



**Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System (ISICS)  
Standards, Protocols, Procedures**

Standard Name:	<b>Statewide Interoperable Plain Language Policy</b>		Date Created:	<b>03-27-2018</b>	
Standard Policy #	<b>1.3.0</b>	Section Title:	<b>Interoperability Standards</b>	Status	<b>Approved</b>
Approval Authority:	<b>ISICSB</b>		Adopted:	<b>04/12/2018</b>	Reviewed: <b>08/08/2019</b>

**1. Purpose or Objective**

Plain Language (clear speech) Compatibility:

The ability of emergency response personnel from different disciplines, jurisdictions, organizations, and agencies to work together depends greatly on their ability to communicate with each other. The use of plain language is about the ability of emergency response personnel to communicate clearly with one another and effectively coordinate activities, no matter the size, scope, location, or complexity of the incident.

The use of plain language (clear speech) in emergency management and incident response is a matter of public safety, especially the safety of emergency response personnel and those affected by the incident. It is critical that all those involved with an incident know and utilize commonly established operational structures, terminology, policies, and procedures. This will facilitate the achievement of interoperability across agencies / organizations, jurisdictions, and disciplines, which is exactly what the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS) is seeking to achieve.

**2. Technical Background**

**Capabilities**

Integrated Communications

Incident communications are facilitated through the development and use of a common communications plan and interoperable communications processes and architectures. The ICS 205 Form is available to assist in developing a common communications plan. This integrated approach links operational and support units of agencies involved and is necessary to maintain communications and enable common situational awareness / interaction. Preparedness planning

should address the equipment, systems, and protocols necessary to achieve integrated voice and data incident management communications.

### **Constraints**

N/A

### **3. Operational Context**

Any communications between organizational elements during an incident should be in plain language in order to ensure that information dissemination is timely, clear, acknowledged, and understood by all intended recipients. Codes should not be used, and all communications should be confined to essential messages. The use of acronyms should be avoided during incidents requiring the participation of multiple agencies or organizations. Policies and procedures that foster compatibility should be defined to allow information sharing among all emergency response personnel and their affiliated organizations to the greatest extent possible.

#### Encryption or Tactical Language

When necessary, emergency response personnel and their affiliated organizations need to have a methodology and systems in place to encrypt information so that security can be maintained. Although plain language may be appropriate during response to most incidents, tactical language is occasionally warranted due to the nature of the incident (e.g., high-risk incident, such as active shooter.) The use of specialized encryption and tactical language should be incorporated into any comprehensive incident action plan (IAP) or incident management communications plan (IMCP).

### **4. Standardized Policy**

The use of plain language is about the ability of area commanders, state and local Emergency Operations Center (EOC) personnel, federal operational coordinators, and responders to communicate clearly with each other and effectively coordinate response activities, no matter what the size, scope, or complexity of the incident. The ability of responders from different jurisdictions and disciplines to work together depends greatly on their ability to communicate with each other.

It is required that plain language be used for multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional, and multi-discipline events, such as major disasters and exercises. Beginning in the fiscal year that starts on Oct. 1, 2006, federal preparedness grant funding is contingent on the use of plain language in incidents requiring assistance from responders from other agencies, jurisdictions, and functional disciplines.

#### Primary Intended Use

Multi-agency or multi-jurisdictional emergency response or exercise.

#### Best Practices Encouraged

The use of plain language in emergency response is a matter of public safety, especially the safety of first responders and those affected by the incident. It is critical that all responders, including

those from other jurisdictions or states, as well as the federal government, know and utilize commonly operational structures, terminology, policies, and procedures.

#### Incident Scope and Geographic Area

Regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups are available for use everywhere the ISICS platform provides geographic coverage, regardless of incident size or scale. Interoperability incidents may be localized or dispersed in area. Participating personnel and resources may be local, regional, statewide, or national. Incidents may be pre-planned or emergent in nature.

### **5. Standardized Procedure**

While the NIMS Integration Center does not require plain language for internal operations, it is strongly encouraged. It is important to practice every day terminology and procedures that will need to be used in emergency incidents and disasters. NIMS implementation is a long-term effort. Though it is not practical to expect a change of ingrained habits overnight, it is expected that over time, everyone will understand the importance of using plain language for day-to-day operations.

#### Unit Identification

When operating on the regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups, users should initially identify in the following manner using plain language: Agency being contacted, personnel agency name and service branch or function designation, followed by call sign or unit number and talkgroup. Examples: “Cedar Rapids State Radio, from North EMS 512 on R1 CALL11”, “Dallas County, from Elk River Police 512 on IA CALL1,” “Johnson County, from Washington County Public Works 512 on R6 CALL1,” “ISP 512, from 63-4 on R5 CALL51,” etc. Once established, ongoing communications between the same units may be shortened.

#### Use of 10-Codes and Acronyms

The use of 10-codes, signals, unique acronyms, and other codes should not be used on the regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups because there is no standardized set of codes. Plain language should be used in all cases.

### **6. Management**

N/A