

# COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURES

[POINTERS](#)   [EMERGENCIES](#)   [BLACK FLAGS](#)   [RADIO vs LAND LINE](#)   [DISCLAIMER](#)

A lot of folk new to flagging are intimidated when it is their turn to be the Communicator. This is NORMAL, most people have not had the opportunity to use a "two-way" system. Get over it! If you feel uncomfortable when on the radio, let your Captain know!!! They won't let you out of doing it, but will work closely with you until your fears are gone, "leading" you through the calls. As a novice, the first call to Control your Captain should have you make is "Control...novice on the phones". This alerts Control to EXPECT calls from your station to not be perfect at first and that they have to be gentle with you. This "novice call" should not be in any way taken as being demeaning, it is just good for Control to know that they will be communicating with an inexperienced communicator at this particular Station. As the day goes on, and you rotate in/out of the Communicator's position, your Captain will decide whether or not you have to continue with the "novice on the phones" call.

The responsibility of the Corner Station Communicator is twofold:

1. Transmit information from the corner station to Control
2. Receive information from Control and advise Captain.

Who the heck is "Control", anyway? "Control" is located in Race Control. At a minimum, Race Control consists of Stewards, a Control communicator, and Recorder. An Operating Steward will be "in the chair" (in charge of), each session. They will have a backup Steward with them and together monitor the station calls and decide on how to handle situations on/off the track. The voice of Control (the Control communicator), receives calls from the various stations, EV, and other folk on the race radio network and insures that the Operating Steward understands the calls/situations. The Operating Steward will advise the Control communicator of what is to be communicated back to the Station(s), how they wish "things" to be done, when "things" are to be done, etc. All of the communications back and forth between Control and the Stations are recorded. The Recorder has the awesome responsibility of recording each communication in black and white in the "log" (a written history). The "log" is used to indicate incidents, track conditions, where pickups and their types are needed, etc. as communicated over the race network. The Recorder REALLY appreciates SIMPLE, CONSISE and ACCURATE calls from the stations.

To transmit to Control, first let them know YOU have something to say to them..."Control, this is Station 3", is a good beginning. By using this format, you inform Control that you wish to speak with them and who you are. Actually you are asking permission of Control to be acknowledged by Control. Control will reply with something like "Go ahead Station 3". You would then reply "Control, this is Station 3, we had car number four six spin off driver's left, just upstream of Station 4 and he has continued". Control will thank you and/or ask for additional information. Simple...huh, well it should be.

Simple. Calls SHOULD be KEPT simple to AND from Control. SPEAK SLOWLY. Gather the facts of what you wish to say in your head BEFORE you make the call. Make written notes to yourself (each Corner station should have a notepad).

## COMMUNICATIONS POINTERS:

ALWAYS describe car numbers in words ("...car number four six"), not in numeric format.

ALWAYS describe Station numbers in numeric format ("...Station 11"), not in words.

Avoid "run-on" or "blow by blow" communications, make the fewest number of calls to describe an incident.

DO:

- "Control, this is Station 3, we had car number four six spin off driver's left, just upstream of Station 4, he has continued and we are clear"

DON'T:

- "Control, this is Station 3, we have car number four six spinning"
- "Control, this is Station 3, he is going off"
- "Control, this is Station 3, he is on driver's left"
- "Control, this is Station 3 he is just upstream of Station 4"
- "Control, this is Station 3, car number four six has continued".
- "Control, this is Station 3, we are clear".

Be brief but descriptive, using "standard" descriptions (slid off, drove off, spun off, etc...), advise if car has proceeded or what it will require at sessions end. "Standard" phrases aid Recorders in their note taking.

In the case of an incident where a car will not continue, advise Control of the driver's condition and location (OK, still in the car, out and over the wall, on Station, etc.).

Unless it is an EMERGENCY...refrain from radio usage on Pace and First race lap. Take notes on mundane incidents and call in after first lap is completed.

