

LWC Internal Communications System Protocol

(As of August 2023)

This document outlines the basic operations and protocol for communications **within** Little Whale Cove (LWC). The backbone of the LWC **Internal** Communications System (ICS) consists of handheld radios (or *walkie-talkies*). The protocol does **not** preclude the use of voice or text communications via cellular phones, communications via landline-based phones, or the Internet (email, Voice-Over-Internet Protocol or VOIP, etc.); however, these systems are vulnerable and their coverage is uneven or nonexistent in certain areas of LWC. On the other hand, handheld radios provide reliable short-range communications even during extreme events when other communication systems are inoperable.

The handheld radios use frequencies assigned by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to the Family Radio Service (FRS) and General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS) channels – specifically Channel 7. These handheld radios form the basic elements of the LWC ICS (hereinafter referred to as simply the ICS), and provide for communications between Safety Committee officers and members, Safety Area Captains, Board members, management and staff, and community residents during certain events or emergencies. All handheld radios must be operated within the power limits specified by FCC guidelines for Channel 7 (i.e., FRS – 2.0 watts or GMRS License – 5.0 watts).

Please note: This protocol in **no** way supercedes nor replaces the existing LWC communication protocol based on Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Incident Command Management System (ICMS) protocol between **LWC Net Control**, the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office Auxiliary Communication Service (LCSO ACS), Depoe Bay Emergency Operations Center (EOC), or other involved entities. Rather, this ICS protocol is designed to cover those times when LWC Net Control (and designated alternate) are **not** available **or** when an event does **not** activate the overarching communication network. These events may include, but are not limited to – interruption of utilities (electric, gas, water, etc.); dense smoke; extreme weather events; and other events that disrupt normal routines.

This *Protocol* is designed to answer the following key questions:

1. Under what conditions and when is it appropriate to activate the ICS?
2. Who should activate and control the ICS and what are the proper procedures for communicating via the radios?
3. Who will be responsible for collecting information for dissemination via the ICS?
4. How and when should communications be passed from the ICS to the LWC Net Control (if available and activated)?
5. How should Area Captains be polled and how often during an event should the Area Captains be re-polled?
6. When polled, what information should Area Captains provide?
7. How do we cover Safety Areas that either do not have Area Captains or the Area Captain is unavailable?
8. Who should record the information provided by Area Captains and in what format?
9. Who should create a summary report for each activation of the ICS and what should the summary include? In what format? To whom should it be distributed?

1.0 Time and Conditions for ICS Activation

The ICS will be activated at the discretion of one or more Area Captains based on FEMA Alerts, LCSO Alerts, information from other sources, their own observations, or the observations and concerns of residents. These events could include a power or other utility outage involving more than one home (or in the case of fire or a gas leak – the potential to involve more than one home), unexplained dense smoke in the neighborhood, an armed person walking through the neighborhood, etc. These events may be considered “non-emergencies” by agencies; nevertheless, they may interfere with normal routines and they may be a true emergency for a group of people within LWC (e.g., those individuals that rely on electricity to run a oxygen concentrator or a CPAP [Continuous Positive Airway Pressure] machine). LWC, as a community, has the discretion to establish a communications network even if agencies have not declared an emergency.

2.0 Activating the ICS

As stated above, the ICS may be activated by any Area Captain or their designated alternate. Provided cellular and Internet service are working, a group cellular text and email notification of the LWC ICS activation may be sent out by the Area Captain to their respective LWC Safety Area residents and other Area Captains. If cellular and Internet services are down, the Area Captain will send out a radio message via FRS/GMRS Channel 7 (462.7125 MHz) as soon as possible and then commence regular radio transmissions every hour on the hour. If the event is determined to possibly affect all of LWC, one Area Captain will be selected to control the ICS and will be identified as **“ICS Control”**. (Note: **ICS Control** should not be confused with LWC Net Control, who is typically a ham radio operator and is in contact with entities external to LWC. ICS Control will be responsible for ICS radio traffic, compiling necessary (and accurate or reliable) information, and sending out this information and instructions to other Area Captains for dissemination throughout their respective Safety Areas.

