

**DeKalb County Fire Department  
Common Terminology for Radio Communications**

*As part of our compliance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS), DeKalb County Fire Department will use common terminology (plain language) for all radio communications.*

Prior to transmitting a message, the responder must establish communications with the dispatcher. This is accomplished by stating this language:

Example: “Engine \_\_\_ to Central”. Once the dispatcher acknowledges the communications, the message content can be relayed.

Below are frequently used communication terms:

- **“Affirmative”**—yes. Example: “that is affirmative central, we do need an ambulance dispatched.”
- **“Negative”**—no. Example: “that is negative central, we do not need another engine dispatched.”
- **“Enroute” or “Responding”**—when the apparatus leaves the station to respond to the call. Example: “Rescue 51 is enroute to the scene.”
- **“On the Scene”**—arrived. Example: “Engine 58 is on the scene central.”
- **“Establishing Command”**—this is used when the first arriving unit takes incident command of a fire, rescue, or landing zone. Example: “5900 is establishing fire command.” (Always state which function: fire, rescue, or LZ)
- **“Clear the Scene”**—finished with assignment returning to the station. Example: “Command to Central: All county fire units are clear the scene at 123 Main Street.” **NOTE: only the Incident Commander should transmit this communication to dispatch. Each unit does not individually transmit this. This is normally the last unit on the scene.**
- **“Back at the Station”**—when the apparatus arrives back at the fire station. Example: “Tanker 1 is back at the station.” **NOTE: This is a one-way communication and should not be directed to dispatch.**
- **“Repeat Your Traffic”**—used when the message needs to be repeated. Example: “Central I did not copy the address. Could you please repeat your traffic?”
- **“Out of Service”**—when truck is not available to respond due to mechanical problems. Example: “Engine 59 is out of service until further notice.”

**Remember, emergency communications is not “rocket science”. If you cannot think of the exact wording, just simply say what you need in a clear and unemotional tone.**