

Transcript: Advanced Radio Features (December 2023)

Welcome to this Alaska Land Mobile Radio training presentation: Advanced Radio Features. In this training, we will identify several features within your subscriber unit that can assist in troubleshooting and provide for an improved user experience for all members.

Be aware that all subscriber units have varied features and capabilities. Some features may not be available in your specific radio or subscriber unit and other features may not be available due to radio programming, agency policy or other reasons. Always check with your agency radio point of contact for information on how to access these features in your specific radio. We will review these features that are generally available for most manufacturers on most radio units. Again, check with your agency on specific information about how your controls, menus, and radio are programmed. ALMR does not mandate any specific type of radio programming or code plug, which means agency radios from one agency or even within one department to another may be programmed differently, and these features may be accessed in different ways, or may not be available at all.

Many newer subscriber units have a channel announcement feature. This channel announcement feature provides for audio indication of the channel, zone, or both that you're switching to. The channel announcement feature requires specific programming steps to take place. You can program any type of audio file to play when you reach a certain channel or zone. This is specifically useful for times when you are not able to see the display of a radio, or maybe using an earpiece or remote speaker mic setup.

By default, all subscriber units operating within the ALMR system automatically find and affiliate with the radio site that has the strongest signal for that particular radio at that particular time. This is done in a similar way to a cell phone in which your phone call may be handed off to various cell sites as you drive through a particular area. The strongest signal indicator may not necessarily be associated with the physically closest site, as terrain height and other indications will affect the signal. It may be useful to display the site and the signal that your radio is receiving, and most radios have the ability to do this through a programmed key or through a menu function. How this site information displays is dependent on the manufacturer and the radio programming, but generally will display either the site, the signal, or both. In this example, the site name is R1 North and the signal is being displayed. RSSI is an acronym for Received Signal Strength Indicator and is a numeric value of the signal you are receiving from the site. This information is helpful in troubleshooting, especially if you are reporting an issue to the ALMR helpdesk, include the site information and the signal information to aid us in looking through logs and other system information for troubleshooting.

Depending on the programming of your radio, you may see a site ID, a numeric number instead of a name. This is due to how a radio is programmed and many radios have the ability to load the list of sites via name. However, others will only show the ALMR site ID number. There isn't a capability to search for a specific site to switch sites, and we'll review more of site lock and unlock in a moment, but generally, especially on Motorola radios, holding down the site display button generally we'll put it into a site search mode and may affiliate itself with a new site. This

forces a reaffiliation and forces the radio to search for an improved signal and potentially associate to that new site with the stronger RSSI.

Similar to site search and display, the site lock and unlock feature will allow you to force your radio to affiliate to a specific site. This may be useful in certain situations when you're in range of multiple sites where one may be busy or have the majority of traffic. As an example, if a large situation is going where there is a large number of responders, many radios in that small geographic area may be associated to that specific, stronger ALMR site. However, there may be availability to have a site with less RSSI or less signal, and have less congestion on that particular site. By using the site lock control as it's programmed on your radio, you'll see a site locked indicator indicating that the site is locked to that particular site. Make sure you unlock the site when you are done with the incident or moving out of the area. If you see an out of range message displayed or no signal message displayed on your radio unit in an area where you know there's ALMR coverage, this is the first troubleshooting step is to make sure the site is not locked to a particular site that you are travelling away from or are now out of range from.

Several other functions may help the user experience from day-to-day work with your radio. Bluetooth accessories are becoming more and more common and generally if your agency uses a Bluetooth accessory, a control is set for Bluetooth on and off. This allows you to pair and activate the accessory and also to shut the radio out of Bluetooth mode if you are not using it. This helps preserve battery for the unit when not in use.

Additionally, generally by using menu options, most radios have a display option for the current time, date, or both. You can set clock functions using menu options. This can be helpful especially for convenience of display, but also can be helpful in logging for your particular radio. Or may become more important for future functions of the almar system, especially as more technologically advanced features are introduced through system upgrades and other advancements. Finally, there is usually a backlight control or dimming function that can allow you to see the radio display in all lighting conditions. Check with your agency programmer if backlight options or controls are available to you through a shortcut key, and generally if not, they are available. Through the menu interface.

A common advanced feature that is used on many subscriber units is the emergency button. This button is used to signal and emergency to the dispatch center, indicating that the radio recipient of the radio user has an emergency situation that requires immediate assistance. Radio programming is required for this function. Radios generally switched to an agency owned and monitored talk group through programming. When this button is depressed. Generally, the dispatch center that you operate out of will monitor that talk group and respond via their protocol to any emergency button activations. Please note that if you do not use your own dispatch center, an MOU agreement must be in place to use the emergency button. Almar policy and procedure on emergency button use describes this in detail and is available on the Almar website. Be familiar with how the emergency button works, how to activate and deactivate. Please note that once an emergency button is activated, it must be properly deactivated. Turning off the radio will not clear an emergency alert, and when an emergency alert is issued, a channel is held at the AL. Our site you're affiliated with and alarms indicate in your dispatch center and potentially others, so this use of this E button is critical to know agency policy as well as how your radio is programmed to handle it. If your agency does not use emergency buttons and it is not required

to. Use them via radio programming. The button that is typically reserved for emergencies, which is the orange button on most radios or red button can be programmed to another function. If that's desired to use one of the other advanced radio features available to you.