



## RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

Date:

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By Direction Of:

Lucas M. Miller, State Inspector General

### A. Purpose & Scope.

To establish the Office of State Inspector General’s (OSIG) policy and procedures governing the installation, maintenance and operation of radio communications using OSIG issued radios and the Pennsylvania Statewide Radio Network. Failure to abide by this policy may result in discipline up to and including termination.

### B. Definitions.

*OSIG-issued radios* – Portable radios purchased by the OSIG for use during OSIG investigations. Radios are only to be used for OSIG related business.

*Incident Command System (ICS)* – A standardized on-scene emergency management construct specifically designed to provide for the adoption of an integrated organizational structure that reflects the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents, without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. The incident command system is the combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure, designed to aid in the management of resources during incidents. It is used for all kinds of emergencies and is applicable to small and large, complex incidents. The incident command system is used by various jurisdictions and functional agencies, both public and private, to organize field-level incident management operations. See, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, National Emergency Communications Plan, 2014, Appendix 9, “Glossary”.

*National Incident Management System (NIMS)* – A system that provides a consistent nationwide approach for federal, state, local, and tribal governments, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size, or complexity. The term includes any successor system established by the federal government. See also, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, National Incident Management System, December 2018, “Glossary of Key Terms”.

*Pennsylvania Statewide Radio Network (PA-STARNet)* – Statewide radio network comprising a communication and information infrastructure connected by a digital microwave system for transmission of voice and data, referred to in the Act of December 2, 1996 (P.L. 921, No. 148), a supplement to the Capital Budget Project Itemization Act for 1996-1997, as “Statewide Mobile Radio and Microwave System,” including all frequency bands and other system extensions owned and operated by the commonwealth and connected to the core digital trunked radio network operating in the 800 megahertz (MHz) public safety frequency band and in other public safety frequency bands licensed by the Federal Communications Commission FCC), or to the microwave backbone network.

*Public Safety Communications* – Means and methods for transmitting and receiving information necessary for the conduct of services rendered by or through federal, state, or local government entities in support of the protection and preservation of life, property, and natural resources, as prescribed by law.

### **C. Policy.**

Per [Management Directive 245.15 \(amended\)](#), the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), through the STARNet Division, is the single agency responsible for the development, operation, regulation, management, maintenance, and monitoring of PA-STARNet, including all infrastructure, equipment, software, services, and licenses supporting its application to public safety and emergency communications.

PSP manages and administers PA-STARNet for the benefit of all participating agencies, for the support of effective communications at critical public events, and for the interoperable communication needs of local, state, and federal first responders during emergencies.

The PA-STARNet Division establishes policies, standards, and procedures for the specification, procurement, development, testing configuration, operations, use, replacement, and maintenance of all PA-STARNet resources.

This policy will apply to all OSIG personnel who operate OSIG-issued radios on the PA-STARNet. This policy shall also apply to any successor platform or system used by the Commonwealth for a substantially similar purpose.

### **D. Procedures.**

#### Responsibility

The purchase, programming, and maintenance of OSIG-issued radios shall be the responsibility of the Bureau of Administration, Policy, and Training (BAPT).

BAPT shall also be responsible for the initiation of radio equipment service and repair contracts with authorized vendors.

BAPT, in consultation with the Bureau of Special Investigations, the Bureau of Law Enforcement Oversight and the Bureau of Fraud Prevention and Prosecution, as appropriate, shall be responsible for liaison with other state, county and municipal government agencies on mutual communications issues. Final disposition of those issues will be the responsibility of the First Deputy State Inspector General, or designee.

All OSIG employees are responsible for the care, routine maintenance, and proper usage of their OSIG-issued radios. This includes ensuring radios are charged and ready for use. Radios must be on anytime the employee is not in his or her designated Headquarters location.

All supervisors, or a designated staff member, must monitor their assigned channel any time one of their assigned employees has his or her radio on. Employees must notify their supervisor or designated staff member when they are going in the field to ensure the channel is monitored.

### General Requirements

Operation of OSIG-issued radios will be in full compliance with the rules of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). OSIG will also follow the usage requirements listed in [Management Directive 245.15 \(amended\)](#).

The use of any OSIG-issued radios shall be limited to communications essential to the conduct of official OSIG business. Under the rules of FCC, it is unlawful to:

- Transmit superfluous signals or messages of a personal nature by radio.
- Use profane, indecent, or obscene language.
- Cause malicious interference with any other radio communications.
- Intercept and use or publish the contents of any radio message without the express permission of the proper authority.
- Damage or permit radio apparatus to be damaged.
- Make unnecessary or unidentified transmissions.
- Transmit messages from a mobile unit to monitor receivers.
- Transmit without first making sure that the intended transmission will not cause harmful interference.
- Make any adjustments, repairs, or alterations to an OSIG-issued radio.
- Deny access to any radio equipment to any properly identified FCC representative who asks to inspect it. All OSIG radio equipment must be made available for inspection at any reasonable hour.

Radio transmissions are not allowed on a state, county, or municipal radio frequency without prior written authorization by the OSIG. Verbal consent by a state, county, or municipal government office is not sufficient.

All radio transmissions using other authorized government agency frequencies must comply with that agency's radio procedures and mobile/portable identification system.

Upon a conviction for any willful or knowing offense under the Communications Act of 1934 provides a penalty of not more than a \$10,000 fine and/or one-year imprisonment for the first offense.

### GPS

The radio GPS system **must** be on at all times. Staff will not turn this function off at any time.

### Auxiliary Frequencies

OSIG-issued radios shall only make use of OSIG-approved frequencies. The use of any additional frequencies must first be approved by the agency.

### Communications Priorities

Users of PA-STARNet must observe the following communication priorities, in descending order, yielding in case of conflict with a higher priority use:

1. Voice communications for emergency response.
2. Video or other data communications in support of emergency response.
3. Public safety voice communications by commonwealth agencies.
4. Interoperable voice communications.
5. All other voice communications.
6. Data Communications.

### Emergency and Interagency Communications

As required by the Governor's Proclamation Implementing the National Incident Management System (NIMS) on December 20, 2004, all emergency communications using PA-STARNet are conducted in accordance with NIMS and the Incident Command System (ICS).

As required by NIMS, all emergency communications using PA-STARNet are in plain language and common terminology, free of codes, acronyms, abbreviations, and unnecessary technical terms.

During emergency and other interagency communications, all callers using PA-STARNet identify themselves clearly, using jurisdiction, agency, public safety discipline, unit, and role as applicable.

### Emergency Button

The emergency button is to be used only in case of an emergency. Pushing this button locks the channel the individual is on and records his/her GPS coordinates. An audible alert is projected on the channel, along with the GPS coordinates. It also opens the microphone

function to allow the individual to communicate with others on the channel. Each channel must be monitored at all times while in use.

The emergency must be cleared by the individual. If it is pressed accidentally, holding the button for two seconds will clear the emergency and reset the radio.

#### Reference Material

BAPT shall be responsible for providing all OSIG staff assigned a portable radio with a copy of any and all policies and procedures for the use of OSIG-issued radio equipment.

#### **E. Additional Information.**

Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to your supervisor.

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