Radio SILENCE during Black Flag Procedures (Control should announce when Driver has acknowledged, pitted or Black Flag Procedure is over)

If a backup flag is needed from an upstream station, request the flag from the station directly, not thru Control ("Backup waving yellow at four, please"). Don't waste time trying to see if upstream station has put out a flag, ASK FOR IT. Communicator on the station being asked to display a backup flag should, first, insure flag is displayed, then, confirm to Control that the flag is displayed ("four confirms waving yellow"). Once the need for an upstream back-up flag has past, advise the upstream Station that they may drop their flag.

If you have multiple calls...(numerous, unrelated spins), advise Control you have multiple calls, wait for Control to ask you to continue, or "Hold". When cleared to make call, pause between each individual call for Control to ask you to continue (this temporarily opens the net for any urgent call to be made). Advise Control you are making the last call of any multiple call.

If the CAPTAIN determines an incident may require race stoppage, the Station Communicator should advise Control of the situation, giving details (circumstances, track blockage, etc...), and state "The Captain advises, the race be stopped". This gives the Operating Steward the information necessary to decide on the course of action to take.

### **EMERGENCY CALLS:**

If your CAPTAIN indicates an Emergency call is required, the Station Communicator should key in saying "EMERGENCY, EMERGENCY This is Station X, we have an EMERGENCY!". Control will respond by asking all other Stations for radio silence, explaining there is an emergency at Station X. Control will then ask Station X what their situation is and if there are any emergency vehicles required immediately.

### **BLACK FLAGS and/or MEATBALLS:**

Black Flags or Meatballs, to be shown at Start/Finish and the "Black Flag" Station, will have the cars "called by" by upstream Stations. Control will announce which Stations are to call the car by.

Black Flags or Meatballs, MAY be shown at Start/Finish ONLY. Cars will be "called by" by Stations upstream of Start/Finish only.

When "calling a certain car by", give the car's number, color and it's position in the pack. "Green car number one two by Station 11 now, third in a pack of 5".

### **FM RADIO versus LAND LINE COMMUNICATIONS:**

Tracks that use FM Radios for communications are more the norm than those that use a Land Line system. FM Radios are battery powered radios that operate on a set frequency and allow only ONE COMMUNICATION AT A TIME. This means that when the microphone button is pushed, the button pusher has the ENTIRE frequency "tied up", and ONLY THEY can communicate. For this reason, calls MUST BE KEPT SHORT and the NUMBER OF CALLS KEPT TO A MINIMUM. When you need to made a call, insure that no one else is talking or that you would be interrupting a "back and forth" conversation between another Station and Control. The exception to this is if the need to call an Emergency from your Station arises, while someone else is transmitting. In this case (unless the call in progress is also an Emergency call), key the mike and make your Emergency call... "EMERGENCY, EMERGENCY this is Station X, we have an emergency!", un-keying the mike after the call. Do this until Control has confirmed hearing your Emergency call. The stations nearest you will be able to hear your Emergency call over a Station transmitting further from them. Be courteous on an FM radio net, all calls will probably be monitored by people other than "Race Officials". Do not speculate or judge on air. Provide Control with the information they ask of you, in a factual, objective manner.

Land Lines are found at permanent racing facilities. The Station Communicator is tethered to a junction box where the headset is plugged into. Generally follow the same procedures you would, as if you were using FM radios. The big difference is that more than one person can talk, and be heard, at the same on a Land Line. While this means you don't have to wait until someone else quits talking to talk yourself, you should wait until the net is clear to make your communication. Being able to "talk over" (or yell over), someone else is advantageous when you have an Emergency call to make...just do it!

### **DISCLAIMER:**

I have tried to touch on the BASICS of communications here, without getting into "local" rules of communication. There are procedures specific to sanctioning bodies, race Regions, race tracks, Divisions, Stewards, Flag Chiefs, etc. For example, you may be required to give a car's color and/or your Station's flag condition with every call you make...you may be allowed to say certain words on the net...not be able to say certain colors...you may even be required to identify an emergency vehicle with "Tiltbed" on it's door as a rollback! As a novice or someone new to the track you're working, don't forget to ask your Captain if there are any "local" communications rules.

---

A rainy, cold, windy loong day trackside is still better than a day at work.

Thank you and have a fun time at the track...[Mo](#)

\*