

8 ACTIVATION OF SFACS

8.1 Overview

In a major emergency, the San Francisco Emergency Operations Center (SFEOC) is activated. One element of this emergency organization is the Communications Branch of the Operations Section. The decision to activate the SFACS is made by the Communications Branch of the SFEOC.

Formal activation is required for Disaster Service Workers insurance coverage to be effective. (Disaster Service Workers coverage is also in effect during training exercises that are approved by the Department of Emergency Management.) Hence, in an emergency, SFACS members do not self-deploy. (See Section 8.5 below)

Contact information for the SFACS leadership team and ICS Officers is maintained by the Department of Emergency Management and is on file at the SFEOC. (See Appendix IV) When the decision is made to activate the SFACS, contact will be made with the SFACS Chief. If the Chief is not reachable, contact will be made with the Deputy Chief and then other members of the leadership team. This contact represents the formal activation of the SFACS. The remainder of this section summarizes what happens next.

In an emergency activation, the chain of command is based on the Incident Command System (ICS) organization. Personnel assignments will be made to support incident action plans. This means that individuals may be rotated in and out of specific positions as determined by the needs of the incident and as the needs of the served agencies change.

8.2 Radio Communication

A key communication element in the SFACS activation is the WA6GG (Twin Peaks/ACS) repeater at 442.050 MHz + 5 MHz tone = 127.3 Hz (both encode and decode). If the repeater is not operating, radios should be tuned to simplex operation on the repeater output frequency, 442.050 MHz tone = 127.3 Hz (both encode and decode).

If the WA6GG repeater is not in operation and if the output frequency is in use and not preemptable, a simplex net should be established on 441.000 MHz with a transmit tone of 100.0 Hz.

8.3 Alert Status (Pre-activation)

Some of the possible major emergencies that may face the residents of San Francisco are readily apparent, for example, a major earthquake or fire. After such an incident, the leadership team may move the SFACS to an Alert Status. Alert Status exists only to allow identification of resources available for deployment.

During an Alert Status, **no** member should self-deploy to any SFACS facility. All Resource Net information gathering should be done with members remaining in place.

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As soon as possible after moving to an Alert Status, a staff member will initiate a Resource Net using the WA6GG (Twin Peaks/ACS) repeater to identify the resources immediately available for deployment.

Members suspecting that SFACS has been moved to an Alert Status should monitor the WA6GG (Twin Peaks/ACS) repeater. If a Resource Net is not set up within 30 minutes of an incident, members can reasonably assume that the unit has not been moved to an Alert Status.

If it is clear that an event is major with significant damage and if a staff member or ICS officer does not initiate a Resource Net within 15 minutes, then any member who is available and competent to do so may initiate such a net. When a staff member becomes available, the volunteer will relay the information gathered and relinquish control of the net when directed to do so.

When a Resource Net has been established, follow the instructions of the Net Control Operator and avoid unnecessary traffic. The Net Control Operator will ask you to identify yourself by your name and callsign. You may also be asked to define your current location, when you could be available for possible deployment and for how long you could be available. (See Section 8.5 below.)

SFACS may be moved to Alert Status by other means, such as an Emergency Alert System announcement, National Weather Service SAME announcement, the DSWAlert System or individual phone calls, e-mails, pager alerts or text messages to members.

8.4 Leadership Team Response in an Activation

The individual receiving the activation contact will contact other members of the leadership team and ICS Officers by land line or mobile phone or, if those systems are not working, via the WA6GG (Twin Peaks/ACS) repeater.

If it obvious that a significant incident has occurred, the staff will probably have moved the unit to Alert Status and initiated a Resource Net. (See Section 8.3) At a suitable break in the Resource Net, they should discuss and decide on their initial response. If there is no contact from SFEOC after 30 minutes, the leadership team may decide to send a member to the SFEOC to determine if an activation of SFACS has been ordered or they may decide to activate the SFACS Response Organization and make their way to the ACRR. Not all incidents will require an activation of SFACS. [We need clarity about DSW coverage if staff members self-deploy as described here.]