ICS Radio Procedures

- **ICS Control**
 - Activates the ICS (refer to sample script)

Sample Script: “This is (*Safety Captain’s name, Safety Area, and GMRS call sign*) activating the LWC Internal Communications System or ICS. I will be acting as ICS Control until further notice. I will be transmitting every hour, on the hour to transmit any information. Please leave your radios on or turn them on 5 minutes before the hour.”

- Conducts poll of participants (script)

Sample Script: “This poll is for Safety Captains, LWC management and staff, LWC Board members, and community residents. Participants polled should respond with name, GMRS call sign (if appropriate), location, readability of radio signal, Area status (Green, Yellow, or Red), and any other pertinent information. This poll will use FRS/GMRS Channel 7 (frequency 462.7125 MHz).”

- Coordinates communication so that only one participant is talking at a time
- Poll each Safety Area Captain (or alternate), if no response, repeat, if still no response, ask for anyone else listening in that specific Safety Area. ICS Control **must** move slowly to provide sufficient time for a response
- Records participants and communications on *Event Log* (Appendix A) specifically identifying “communication holes”, i.e., those Safety Areas where there was no response
- Compiles and relays information updates to participants
- Establishes scheduled time for re-polling of participants
- Closes the ICS Poll (refer to sample script)

Sample Script: “This concludes the LWC ICS poll.” (*If appropriate*): “The LWC ICS is scheduled to be reactivated at (*next schedule polling time*).”

“This is (*Safety Captain’s name and GMRS call sign*) ICS Control **pausing** the ICS. Please keep FRS/GMRS Channel 7 clear for future polls and event-based radio traffic. ICS Control OUT. Channel clear.”

- Compiles Event Summary Report
- **Participants**
 - **Listen** (first and foremost)
 - Wait to be polled by ICS Control before transmitting

- Maintain transmit power in compliance with FCC regulations (FRS – 2.0 watts or GMRS License – 5.0 watts)
- Respond when polled
 - Depress the PTT (push-to-talk) button on the radio
 - Speak slowly and clearly
 - Identify self – name, call sign (if you have a GMRS license), location (Safety Area)
 - How well you hear ICS Control (“loud & clear”, “weak but readable”, “distorted or static only (not readable)”, etc.)
 - Area status (**Green** – no identified injuries or damage; **Yellow** – less serious injuries or damage but need further evaluation; and **Red** – serious injury or damage – requesting assistance). Other pertinent information.
 - Communicate message slowly and clearly
 - Keep transmissions brief
 - Give control back to ICS Control (“Over”)
 - **Stop pressing PTT button** (or no one else can talk)
- Do not try to transmit while another participant is transmitting
- Relay any communications heard from participants that ICS Control cannot hear using the procedures described above

3.0 Critical Information Collection and Dissemination

ICS Control may designate or ask for a volunteer to collect critical information such as the nature and extent of the event, the projected duration of the event, the entities involved, suggested actions, etc. This information will be obtained via cellular and/or Internet queries (if available), monitoring NWS (National Weather Service) and ham radio transmissions, and personal observations. This information will be passed on via 2-way radio to ICS Control who will compile (if from multiple people) and pass the most relevant information to the Area Captains who, in turn, will transmit this information to residents. For those residents without radios, ICS Control will ask someone to place a notice (handwritten or printed) in the safety kiosks and periodically update it if it is safe to do so. The key for the LWC kiosk is in the SOC (Safety Operations Center) lockbox and the Innisfree kiosk is not locked. Although the kiosks are available, it may be difficult or unsafe to place notices in the kiosks in a timely manner. **All residents are encouraged to purchase an FRS (Family Radio Service) radio that runs on disposable batteries and a supply of disposable**

batteries. Turning on these radios and tuning to Channel 7 will facilitate information dissemination and reduce the need for residents to go to the kiosks either to post or read notices particularly during those times when sheltering in-place is recommended. Universal use of radios will also reduce the need to go door-to-door to inform residents and conduct welfare checks.

