



# COMMUNICATIONS *by Christopher Huston*

If every operation was critiqued, what is the one item that would be brought up every time? Communication; our process of sharing information face to face or via radio. Many factors affect our fire ground communications. Radio signal, noise, getting talked over, stuck mic, distractions and talking while on air. We will probably never overcome all our issues but small changes we can certainly make it better.

### 3-Way Communication

This style of communicating is another way to ensure a clear transfer of information takes place when using a radio. 3-way communication involves the sender transmitting the message, the receiver repeating the message, and then the sender confirming the message was received and understood. A fallback of this style is the amount of time used up with the repeat back. It is best to use a condensed version. For example –

“Engine 1 from Command, establish a water supply at the corner of main and 1st using large diameter hose and relay pump to Engine 2.”

“Command, understand setup water supply at 1st and main with 5inch and pump to Engine 2.”

“That is correct Engine 1.”

At first you may still think this is too much time on the radio, but what takes longer? Confirming the actions to be taken are correct and understood or spending time correcting mistakes from misunderstood communications?

### PHONETIC ALPHABET

The Phonetic Alphabet is using ‘code words’ to signify one of the 26 letters of the alphabet. For example if you wanted to say what side of the structure you are on instead of A, B, C, D, you would say “Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta.” Many times simply using the letter can be confusing since so many letters, more-so over the radio, sound like another letter. Using the phonetic alphabet is more important during a HAZMAT scene. The difference of one letter can change the operation.

ALPHA	NOVEMBER
BRAVO	OSCAR
CHARLIE	PAPA
DELTA	QUEBEC
ECHO	ROMEO
FOXTROT	SIERRA
GOLF	TANGO
HOTEL	UNIFORM
INDIA	VICTOR
JULIET	WHISKEY
KILO	X-RAY
LIMA	YANKEE
MIKE	ZULU

**TIPS: Do not key the mic till ready to speak. Know what you want to say. Speak calmly and deliberately. Use plain text.**