



Standard Operating Guidelines

Title/Subject	Communications Unit Position-Specific Recognition Guidelines	Effective Date	Revision Date
References			

By signing below, the signatory has read the following Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) and agrees to its contents.

Approved by:

Name/Title/Agency

Date: XX/XX/2013

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1. Scope

This Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) applies to those individuals who meet the recommended DHS guidelines for eligibility, training and experience for All-Hazards Communications Unit positions, and are requesting recognition within the State of Wisconsin.

This document references positions within the Communications Unit (e.g., COML, COMT) as they pertain to All-Hazards emergency response classifications; such references are not intended to reflect Red Card positions, as recognized under National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) or other existing organizational guidelines.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this SOG is to describe the process for requesting recognition for position-specific roles within the Incident Command System (ICS) organization, specifically in the Communications Unit. The process described is specific to Communications Unit personnel within the State of Wisconsin.

This SOG defines the minimum standards for Communications Unit positions in the Wisconsin Communications Unit Recognition Program.

This SOG is not written for the purpose of establishing minimum personnel standards and qualifications to be used as a basis of asserting liability against any of the participating agencies or entities. It contains statements of best practices. In many cases, the best practices contained within this document strive to exceed and improve upon prevailing standard practices, standards and qualifications. This guidance document is not intended for use in a court of law to determine an applicable standard of care or minimum qualifications for emergency response personnel under any circumstances.

The intent of this guidance is to define and develop human resources deemed by the State as qualified to fill a Communications Unit position.



2.1. Objectives

1. Establish minimum training and recognition standards for Communications Unit personnel working as part of a Local/Tribal (L/T) Incident Management Team (IMT) or as a single resource assignment within the State of Wisconsin.
2. Define the minimum required training and guide the development of skills and knowledge outside of the formal classroom environment for Communications Unit position-specific trainees to obtain recognition within the State of Wisconsin.
3. Define criteria to obtain and maintain recognition status for position-specific roles within the Communication Unit.
4. Retain the foundation of the performance-based qualification system established and implemented in the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) qualification system, and expand the performance-based evaluation process to include State recognition requirements.

3. Background

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) is a comprehensive, nationwide approach to incident management that provides a template to effectively and efficiently prepare for, prevent, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size, or complexity. It is applicable across functional disciplines at all jurisdictional levels.

A key feature of NIMS, the Incident Command System (ICS), is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazards incident management approach that represents organizational best practices and has become the standard for emergency management across the country. Within the NIMS ICS organizational structure, the Communications Unit plays a critical role and is responsible for: developing plans for the use of incident communications personnel, equipment and facilities; coordinating, installing and testing communications equipment; supervision and operation of an Incident Communications Center (ICC); and the distribution, maintenance, repair and recovery of incident communications equipment.

3.1. Communications Unit Positions

Positions within the Communications Unit may include:

- Communications Unit Leader (COML)
- Incident Communications Center Manager (INCM)
- Radio Operator (RADO)
- Incident Communications Technician (COMT)
- Technical Specialist (THSP)
- Auxiliary Communications (AUXCOMM)
- Communications Coordinator (COMC)
- Message Runner



The following duties are a sample listing of duties and are not all inclusive:

Communications Unit Leader (COML)

1. Plans and manages the technical and operational functions of the Communications Unit during an incident or event
2. Supervises the Communications Unit. Manages Communications Unit personnel (INCM, RADO, COMT, THSP)
3. Participates in incident action planning.
4. Prepares the Incident Radio Communications Plan (ICS Form 205)

Incident Communications Center Manager (INCM)

1. Establishes and manages an Incident Communications Center (ICC)
2. Supervises RADO positions
3. Assists the COML

Radio Operator (RADO)

1. Staff positions in the ICC
2. Also referred to as "Incident Dispatchers" or "Tactical Dispatchers"
3. Receive specialized training to operate in an incident-based environment
4. Includes Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce (TERT) resources