4.0 Passing ICS Control to LWC Net Control

If Net Control or their designate elects to take over LWC radio communications or the Incident Command Management System is activated, ICS Control will pass the responsibility on to LWC Net Control and all Area Captains will report to Net Control. If Net Control is communicating with other entities and is unable to issue the hourly report, the original ICS Control will transmit any information (including the message that there is no new information) on the hour until such time that Net Control can resume hourly updates.

5.0 Polling Area Captains and Polling Frequency

The ICS Control Area Captain will conduct a poll of all Area Captains, their alternates, and/or residents within the Safety Area on the hour using FRS/GMRS Channel 7. The polling frequency can be changed to greater than hourly if the situation is not particularly fluid or conditions are relatively stable. ICS Control will determine the optimum polling timer interval; however, the reporting interval should be flexible and must be announced by ICS Control and updated as necessary.

6.0 Information Provided during Polls

Area Captains will provide their GMRS call sign (if they have a GMRS license), name, Safety Area #, signal reception (loud & clear, weak but readable, distorted or static only (not readable)), brief description of status (**Green** – no identified injuries or damage; **Yellow** – less serious injuries or damage but need further evaluation; and **Red** – serious injury or damage –

requesting assistance), and any other relevant information (e.g., downed trees, flooded culverts, etc.).

7.0 Safety Areas without Captains or Alternates

If a Safety Area does not have a Captain or alternate, an adjacent Area Captain may volunteer to report for another area but only if it is safe or they are receiving radio input from residents of the adjacent Safety Area.

8.0 Recording and Format of Polling Information

ICS Control or their designate, will record the above information on **paper** *Event Logs* which will be stored in a notebook that will be stored in the LWC Gatehouse once the *Event Summary Report* has been completed (see 9.0 below). Each Safety Area Captain is advised to keep a few paper copies of *Event Logs* on hand for those times when there is no electrical power. If there is power and the ICS Control so decides, the *Event Logs* can be completed electronically. This is also true for drills and exercises thereby reducing the amount of paper required.

9.0 Event Summary Report

ICS Control or their designate will compile the information on the *Event Logs*; tabulate information where appropriate; and write a narrative of events and actions and suggestions for future events. This report will be distributed electronically to the Safety Committee and a printed copy of the *Event Summary Report* (along with the *Event Logs*) will be placed in a notebook and stored in the LWC Gatehouse. An example of an *Event Summary Report* prepared for the Labor Day 2020 Storm and Echo Mountain Complex Fire is provided in Appendix B to this protocol.

Information and Suggestions for Consideration

- **Area Captains are not first responders.** Their job is to collect and disseminate information to Area residents, ideally via 2-way radios,

thereby obviating the need for them to conduct door-to-door visits which may be unsafe.

- A note about communications on the hour. Everyone is encouraged to turn on their radios at least 5 minutes before the time given that everyone may not have the accurate time. Admittedly, this will deplete batteries a little faster but we need to make sure everyone hears the transmissions.
- The Safety Committee strongly recommends that **every** resident purchase an inexpensive, preprogrammed FRS (Family Radio Service) radio (tuned to Channel 7) that runs on disposable batteries and a stock of disposable batteries. This will enable them to obtain updated information without putting themselves and Area Captains in jeopardy resulting from the need to leave the shelter of a home.
- The Safety Committee urges all Area Captains to obtain a GMRS license from the FCC. This license does not require a test, costs \$35, and the license is good for 10 years. This license will then allow a licensee to transmit on Channel 7 at 5 watts which is more than twice the power allowed without a license (i.e., only 2.0 watts).
- Consider purchasing an FCC GMRS-certified radio (sometimes referred to as a “Part 95E”^{*} certified radio. It is legal to transmit via GMRS with these radios. Inexpensive GMRS-certified radios currently cost <\$40. Be advised, however, that most of these radios use rechargeable batteries, i.e., they cannot accept disposable batteries. One or more spare, rechargeable batteries will extend the operating time of these radios provided the spare batteries are kept fully charged. Alternatively, rechargeable batteries can be charged by a generator, a power pack, a car, solar panel, and even hand-crank generators. You must ensure you have the proper cables for connecting your radio to these energy sources.
- Related to the issue of local power generation and particularly relevant to situations requiring evacuation – it is a good idea to ensure that your vehicle fuel tank (or battery) is at least half full.
- If the phones (cellular or wired) are operating, it might be possible to establish a phone tree to disseminate information. Remember, however, that some residents receive their “phone” calls via the