When activated, all leaders will report to the ACRR or alternative staging area as soon as they are able. ICS Officers will also report to the ACRR if requested. The first one to arrive will become the SFACS Incident Commander until replaced. As others arrive, they will fill the other positions in the SFACS Response Organization.

The Incident Commander, or designee, will report to the SFEOC to receive instructions about where and how SFACS is to serve.

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Using the report from the SFEOC, the Response Organization will organize the SFACS response and decide how to deploy its members. When the specifics have been decided, deployment instructions will be given to SFACS members via phone, if possible, or the WA6GG (Twin Peaks/ACS) repeater.

The Operations section of the Response Organization is responsible for directing the deployment of SFACS members. Normally the person in this position will work closely with the Net Control Operator of the Resource Net.

8.5 Initial Member Response in an Emergency

As noted above, some of the possible major emergencies that may face the residents of San Francisco are readily apparent. In these situations, members should do the following:

- 1) Make sure you and your family are safe. If not, take the necessary steps to make sure everyone is safe.
- 2) Tune your radio to the Twin Peaks/ACS repeater and monitor this repeater for further instructions. (If the repeater is not operating, tune your radio to simplex operation on the repeater output frequency as described in Section 8.2 above.) Staff members may be using the repeater to conduct a Resource Net or to discuss initial plans. Please do not interrupt their conversations unless absolutely necessary or requested to do so.
- 3) While monitoring this repeater, gather your personal supplies, food and radio equipment. (See Appendix V)
- 4) When requested, identify yourself and provide the requested information. **If requested,**
Repeat your full callsign phonetically
Describe how soon you can deploy and for how long
Describe the status of your equipment that is immediately available
Describe your current location and whether you are fixed or mobile
Describe the transportation available to you
If you are sick or injured or have other physical limitations that may limit where you may be deployed, make that known
- 5) Deployment instructions may come by phone, the Resource Net on the Twin Peaks/ACS repeater or the **DSWAlert** System.
- 6) When appropriate, deployment instructions should include precautions to mitigate potential hazards associated with the assignment.
- 7) When directed to deploy, follow those instructions. Until so directed, stay put.
- 8) DO NOT accept an assignment that exceeds your physical, technical or personal limitations or abilities. It is your responsibility to inform the individual directing your deployment if you decide to decline the assignment for these reasons.
- 9) While travelling to your assigned post, continue to monitor the Twin Peaks/ACS repeater.

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Before leaving for your assignment,

- 1) Make sure you are clear on what travel or pickup arrangements have been established for you.
- 2) Review your assignment. Know where you will report, to whom you will report and what your responsibility will be.
- 3) Determine what emergency communications procedures are in place to ensure that you can contact the Operations section if necessary.
- 4) Recheck your personal equipment and items that you will need for at least 12 hours, including any personal protective equipment that might be needed.
- 5) Ensure that family members know your destination and how to contact you in the event of a family emergency. In a family emergency, your family can contact the ACRR at (415) 558-2796.

If any of these items are unclear to you, check in with the person who ordered your deployment and clarify any uncertainties before leaving.

When activated, SFACS personnel are expected to provide their own radio equipment, even when deployed to a location that has radio equipment installed. They are also expected to provide their own supplies, suitable outdoor clothing, food, water and shelter to sustain operations away from their home for a 12-hour operational period. (See Appendix V.)

SFACS attire for events and drills is “business casual”. Wear practical, sensible footwear. Shorts, T-shirts and flip-flop sandals are examples of inappropriate clothing while working as an ACS volunteer. Official ACS caps, shirts and jackets are worn at the discretion of the Incident Commander.