Incident Communications Technician (COMT)

1. Responsible for supporting the technical functions of the Communications Unit
2. Install, test, trouble shoot communications systems
3. Identify requirements for radio system coverage
4. Support battery needs
5. Resolve interference issues
6. Program radios
7. Maintain/repair equipment

Technical Specialist (THSP)

1. Possesses expertise in specific types of communications technology
2. Gateways, radio caches, telephone, data, mobile communications assets, GIS

Auxiliary Communications (AUXCOMM)

1. Considered a Technical Specialist in the Communications Unit
2. Organizations and personnel which provide communications support to public safety, emergency management, and other government/non-government agencies
3. Includes emergency, backup, or supplemental communications support during unexpected emergencies, planned events, or training exercises

Communications Coordinator (COMC)

1. Provides support to the Communications Unit and COML. Not technically a part of the Communications Unit



2. Responsibilities frequently performed by ESF #2 representative or Public Safety Communications Center supervisor. May operate at the local, regional, state, or federal levels
3. Performs frequency coordination responsibilities within a region or a state during an incident or event
4. Reviews Incident Radio Communications Plans to ensure communications channels / talkgroups are allocated and used effectively. Works with the COML to assign channel / talkgroup resources in support of the Incident Radio Communications Plan
5. Coordinates among multiple incident sites, dispatch centers, incident command personnel, etc., to prevent or resolve interference issues

At smaller scale incidents or events (e.g., Type III, IV or V), the COML may be the only person within the Communications Unit; therefore, an individual serving as a COML must also have a working knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the subordinate positions. During all-hazards emergency response operations, effective communications among multiple jurisdictions, disciplines, and agencies is essential. Ineffective or poorly coordinated on-scene communications can potentially compromise critical operations.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has established all-hazards training curriculum for the following positions:

- Communications Unit Leader (COML)
- Incident Communications Technician (COMT)
- Auxiliary Communications (AUXCOMM)

Following completion of the DHS-approved all-hazards training curriculum, it is the responsibility of each state to establish a process for recognition of qualified Communications Unit personnel.

4. Guidance

With the publication of this initial version of guidelines, the standards established are the minimum to be met by participating agencies, organizations, and individuals that choose to participate in the Wisconsin Communications Unit Recognitions Program. The Wisconsin Communications Unit Recognitions Program is a voluntary program implemented to provide guidance and minimum standards for the development of Communications Unit Positions.

Candidates applying for qualification under these guidelines must have a public safety agency sponsor. Candidates must be approved to participate by their primary or home public safety organization. Candidates who have begun the process of qualifying for a position under NWCG guidelines can continue to use those standards in parallel.



4.1. Document Terminology

The terms “shall,” “must,” “will,” and “required” are used throughout this document to indicate required parameters and to differentiate from recommended parameters. Recommendations are identified by the words “should,” “may,” “desirably,” and “preferably.”

EMAC: The Emergency Management Assistance Compact is a state-to-state mutual aid compact that allows states to share resources (personnel, equipment, commodities) with another state during Governor declared disasters.

5. Categories for Response

In an effort to provide effective communications support during emergency incidents, planned events, or exercises, Wisconsin established five categories for response:

1. **Agency:** Deployment in support of home agency only
2. **County:** Deployment in support of any agency within county of home agency
3. **Regional:** Deployment in support of any agency within the home or adjacent WEM Region
4. **Statewide:** Deployment in support of any agency within the state (must have documented agency authorization to deploy statewide)
5. **Out-of-State/EMAC:** Deployment in support of out of state incidents following an **Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)** or mutual aid request (must have documented agency authorization to deploy out-of-state)

6. Steps Required to Obtain Recognition

The steps listed below are required to obtain recognition within the State of Wisconsin for position-specific roles within the Communications Unit.