Internet so it too would need to be working to activate this tree to those residents.

- In addition to serving as a repository for *Event Logs* and *Event Summary Reports*, the LWC Gate House and staff support will primarily be post-event; however, some onsite staff may be actively involved during an event **but only if it is safe for them to do so.**
- * **C**ode of **F**ederal **R**egulations – *Title 47 CFR Part 95, Subpart E – General Mobile Radio Service*

Appendix A
LWC ICS Event Log

LWC Internal Communications System (ICS) Event Log

Date:		Channel:	FRS/GMRS 7
Time:		Frequency:	462.7125 MHz
Event:		SubNet CONTROL:	

Area	Safety Captain / Alternate	Readability (LC,W,D,N)*	Area Status (G,Y,R)**	Area Report Details
1	Cheryl Meece WRMH923 Ron Pierre			
2	Dave Folz			
3	Jana Begor Steve Hornung			
4	WRWJ624 Paul Caldron			
5	Jim & Mary Ann Kemmer Molly Dumas			
6	Judy Maguire			
7	WRVV415 Randy Kollars (Temp)			
8	WRVV415 Randy Kollars Pat Neal Dan Arnold			
9	Rheama & Russell Koonce John Penrod			
10	Rheama & Russell Koonce (Temp)			
11	John Bingham			
12	Gary Perdue WRMV879 Bill Albright (Temp)			
13	WRMV879 Bill Albright Randy Wikoff WQXM262 Mike Tomlinson			
14	Edmund Clark			
15	Mike Ramos			
LWC HOA Board				
Chair	Suzanne Buller			
	Michael Seibold			
SC Liaison	WRWJ624 Paul Caldron			
	Greg Steinke			
	Edmund Clark			
LWC Management & Staff				
Comm Mgr	Dena			
Maint	Scott			
Maint	Yves			
Other Safety Comm Members				
Chair	Rici Peterson			
Red Cross	Mike Johnson			
Other LWC Residents				

* LC= Readable Loud & Clear W = Weak but Readable D = Distorted or Static (Not Readable) N = No Response heard
 ** G = No identified injuries or damage Y = injuries or damage need further evaluation R = Serious injury or damage

Other Radio Resources NOT Included in LWC ICS Radio Poll				
LWC Licensed HAM Radio Operators				
	KI7LNK Ron Pierre			
	KK7JCO Paul Caldron			
	KI7ZCK Bill Albright			
	KI7EHD Paul Banas			
	WI70 Will Hobbs			
Depoe Bay EOC Net 146.530				
	W7ALX Michael Dane			

Appendix B
Sample *Event Summary Report*

The LWC Safety Committee met on 9/22/20 to debrief on the Labor Day Week storms and wildfires incident, and to make recommendations for improved response to future incidents that necessitate activating the LWC incident command. We appreciate the input we've received from the community, and the support of Safety Committee volunteers who responded. As noted on the [Emergency Plan](#), the mission of the Safety Committee is to help residents prepare for, and respond to emergencies, and to care for one another when disaster strikes. No drill can replicate real life emergencies, so this was quite the test of our team and Emergency Plan. We were fortunate that the wildfire was not imminent nor the situation life-threatening. Lessons learned were not insurmountable but invaluable. We were able to see what worked in our Emergency Plan, and what protocols we need to change to respond more effectively.

