hall 10 leaving Hall station responding to the fire at Parkwood”*

Vehicle Status

Vehicle status is used by the CAD to determine the current operational availability of RFS Units as well as recording when they are responding or proceeding to incidents. The MDT allows members to directly change their own status within the CAD. The MDT will have the following status available for the use of RFS Units.



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1. **“NOT AVAILABLE”** – This indicates that the Unit is not available for operational purposes, the unit maybe stood down at its home station with no crew or maybe mobile with a driver only.
2. **“MOBILE AND AVAILABLE”** - This indicates that the Unit is mobile, meets the RFS minimum crew requirement and is ready for immediate response to incidents.
3. **“AT HOME STATION”** - This indicates that a unit is stood up and available from its home station with the accepted minimum crew in the Unit.
4. **“RESPONDING”** - This indicates that you have received a call from COMCEN or the RFSDO and are responding to a given address or location (as per “SOP 4.1 Response”).
5. **“PROCEEDING”** - This indicates that you have received a call from COMCEN or the RFSDO and are proceeding to a given address or location (as per “SOP 4.1 Response”).
6. **“ARRIVED AT INCIDENT”** - This indicates when a Unit has arrived on scene at the incident.

All Units are to change their status and provide updates via MDT and at the same time via radio. Again, this is to maintain the situational awareness of the RFS Duty Officer, Brigade Officers and other units

Example:

Routine message *“Comcen, Comcen, Tidbinbilla 20 leaving Tidbinbilla Station for a maintenance run, mobile in the Paddys River area, **not available** for response”*

Operational message *“Comcen, Comcen, Tidbinbilla 20 **responding** to the Car Fire in the Paddys River area”*

Where there are enough members of a brigade at station to be operationally available (as per “SOP 3.4 Crewing Arrangements for Operational Incidents) they are to stand a unit up using the MDT and radio by choosing a status of “Home Station”.

The CAD has a number of other statuses, beyond the above, that may on occasion appear on an MDT. Should this occur and the status chosen by the CAD doesn't accurately reflect the unit's actual status, the operator is to change their unit's status on the MDT and radio Comcen to inform them on the change.

Dispatch to Incidents

Comcen will dispatch all RFS Units to incidents via radio at the moment the incident is created, as well as sending the incident details to their MDT. Comcen will not wait to see if a crew will acknowledge the incident via the MDT before radioing the units. All



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RFS Units are to acknowledge the receipt of any incident (by indicating they are responding or proceeding) via the radio and changing their status via the MDT.

Interstate assistance

When RFS Units assist interstate agencies, Comcen will create the event as an incident in CAD which the Units will be assigned to (e.g. “Bombala Bushfire Assistance”).

Duress

This function is a critical feature of the MDT to report when the crew is in imminent danger. The Duress function will immediately alert Comcen confirming the Unit location.

When activated, Comcen will;

1. Radio the Unit to confirm the nature of the threat;
2. Advise the Incident Controller, RFSDO and/or Units in the vicinity of the Unit requesting assistance.

In such instances, the crew should also attempt to activate the TRN Duress alert as this will provide an open microphone for a limited time in which Comcen can be alerted to the nature of the threat without a crew member having to operate the radio. (See SOP 5.6 Duress)

This function will then allow the Incident Controller and RFSDO to take appropriate actions in response to the threat to the Unit.

Command, Group Officer and Staff Vehicles

As per SOP 1.14 RFS Command, Group Officer and Staff Vehicles being used in an operational role, must only be ‘stood up’ and made available for response when crewed by a member who is deemed to have the experience and qualifications to perform the role of a Level 1 Incident Controller. If the Unit is required to be made available for response and it is not crewed by an individual who meets this requirement, that member must notify the RFSDO via Comcen.

Units without MDTs or out of MDT coverage

The MDT transmits and receives data through the ‘NextG’ network (in the near future this coverage will be enhanced through the TRN network). Any unit that does not have an MDT or has a non functioning MDT must radio through their status updates and also provide Comcen with a location name and the ESA Handy Map Location (Grid Square



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Location) in which they are available. This will then be correctly reflected on the CAD system as to the Units availability and location that they are on standby.

Example: “Comcen, Parks 10 is mobile and available at River’s Station grid square India One Three, that is grid square India – One, Three”

It is important that the phonetic alphabet is used and numerical values be given as numbers and words.

For Units that are **“Mobile and Available”** in a particular area, the location name and grid square where the Unit will be is to be radioed to COMCEN and this will be the location that the Unit will be reflected on the CAD system.

Units that have informed COMCEN of their grid square location and are mobile in that square do not need to inform COMCEN again until that unit moves from that grid square.

For Units that are travelling from one location to another over some distance (*For example Stromlo Depot to Kowen Forest*), the Unit is to give COMCEN the location name and grid square of the destination that they are travelling to.

Once a Unit arrives at their destination, they are to radio COMCEN, confirming the relevant location name and grid square.

Fault Reporting

When a fault occurs that the crew of a Unit are unable to rectify, they are to report the fault and continue operating via radio.

To report the issue for fixing, members should:

- During work hours- advise the Operations Section via the Brigade Equipment Officer or Captain;
- Afterhours or during an incident- advise the ACTRFS Duty Officer;
- During an incident with an established IMT- contact the Sector Leader who will report the issue to the IMT Operations Officer.

Once reported, the appropriate ACTRFS Officer will report the issue to ESA ICT via the normal channels during working hours. Where deemed necessary the Duty Officer or IMT Operations Officer will refer the problem to the ESA ICT on-call technician for after hour’s attention.



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Maintained By: Manager, Operations

Approved By: Andrew Stark

Position: Chief Officer RFS

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Andrew Stark', written over a light green rectangular background.

Date: 10/07/2012

Cross Reference SOP/s: SOP 1.4 Command vehicle use
SOP 3.2 Urgent duty driving
SOP 3.4 Crewing arrangements for operational incidents
SOP 4.1 Response
SOP 4.2 Weight of response
SOP 5.3 TRN Radio use

Amendments: Replaced - SOP 5.4 Resource Location Tracking -
10/07/2012