1. Candidates must meet the prerequisites to attend all-hazards position-specific Communications Unit training.
2. Candidates must successfully complete all-hazards position-specific Communications Unit training.
3. Following training, candidates must complete the applicable Position Task Book (PTB) and other requirements listed in this SOG.
4. Candidates must submit request along with all required documentation described in this SOG to the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) for review.
5. The SWIC or his designee will review the candidate’s documentation to determine eligibility for recognition in accordance with this SOG. The candidate may be asked to provide additional information or documentation if necessary.
6. If eligibility is confirmed by the office or designee, the candidate’s application packet will be submitted to the Interoperable Communications Standards Group (ICSG) for consideration and recognition.
7. Once recognition is obtained, the candidate must comply with the provisions contained in this SOG to maintain and renew the recognition status for the desired Communications Unit positions.

Each step listed above is described in further detail in the following sections of this SOG.



7. Position-Specific Communications Unit Training Prerequisites

Candidates wishing to complete all-hazards position-specific training must meet the prerequisites listed below prior to attending the desired course(s).

R = REQUIRED O = OPTIONAL, RECOMMENDED	COML	INCM	RADO	COMT	THSP	AUXCOMM	COMC
PREREQUISITE COURSES:							
IS-100	R	R	R	R	O	R	R
IS-200	R	R		R		R	
ICS-300	R			R			
ICS-400	R						
IS-700	R	R	R	R	O	R	R
IS-800	R			R		R	
PREREQUISITE DOCUMENTATION, EXPERIENCE:							
Complete and submit FEMA Form 119-25-1	R						
Obtain FEMA Student ID	R						
Public safety background with experience in field operations	R						
Awareness of public safety communications technology	R			R			
Basic knowledge of local communications systems, frequencies and spectrum, technologies, local topography, system site locations including knowledge of local, regional, and State communication plans, and contacts	R			R			
Public safety background with technical experience in field communications (radio, telephone, data, SATCOM, etc.)				R			
General Class (or higher) Amateur Radio License						R	
Documented experience in Auxiliary Emergency Communications						R	



9. Following Completion of Training

9.1. Introduction

The Wisconsin Communications Unit Recognition Program is a performance based credentialing system. In this system, the primary criterion for qualification and recognition is individual performance as verified by a qualified evaluator using approved standards. In a performance-based system, qualification is based upon demonstrated performance as measured on incidents, events, normal job activities, or during training/exercises.

As such, the criteria for Wisconsin specific qualification for regional or Communications Unit positions is based on successful completion of required training followed by observation and evaluation to confirm skill level and proficiency. The Position Task Book (PTB) serves as the instrument used to demonstrate the ability to perform the duties and responsibilities of the desired Communications Unit position.

9.2. Position Task Book (PTB)

- a. **Training:** Candidates must first successfully complete the required training course(s) prior to obtaining and initiating their PTB. The two positions that currently require the completion of a PTB are COML and COMT.
- b. **PTB Completion:** The candidate must initiate their PTB in accordance with the instructions in the PTB for the desired Communications Unit position. The PTB contains tasks designed to demonstrate proficiency and the ability to perform the roles and responsibilities required of the position PTB Tasks are completed and observed under the following circumstances:
 - i. **O:** Can be completed in any situation (simulation, classroom, daily job)
 - ii. **I:** Must be performed on an incident, planned event*, or full scale exercise *
*Must be preapproved by the SWIC.

Candidates may not initiate their PTB until they have successfully completed training. Once the PTB is initiated, the candidate has a time frame of 3 years to complete and submit their PTB and supporting documentation. All task must have occurred on or after the date the PTB is initiated.

Successful completion of all required tasks of the position, as determined by qualified evaluators, will be the basis for the candidate's application. Qualified evaluators include:

- A recognized COML may observe, evaluate and sign for PTB tasks for COML or COMT trainees.
- In lieu of a COML a Recognized COMT may observe, evaluate and sign for PTB tasks for COMT trainees.