The following information reflects the challenges LWC faced from the windstorm, utility outages and wildfires Sept. 8-11 as well as the recommended changes in emergency response.

CHALLENGES:

- **Lincoln County Emergency Alerts** - These are frequent, and monitored by the Safety Committee. However, the county emergency management is not staffed 24hrs. The weather advisory we received early Sept. 7 forecast winds from the east. Alerts on the wildfires, road closures and evacuation levels were not immediately accessible.
- **No Utilities** - On Sept. 8, all electrical power, cell phone service and landline phones were out. That meant the internet, email, and Call-em-All were not available to update LWC residents.
- **Situation Assessment** - Downed and falling trees were a danger, and smoke was at hazardous levels. We advised ALL area captains to remain indoors, and to contact residents when it was safe to do so. LWC staff were delayed in arriving to do damage assessment due to HWY 101 closure from fallen trees. We cannot rely on LWC staff to fix every concern, so we need to have a plan for assessing problems when they are not here.
- **Communications** - We monitored HAM radio transmissions to obtain information about conditions outside of LWC, and began relaying this information to area captains mid-morning. We found that not all areas were able to hear or provide reports on the hand-held radios - especially in low-lying areas. We know now that we should have immediately activated one function of the incident command system LWC has adopted, and that is the public information component.
- **Lack of Area Coverage by Safety Captains** - There are ___ homes on ___ acres in LWC, divided into 14 areas for Safety Captains to cover. Only 10 of those areas have volunteers willing to serve as captains, and several are part-time residents. That left considerable gaps in our ability to reach all areas of the community.
- **Evacuation Notices** - Determining where the wildfires were, and when we might have to evacuate were not immediately evident. Evacuation notifications are determined by city and county emergency management. The Echo Wildfire advanced rapidly, but we were able to track the county evac levels. While Depoe Bay never advanced to Level 1 evacuation measures, Hwy 101's closure, and the limited egress (only one way through the main gate) pose a considerable threat to our ability to evacuate ___ households quickly.
- **Evacuation Egress** - There is only one way out of LWC, and there are too few keys to open the back gate. Further, there are no protocols for evacuation out the back gate, or to other safe locations if the roads are impassable.

CHANGES TO BE MADE

- The Board and Safety Committee chairs will be more proactive in putting the whole committee on standby when the potential for an emergency response is evident.

- The Incident Command System we adopted from FEMA is a highly effective model. We will amend our Emergency Plan to more closely reflect that structure and the functions needed for any situation.
- The Public Information function (PIO) will be activated immediately when Incident Command is activated. The PIO will ensure timely alerts and periodic updates are sent by whatever means possible. When no power affords email or phone contact, information will be posted on the bulletin board outside the Rec Center.
- The Safety Committee will identify and recruit a team of residents with EMS experience to activate immediately for assessment, reducing the time to analyze damage and danger, and providing crucial information for area captains to disseminate.
- HAM Radio operators will start hourly call-downs with area captains at 8am
- More Safety Captains, and alternates are needed to cover all areas. Further training is needed for information distribution and radio protocols.
- Plans are in the works to improve the back gate easement and widening accessibility for firetrucks and ambulances into LWC, as well as rapid evacuation of the northwest area of LWC.
- Homeowner emergency preparedness is your responsibility and vital to our having a safe community.

The Safety Committee can create plans, print quick emergency guides for you to post on your refrigerator, offer workshops, and even program personal radios at the right frequency so you can hear what we hear. Safety Committee volunteers are not emergency responders, and should not be expected to safeguard residents. The committee makes an effort to educate and encourage homeowners to be more aware of potential hazards in our forest and coastal environment, and be prepared for any kind of emergency from evacuating at a moments notice to sheltering-in-place for at least 72hrs. But it is the onus of the homeowner to read what is made available and participate in emergency fairs. Hopefully, the windstorms and wildfires of Labor Day week drilled that message home.