8.6 Likely Deployment Scenarios

The training program of the SFACS is based on the assumption that the following deployment scenarios are most probable:

- 1) Deployment to SFEOC or a Department Operations Center (DOC) such as DPH or Fire Department
- 2) Deployment in support of a net such as at an EDCC (See Section 9)
- 3) Deployment to a hospital
- 4) Deployment to ACRR
- 5) Deployment to the field to report damage conditions, progress reports, weather, etc.

Most of these assignments will involve radio communication. Some, however, will involve administrative or clerical assignments. All of these assignments are important, and members are expected to perform their best in what ever assignment they are given.

The SFACS is deployable to any location in the Operational Area. (See the Plan for a definition of the San Francisco Operational Area.)

8.7 Member Responsibilities When Deployed

The first responsibility of any member should be their own safety and the safety of their colleagues. This includes the management of the stress that inevitably is associated with deployment in an emergency. Some of the elements of safety during a deployment or a training exercise are summarized in Section 13.

If your assignment is to relieve an operator who has been on duty, arrive at your assigned operating station 15 to 30 minutes before your shift starts to set up and receive a briefing before the start of your shift.

When you have arrived at your assigned location and are ready to operate, check in with the Operations section using the Twin Peaks/ACS repeater. Be prepared to give your callsign, location and readiness to pass traffic. If the tactical callsign of that position is not known, ask. A record of your status and the time will be made on a resource summary board.

The specific communication responsibilities will depend upon the deployment location. Some common tasks and activities in a deployment are described in Appendix VI.

If you must leave your post for a short period, e.g. for a restroom break, and there is no relief operator available, notify all those on the net that you need to leave the net for a few minutes. When you have returned, notify the net that you are back on station.

8.8 Replacement and Formal Turnover of Responsibilities

A response to a major emergency may require SFACS activation for several days. Members, however, should not be expected to be on duty for more than 12 hours at a time.

It is the responsibility of the Operations section to arrange for and deploy your relief.

When your relief arrives, you should be prepared with a formal written turnover that describes the status and expectations of each of the active issues. Prepare the documentation for your relief as you would like to receive when you relieve another.

Whenever possible, your turnover should include the following:

- The radio channel or channels you are using
- Radio, power or antenna details
- All the tactical call signs, where the stations are located and, when possible, the operator names and FCC callsigns
- The location of the nearest telephone, if any
- The name and titles of the officials you are serving and how to find and recognize them
- The specific purpose and responsibilities of your station
- The overall situation and expected changes
- Pending activity: messages you have sent, replies you expect and who should get the reply
- Location of the toilet, water, food, etc.

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When your relief is ready to assume control of your station, announce to Net Control and other operators on the net that a new operator is in place and introduce them by name and callsign. This helps to reduce confusion for other operators on the net.

Before leaving, sign out on the Activity Log and complete all paperwork and its organization.

After you have properly turned over your responsibilities to your replacement you should check in to the Operations section. You should not leave your post until released by Operations.

8.9 Record Keeping

In all likelihood, communicators will be using the standard EOC Message Form, ICS 213. All these forms should be retained. Before leaving your position, these forms should be suitably organized.

All SFACS members should also maintain a log of their activities on an ICS-214. This is necessary because [reasons?]. Upon completion of your shift, file your ICS-214 with the Message Forms.

8.10 De-activation

The SFACS will remain fully or partially activated until released by the Communications Branch of the SFEOC.

De-activation and release of individual SFACS members assigned to an incident shall be at the direction of Operations. Do not break contact or leave your post until formally released by Operations.

Before leaving your assigned station, make sure that the local supervisor or Operations has completed an Overhead, Crew and Equipment Report, ICS-204.

If you have been issued SFACS equipment, make arrangements for returning it to the ACRR.

This is a draft of Section 8 of the emerging SFACS Operations Manual.

You can help improve this draft. Please give suggestions for correcting errors, clarifying ambiguities or adding missing issues to John Sebastian at JohnSeb@pacbell.net.

Thanks.