

FAILSOFT OVERVIEW AND PROCEDURE

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[To be incorporated into a Future North Zone EOM (203.02)]

This guideline provides procedures for Failsoft radio communications operation.

FAILSOFT OVERVIEW

When there is a significant issue with the RCS equipment, the 800 MHz looped repeaters may all become unavailable. When this happens the display on your radio will read "Failsoft" and a single high-pitched beep will be heard every 10 seconds. When this happens, all radios SHOULD automatically switch to an available conventional channel. This conventional channel will utilize a mountaintop repeater, providing reasonable mobile coverage throughout the North Zone area. However, some areas will not have 100% portable radio coverage.

NOTE: It may take up to several minutes for your radio to finally identify the correct conventional frequency pair to utilize. Other than changing your radio to be on the pre-identified Failsoft talkgroup, DO NOT change any settings on your radio (e.g. talkgroups, scan, etc.) while it is in Failsoft mode.

Radios that can associate with a working stand-alone Inteli-repeater site (such as Harmony or Cerro Roja in Escondido), may find themselves able to continue to communicate on a trunked system. However, any time they move outside of the range of that Inteli-repeater, they will re-enter the Failsoft mode. Additionally, radios associated with an Inteli-repeater will not be able to talk with those in Failsoft mode. Both North Comm and Escondido Dispatch will be monitoring both the inteli-repeater talkgroups and the conventional channels.

Once the RCS enters Failsoft, radio users are automatically grouped by their radio onto a conventional channel based on the talkgroup their channel selector knob was positioned on at the time of the failure. In order to equally distribute the radio traffic across the three Failsoft talkgroups allocated to the North Zone, the following channel assignments will be in effect during a Failsoft incident:

- A. Users in the NCM West Tactical Area (e.g. OCS, CBD, ENC, etc.) will ensure their radio is set to RHO CMD1.
- B. Users in the NCM East Tactical Area (e.g. VTA, SMC, NCF, etc.) will ensure their radio is set to RHO DSP.
- C. Users in Escondido will ensure their radio is set to an Escondido Dispatch, Command or Tactical talkgroup (e.g. ESC CMD 1, ESC DSP, etc.).

If your radio was set on an EMS (e.g. Base Hospital) talkgroup, then it will be grouped with every other EMS radio in the County onto a conventional channel. All of the Base Stations will be sharing a single frequency pair. Be prepared to utilize County EMS Radio Communications Failure protocols for the duration of the FAILSOFT incident.

The most important thing to remember in a FAILSOFT incident is DO NOT CHANGE TALKGROUPS or touch any settings on your radio (e.g. Scan) unless absolutely necessary. Whenever you change talkgroups, turn scan on or off or push the RSSI button, your radio will return to the "control channel search" mode and it will attempt to find a working

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trunked site. This could cause your radio to be unable to communicate for up to several minutes. Additionally, once it re-enters the Failsoft mode, if you had changed the channel selector knob, your radio could be on a different channel pair than the one you want, since the computer within your radio assigns conventional Failsoft channel pairs based on the talkgroup you have selected. After making the initial switch to the proper Failsoft talkgroup, leave your radio alone unless it absolutely necessary to change to a new talkgroup or conventional channel.

The Mobile Computer Terminal (MCT) system should continue to work in a Failsoft event. Units with MCT's and continue to use it to obtain dispatch information, provide status changes and receive incident information (via entries into the CAD record). However, while unit to unit messaging is functioning, North Comm is not currently able to receive text messages sent via the MCT.

In the event you are unable to contact North Comm or Escondido Dispatch on the Failsoft channel pair, you have several alternatives for contact:

1. Utilize your cell phone to contact dispatch on the emergency or business lines
2. Utilize VHF Red (155.085).
3. Switch to the Conventional Zone (CNV) and select ICALL. Make sure it is in the repeater mode (not direct) and contact San Diego County Sheriff (Station M)

Incident Commanders should consider the use of one of the conventional 800 MHz channels located in the conventional (CNV) zone on their radio for incidents requiring extensive on-scene communications. This will eliminate the problems associated with radios accidentally being knocked out of Failsoft mode by channel or scan changes and dropping off of the incident frequency. Frequencies available include:

ITAC 1, ITAC 2, ITAC 3 and ITAC 4
FIREMARS (not FIREMARS 2)
CARS1-4 (last resort since these are used daily as car-to-car channels)

If the RCS system is rendered useless, the VHF Fire Radio system remains an alternative. Use the following channels (listed in order of priority) to contact your Communications Center:

RED 155.085 MHz
WHITE 1 154.285 MHz
RED 2 154.175 MHz (this channel is repeated)

For tactical use, these VHF tactical channels are available:

WHITE 2 154.265
WHITE 3 154.295
YELLOW 153.890
GRAY 154.355
GOLD 154.435

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FAILSOFT Procedure

- When Failsoft occurs:
 - The word “Failsoft” will alternate with your Talkgroup name in the display of your radio
 - Your radio will “beep” every 10 seconds
 - Your radio will search for a radio site still in wide area Trunking to affiliate with. If your radio is unable to affiliate with one, it will switch to a Failsoft Channel Assignment. You will need to make sure your radios are assigned to the proper talkgroup:
 - A. Users in the West Tactical Area (e.g. OCS, CBD, ENC, etc.) set their radios to RHOCMD1.
 - B. Users in the East Tactical Area (e.g. VTA, SMC, NCF, etc.) set their radios to either RHO DISP.
 - C. Users in Escondido will ensure their radio is set to an Escondido Dispatch, Command or Tactical talkgroup (e.g. ESC CMD 1, ESC DSP, etc.).
- What happens to your communications capabilities?:
 - Trunking and Scanning stop
 - Your ability to communicate with other users and dispatch may be diminished
 - Transmissions are repeated by a mountaintop repeater, but do not have the coverage our normal trunked system provides. Portable radios may not reach North Comm.
 - The “Emergency” button on radios *will not operate!*
 - Radio Aliases (e.g. the name of the radio) will not display in the Dispatch Center. The dispatcher cannot “see” who is transmitting.
- DONT's for Field Users:
 - Other than the initial talkgroup switch to ensure you are on the proper Failsoft channel, avoid switching Talkgroups unless directed to do so by Dispatch or the IC. Switching talkgroups causes the radio to begin the process of searching for a radio site in wide area Trunking. You cannot use the radio to communicate while it's in search mode. It may take several minutes to exit the search mode.
 - Do not move the scan toggle switch. Doing so also causes the radio to begin the search process again. Remember, scanning is disabled when you are in Failsoft mode.
- DO's for Field Users:
 - Ensure your radios are on the proper talkgroup for your assigned area (ESC, East or West).
 - Review with your crew the possible actions you may need to take (e.g. cell phone, EMS Communications Failure Protocols, Conventional Channels for large incidents, etc.)
 - Monitor your radio for information or a return to normal radio operation.
 - Exercise communications discipline. Keep radio traffic to a minimum.
 - Use your MCT for status changes and for sending messages to other field units.

• Last Ditch Communications

In the event you are unable to contact Dispatch on the Failsoft channel pair, you have several alternatives for contact:

- Utilize your cell phone to contact Dispatch on the emergency or business lines
- Utilize VHF Red (155.085).

Switch to the Conventional Zone (CNV) and select ICALL. Make sure it is in the repeater mode (not direct) and contact San Diego County Sheriff (Station M)