

Transcript: E-Button Usage (January 2024)

Welcome to this Alaska Land Mobile Radio training presentation: emergency button usage.

In this training presentation, we will be discussing the appropriate uses of the emergency button, identifying the radio and system behavior when it is used, and discussing requirements, both administrative and radio programming, for using the emergency button. Please note that some radios may behave or display slightly differently than described due to variations in programming and manufacturer setup. The ALMR procedure 300-7, located on the ALMR website goes into much further detail on emergency button requirements and policy.

The emergency button is a button on a subscriber unit that activates an emergency alarm. The activation of the emergency button is only for critical cases. Policy indicates that the button may only be used when imminent danger exists and immediate assistance is required. The button may not be activated for any other reason. Once activated, this button signals dispatchers and takes several different steps technologically to ensure that the user can transmit an appropriate request for assistance or other information. This training will go into detail on those actions.

When you activate your emergency button, generally by holding down the button defined for a few seconds, the radio will change to a designated emergency talk group. This talk group is defined by your agency's radio programming and is required to be a talk group that is monitored by your or another dispatch center. It will begin transmitting an emergency signal and this will be heard on the radio by a series of short tones or a similar alarm. Some radios may not have an audible indication. The display will usually indicate an emergency and may turn a different color or have some other visual reference that you have activated the emergency signal. Once the signal has been activated you should, if possible, immediately notify the dispatcher of what the issue is and what assistance is requested. Generally protocol among all dispatch centers will be the dispatcher will immediately poll the user and ask as well.

If you have accidentally activated the emergency alarm, notify the dispatcher immediately that it was an accidental activation. You can then disable the emergency alarm on your radio, generally by holding down the emergency button again. It is important to recognize that that behavior that initiates in the system. When the emergency button is activated, it disables certain features in your radio. This means that turning off the radio or changing a talk group if possible does not clear the emergency alarm and your radio will stay in emergency mode. Be sure you tell the dispatcher that it was an accidental activation or that the situation is resolved and allow them to complete their steps for disabling to ensure that the alarm does not reset and resound the next time you transmit. Again, remember that turning off a radio after an accidental activation will not clear the alarm. However, it will result in the dispatcher not being able to get a hold of you when the alarm was activated if the unit is immediately turned off.

The ALMR system takes several actions once your emergency button is activated. The tower site that your radio is affiliated with will immediately open a channel and lock it to your specific radio on the talk group that's been defined for when you press the emergency button. This will

happen for the duration of the activation to ensure that your radio can get out any traffic that needs to occur. Again, this behavior is a top priority for the system and the emergency traffic from your radio will trump all other traffic on that site. In addition, an emergency indication will display on the dispatch console that monitors the talk group, an audible alarm and a visual alarm will sound. The dispatch consoles that have the emergency talk group listed will highlight the alarm and display the radio that was activated. Dispatchers for the appropriate dispatch center will acknowledge the alarm and then ask the user for description of the emergency. Once the emergency is resolved, the dispatcher clears the alarm by following the knockdown process. Dispatchers can receive additional information on this procedure using the dispatch operator training video that is available on the ALMR website.

Agencies may not select a dispatch center arbitrarily to monitor emergency button activations. If your talk group is not being monitored by your own dispatch center, such as if you have a regional or contracted dispatch center, you must have a memorandum of agreement for dispatch services to receive emergency button alerts. This should be executed if that dispatch center monitors your traffic at all times, or if there is an arrangement to monitor traffic during after hours or weekend times. This MOA must be signed to and agreed by both parties and is available on the ALMR website under the forms option and then select the dispatch services memorandum of agreement. It is important to understand that agencies that are contracting with another dispatch center must keep an accurate roster of radios that are issued and who they are assigned to. Knowing the radio alias or Radio ID's that can activate an emergency button will allow your monitoring dispatch center to identify the radio user. If an up-to-date inventory is not provided to the dispatch center, it may not be possible to determine who activated an emergency alarm.

Agencies that program their radios or have an outside vendor perform this function must follow several requirements related to the emergency button. Agency policy should determine if emergency button use is to be allowed for certain radios or all radios. If your radio users do not encounter situations where there is an imminent threat, you may not wish to have this option for your particular user base, deactivate the emergency button or reassign it to another function. If you choose to use the emergency button function, select the agency owned talk group that is to be used as the Emergency Revert Talk group. This is the talk group that will revert to in case of a radio activation from your agent. This should be coordinated with the dispatch center that you're contracting emergency button activation with or with your own dispatch center. It is critical to ensure that your ALMR inventory is updated and that aliases are properly recorded. The alias that is on file with the ALMR System Management Office is the alias that will display on the Dispatch console. It is critical to keep that list up to date and ensure that the aliases that are listed have a corresponding radio user that the dispatchers can identify. Note that any alias is programmed into the radio will not supersede the system listed alias when an emergency button activates. Agencies are also responsible for training users on all radio procedures, including the use of the emergency button.

While the E button can be a useful tool when an imminent threat or emergency is occurring, there are several limitations to the E button that must be understood by you and your users. Activation of the emergency button notifies all dispatch centers that monitor the talk group that

you've defined. If you are defining statewide talk groups or talk groups that have multiple dispatch centers, the procedure must be in place to know which dispatch center is responsible for your users. The alarm will display at all dispatch centers with your talk group. The emergency button does not provide the location of the radio user, although this technology may be coming in future system updates. At this time, there is no way technologically to determine the location of the user. For the nature of the emergency, the user must still by voice transmit further information on the nature of the emergency and the assistance required. Typically, agencies with an emergency button have a protocol for an unknown emergency where no information can be determined, but an emergency alarm is activated. Finally, understand that emergency buttons do not operate on conventional or simplex channels. You must be on an ALMR talk group for the emergency button to function correctly.

Please see procedure 300-7, located on the ALMR website for further information on E button policy. If you have any questions, contact the ALMR helpdesk or the ALMR operations Management Office for assistance.