The PTB contains space to list four (4) qualified evaluators. If more than four evaluators observe tasks completed by the candidate, additional evaluator pages may be added to the PTB. Each qualified evaluator listed in the candidate's PTB must fully complete their Evaluator section, to include their recommendations.

The PTB is considered complete when:

- All tasks have been observed and signed off by a qualified evaluator.
- The person responsible for administratively reviewing the PTB has completed the final evaluator section
- The ICSG Chair signs the "Agency Head Recommendation for Certification" section confirming the candidate is being recognized.

10. Request for Recognition

- Application Process:** Prior to requesting recognition, candidates are responsible for ensuring they have completed the necessary requirements and have all appropriate documentation. Eligible candidates desiring recognition must submit the following documents to the SWIC's Office. A separate application package is required for each Communications Unit position.
 - i. Certificate(s) which confirms completion of all-hazards position-specific training
 - ii. Fully completed PTB with all required signatures, and recommendations that the candidate has successfully performed all tasks for the position and should be considered for recognition
 - iii. Written letter of acknowledgement/endorsement from their agency head or agency command-level representative
- Candidate Application Review:** The SWIC's Office is the initial recipient of the candidate's application package. The SWIC's Office provides administrative support to the ICSG in performing a QA review of the candidate's documentation, training records, PTB, qualifications, and other information to ensure the application package is complete and in compliance with this SOG, and to confirm the candidate is eligible for recognition before forwarding to the ICSG. The SWIC may ask the candidate to provide additional information or documentation if necessary.

Following confirmation that the candidate's application package is complete, and the candidate meets the eligibility requirements, the SWIC's Office will forward it to the ICSG. The SWIC's office does not include a recommendation when submitting the candidate's completed application package to the ICSG.

11. Review and Approval Process

- Candidate Review:** The ICSG will review the candidate's application package to consider approval for recognition in the desired Communications Unit position. They may also request an in-person interview with the candidate to obtain



additional details. The candidate will be given one of the following dispositions from the ICSG:

- i. **Approved:** Candidate is approved for recognition for the requested Communications Unit position.
 - ii. **Disapproved:** The candidate's application package requesting recognition is not approved. The candidate will be informed of the reason for disapproval, and if applicable, a list of actions necessary if the candidate wishes to be reconsidered at a future date.
 - iii. **Additional Information Required:** The candidate must provide the ICSG with additional documentation or information as specified in correspondence. The candidate will be given a timeframe within which the requested information or documentation must be provided. If the candidate fails to provide the requested information, the application package will be disapproved.
- b. Documentation/Credentials:** The ICSG will complete the following actions for approved candidates:
- I. Issue a certificate reflecting recognition status for the applicable Communications Unit position.
 - II. Notify the candidate's home agency of the recognition status in the applicable Communications Unit position.
 - III. Notify Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) of the specific Communications Unit Position recognition to add the candidate to the Communications Unit resource database
 - IV. Notify the SWIC's office.

12. Recognition Renewal Process

12.1. Expiration:

Recognition status will expire 5 years from the date of issue. In order to maintain recognition, the candidate must complete the necessary renewal requirements to demonstrate a continued degree of proficiency and skill level in the applicable Communications Unit position.

12.2. Requalification Process:

Individuals must apply to renew recognition before the expiration of their current recognition by submitting:

- An Application Package (**Appendix A**).
- Written letter of acknowledgement/endorsement from their agency head or agency command-level representative.
- Failure to reapply within 180 days following the expiration of current recognition will require the candidate to complete a new PTB and submit a new application package for the desired Communications Unit position as described in Section 10 of this SOG.

12.3. Recognition Renewal Requirements: (complete one of the following)



- Participate (in desired Communications Unit position) in at least one incident or events which lasted at least one operational period and required a written ICS Form 201 or an Incident Action Plan (IAP) and ICS Form 205 Communications Plan.
- Participate (in desired Communications Unit position) in at least one full-scale exercise which required the development of an ICS Form 201 or IAP and ICS Form 205 Communications Plan for an operational period lasting longer than 6 hours.
- Complete a new PTB over the period of 5 years.

