Origination, Relay and Delivery of Radiogram-ICS213 Messages

Background:

Over a period of several years, Radio Relay International researched current practices in the management of communications traffic formatted as the ICS213 "General Message." A variety of input was received from emergency management agencies, Amateur Radio Emergency Service® organizations and the traffic community. After a period of peer review, best practices were identified.

ICS213 Mythology:

The considerable misunderstanding surrounding the ICS-213 message standard is undoubtedly rooted in the confusion between "form" and "format," as well as a misunderstanding of how government standards are implemented.

ICS213 is, in fact, not a message format, but rather a STANDARD, which defines the MINIMUM accountability information, which must be incorporated into record message traffic. Agencies and organizations are at liberty to add additional information as necessary, but the minimum defined content must be retained. In many respects, the ICS-213 minimum defines the same content as that ancient and well-established document; the "inter-office memorandum."

Government and commercial telecommunications systems regularly convey a variety of ICS-213 messages. These systems invariably add ADDITIONAL network management data, which exceeds the minimum standard. For example, an ICS213 message transmitted via e-mail will have considerable network management data appended to it.

In fact, there is no difference between a radiogram properly addressed to a served agency official and an ICS-213 general message except for the network management data appended in the radiogram preamble. It is for this reason that operational messages in radiogram format have been accepted by local, state, and Federal agencies during recent operations. The radiogram format is fully compliant with NIMS ICS213 requirements.

RRI Radiogram-ICS213 Winlink Template:

Radio Relay International, in cooperation with the Winlink Development Team, has developed a template for formatting a fully accountable and properly serviced Radiogram ICS213 message. This template incorporates the usual NIMS ICS-213 fields and appends the network management data needed to ensure the message can pass through multiple networks to reach its last mile destination. This ensures full

interoperability and efficient message transfer between all available Amateur, government and commercial telecommunications modes.

Converting a Radiogram-ICS213 to Standard Radiogram Format:

Consider this example:

46 R HXC KB1TCE 15 OWLS HEAD ME 1214Z SEP 5
TO
JAMES WADES WB8SIW RRI EMERGENCY MGMT DIR
810 SKYLINE DR
MARION IL 62959
833 377 0722 X 700 JAMES DOT WADES ATSIGN RADIO DASH RELAY DOT ORG
FM
STEVE HANSEN KB1TCE RRI LIAISON
NEW TEMPLATE PUSH 0916
BT
THE NEW RRI 213 HAS
NOW BEEN PUSHED TO ALL
WINLINK EXPRESS USERS X 73
BT

AR

Note the following:

1. The components in the red block incorporate the radiogram preamble and are identical to the components one would include for any radiogram message transmitted to an agency official.
2. The components in the blue block incorporate a signature and the *optional* "subject" field requested in the ICS-213 standard.
3. The components in the green block incorporate the text formatted for the interoperable traffic system, thereby allowing the Radiogram ICS-213 to pass between digital, voice, CW or data circuits without concerns about unusual punctuation, capitalization or the like. The "all capitals" sends a clear message to the recipient (addressee) that the message was originated in a non-case-sensitive format.

One is at liberty to reformat the message for transmission via a traffic net simply by resequencing the blue and green blocks. See example next page:

46 R HXC KB1TCE 15 OWLS HEAD ME 1214Z SEP 5
TO
JAMES WADES WB8SIW RRI EMERGENCY MGMT DIR
810 SKYLINE DR
MARION IL 62959
833 377 0722 X 700 JAMES DOT WADES ATSIGN RADIO DASH RELAY DOT ORG
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FM
STEVE HANSEN KB1TCE RRI LIAISON
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AR

Some additional points:

1. Obviously, the "TO" and "FROM" headers need not be transmitted when the message is transformed into the standard radiogram sequence.

2. The title and agency can be placed on a separate line for clarity. For example:
   JAMES WADES WB8SIW
   RRI EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIR

3. Resequencing the text and signature to standard radiogram practice is recommended when refiling to traffic nets to prevent confusion when relaying messages to inexperienced or uninformed operators.

4. Operators originating or transferring Radiogram ICS-213 messages are encouraged to add an op-note to the message stating "ICS 213 MESSAGE"

Delivering the Radiogram ICS213 Message:

When delivering a hard copy of a Radiogram-ICS213 message, either as a PDF attachment to an email or within the physical EOC environment, and with time permitting, it is recommended that operators use RRI Form 1703 or 1704 for delivery. These are available on the RRI "Publications" Page at:

http://radio-relay.org/about/publications/

See the example message above as formatted for delivery on RRI Form 1703 (next page):

Radiogram ICS-213 Message

Number	Precedence	HX	Station of Origin	Check	Place of Origin	Time of Origin	Date of Origin
46	R	C	KB1TCE	15	OWLS HEAD ME	1214Z	SEP 5

To (Name):	Position (Title & Agency):
JAMES WADES WB8SIW	RRI EMERGENCY MGMT DIR

810 SKYLINE DR

City, State, Zip:

MARION IL 62959

Telephone and optional e-mail:

833 377 0722 X 700 JAMES DOT WADES ATSIGN RADIO DASH RELAY DOT ORG

From (Name):	Position (Title & Agency):
STEVE HANSEN KB1TCE	RRI LIAISON
Subject:	**Agency Local Time (conversion from UTC):**
NEW TEMPLATE PUSH	0916

THE NEW RRI 213 HAS NOW BEEN PUSHED TO ALL
WINLINK EXPRESS USERS X 73

Please be brief – Use only the period for punctuation – Assume message may be delivered in all capitals

Message Routing (Received from call sign / DTG):	Message Routing (Transmitted to call sign / DTG):
WINLINK/RRI REGION8 051255Z SEP 2020	

In the above example of a Radiogram ICS213 formatted for delivery on RRI Form 1703 ICS, we see the typical ICS-213 sequence:

1. Preamble including address information first.
2. Signature second
3. Text last
4. Additional accountability information for service/reply message routing at the bottom.

Note that the operator is at liberty to transcribe either five or ten words to a line, depending on preference. Served agencies may find ten words to a line more comfortable to read and comprehend.

When a hard copy Radiogram or Radiogram-ICS213 is delivered to a served agency or non-amateur recipient, please consider the following:

1. It may be helpful to convert the "X" or "X-ray" to a period.
2. It may be helpful to convert the "R" for "decimal" in groups such as "1017R5 MILLIBARS" to a decimal point. However, be absolutely certain you are not changing the meaning of the message.
3. The "QUERY" may also be changed to a question mark.

General Principles when Originating an ICS213:

ALWAYS remember that interoperability is essential. A message may originate on a digital circuit that supports upper and lower case, complex punctuation, and the like, but it may be transferred to an amateur, public safety or military voice circuit to reach the addressee. Keep the "last mile" process in mind. Therefore:

- Brevity is absolutely essential. Explain the need for brevity to served agencies and other customers. Explain its role in retaining the benefits of interoperability.
- Avoid any unnecessary punctuation. The period (transmitted as "X" or "X-ray" in a radiogram) or the question mark (transmitted as "Query" in a radiogram) are usually sufficient.
- Avoid scientific abbreviations. Instead, write them out. For example, "micrograms" instead of "MCG," or "milligrams" instead of "MG." If in doubt about the meaning of an abbreviation, confirm its correct meaning with the originator.

Questions regarding this document, emergency communications training, or other assistance may be directed to:

Info@radio-relay.org

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