12.4. **Recognition Renewal Process**

- Complete and submit the application contained in appendix A to the SWIC.
- If you participated in an exercise or incident to meet the requirements, the candidate must complete and submit the experience record found in appendix B.
- If completing a new PTB to meet the renewal requirements, the completed PTB must be submitted with the application.
- All documentation listed above must be submitted to the SWIC's office who will review for completeness and accuracy and forward to the ICSG for consideration.

13. **Change in Status or Withdrawal of Recognition**

- a. **Change in status:** If an individual moves to a different agency, they must submit a revised recognition application with approval from the new agency head or designee within 90 days. The change of affiliation will not affect the recognition renewal date.
- b. **Withdrawal:** Recognition status may be withdrawn by the individual, the individual's agency, or by the ICSG.
 - i. If withdrawn by the individual, or the individual's agency, written notice of the withdrawal will be provided to the ICSG, WEM, and the SWIC's office.
 - ii. If recognition is withdrawn by the ICSG the individual will receive written notice copied to the individual's agency, WEM, and the SWIC's office. The individual will be provided with the reason for withdrawal, and may be required to return any issued credentials if applicable. If they are considered eligible to reapply for recognition on a future date, details will be provided.
 - iii. In all cases where an individual's recognition status is withdrawn, the SWIC will remove the individual from the Communications Unit resource database.
- c. **Reinstatement:**
 - i. Following a voluntary withdrawal, an individual requesting reinstatement within the 5 year recognition period must submit a letter of explanation accompanied by the application to the ICSG via the SWIC.



14. Administration and Record Keeping

Centralized record keeping for personnel with recognition for Communications Unit positions in Wisconsin is provided by the SWIC's office. The SWIC's office will maintain the current Wisconsin Communications Unit Resource List



15. Appendix A: Recognition Application

Initial Application Renewal / Change in Status Reinstatement

POSITION FOR WHICH YOU ARE APPLYING _____
(Note: Separate applications must be submitted for each position applied for)

NAME _____

AGENCY _____

WEM REGION _____ COUNTY _____

AGENCY ADDRESS _____

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER _____ 24 / 7 PHONE _____

CONTACT E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

APPLICANT'S RANK/TITLE _____

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE DATE

=====

I approve the applicant's participation in the Wisconsin Communications Unit Program in the following response areas.

AGENCY COUNTY REGION STATEWIDE EMAC/OUT-OF-STATE

AGENCY HEAD OR DESIGNEE SIGNATURE AND TITLE DATE

AGENCY HEAD OR DESIGNEE NAME (printed) AGENCY



17. Appendix C: Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

	Definition
AUXCOMM	Auxiliary Communications
CASM	Communications Assets Survey and Mapping Tool
COMC	Communications Coordinator
COML	Communications Unit Leader
COMT	Communications Unit Technician
DEM	Division of Emergency Management
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
EMAC	Emergency Management Assistance Compact
ESF	Emergency Support Function
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GIS	Geographic Information System
IAP	Incident Action Plan
ICC	Incident Communications Center
ICS	Incident Command System
ICSG	Interoperable Communications Standards Group
INCM	Incident Communications Center Manager
L/T IMT	Local / Tribal Incident Management Team
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NWCG	National Wildfire Coordinating Group
OEC	Office of Emergency Communications
PS Tools	Public Safety Tools
PTB	Position Task Book
QA	Quality Assurance
RADO	Radio Operator
SATCOM	Satellite Communications
SOG	Standard Operating Guidelines
SWIC	Statewide Interoperability Coordinator
TERT	Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce
THSP	Technical Specialist
WEM	Wisconsin Emergency Management
WI	Wisconsin