

SouthWest MotorSport

Road Course Racing New Mexico

A Class for Every Car



SWMS Processes and Procedures

SouthWest MotorSport Radio Communication Protocol

Purpose and Scope: These instructions provide standard radio communications mechanisms to help ensure clear, efficient exchange of information during SouthWest MotorSport events, with the goals of enhancing safety and improving event conduct. Flagging and Communications Workers, as well as others using the radio networks during SWMS events, are to be familiar with and use these protocols.

Basics:

First, this system does not use citizens' band (CB) or police radio terminology – no “10-4, good buddy”.

Radio communications have a sequence of “phases” – the call is initiated and acknowledged, the message is conveyed, and the call is terminated.

To initiate a call, the calling individual, after listening to ensure there is not another communication in process, “keys” the radio (presses the push-to-talk button) and calls, in this format –

“(Called station), this is (calling station), over,” releases the push-to-talk-button, and awaits the response.

Example – “Control, this is Corner 14, over.”

Note 1 - Most radio transmissions from a station should end in the word “over” or “go ahead” (meaning that the other party can now respond). If the exchange of information is clearly finished by both parties, the final message can simply be ended without “over” or “go ahead”.

To acknowledge the call, the calling station simply responds similarly – “(Calling station), this is (called station), over.”

Example, continuing from above – “Corner 14 (or simply “14”), this is Control, go ahead.”

To deliver the message, the stations can simplify the format some, while always including the identity of the station speaking – “This is (calling station). (Message or question). Over”

Example – “This is Corner 14. We see what appears to be a part off of a car lying in the track pavement between turns 13 and 14. Please advise. Over.”

Note 2 – To indicate that you understand a transmission, simply say “Roger” or “Got it”. If you did not understand what was said, say “Say again.” (That can be made specific, such as “Say again the vehicle number and color.”)

Once the needed information is exchanged by the stations, to terminate the communication one or the other of the stations may conclude their transmission with “out”, which notifies all other stations on the net that that particular communication is concluded.

Example – “14, this is Control. Roger that you have retrieved the part from the track. Thanks for your attentiveness. Out.”

A Little More Urgent:

Certain situations call for somewhat faster communications, though. In such situations, the calling station can assume that they will be heard, stating their message without waiting for an acknowledging reply. This is especially so if communications have generally been clear and understandable up to that point.

Example – “All corners, this is Control. Please show a red flag at all corner stations. Over”

Note 3 – The example directly above calls for the corner stations to both do what they are directed, and to respond to the message. In such “all stations” cases, the called stations should respond in numerical sequence – “This is corner 3. Roger, over.” “Corner 6. Roger, over.” etc.

Example – “Control, this is Corner 3. Red Mustang number 29 is off track, driver’s right, between turn 4 and 5. The car is stationary. Over”

Specific Situations:

Additional vehicles to enter the track - While a track session is underway, there are times when additional vehicles can be permitted onto the track. For example, this occurs if a vehicle is late to grid for the session, or if a vehicle has come in to the paddock for inspection and been cleared to return. In such cases, the two stations involved are Pit & Grid and Start/Finish, and, for usual, counterclockwise on-track vehicle flow, Start/Finish controls the situation. During this situation, other stations should stay silent, unless they have an emergency situation to report. Pit & Grid will notify Start/Finish of waiting vehicles –

“Start/Finish, this is Grid. I have two vehicles to enter the track. Over”

Pit & Grid will not signal the drivers onto the track until ordered by Start/Finish. If it is not safe to allow the vehicles on-track, Start/Finish will so indicate –

“Grid, this is Start/Finish. Negative, hold the vehicles. Over.”

Start/Finish, using their better visibility toward turn 14 and beyond, will determine when it is safe for the vehicle(s) to enter the track. At that time, Start/Finish will call to Pit & Grid –

“Grid, this is Start/Finish. Send them now. Send them now.”

(Note – Start/Finish is the only station to use the phrase “send them now”.)

At that time, Pit & Grid will clearly signal the driver(s) onto the track.

Note 4 – When the on-track vehicle direction is clockwise, the protocol above is modified. Since the Track Marshal at the Grid will have better visibility of vehicles approaching his location from “corner 2”, that Track Marshal will inform Control that there are one or more vehicles to enter the track. Control will direct Grid to release the vehicles when it is clear from his point of view at the Grid (unless there is some other extenuating circumstance).

Reporting a collision, an “off”, etc. – Corner stations must keep Race Control informed of unusual situations during track sessions (of course, while they are displaying the appropriate flags). For efficiency and clarity in communications, this should be done in a particular manner, conveying information about the vehicle(s), the situation, the location, the driver(s), etc. After the initial portion of the call (“Control, this is Corner 8...”), the message should identify:

- The vehicle(s), by color, make/model, and number
- The situation
- The location (e.g., “Turn 10, in the racing line”; “Off, driver’s right, between turn 4 and 5”
- Plus any other apparent information.

Examples –

“Control, this is Corner 3. Green Miata number 5 went four-wheels off, driver’s right, in turn 4. He returned to the track and proceeded on. No debris can be seen on track. Over.”

Control, this is Corner 14. Red Viper number L-4 struck the wall exiting turn 13. The car is now on the inside of the track, driver’s left, stationary. Over. ”

“Control, this is Corner 6. Blue Mazda number 57 and maroon Porsche number 122 collided between 6 and 7. The Mazda is now off-track driver’s right, turn seven. The driver signaled thumbs up. The Porsche proceeded on. Over.”

From this point on in such situations, communications are less formatted and more situation specific, other than the standard protocol of identifying the calling station in each transmission.

Document Point-of-Contact: Bob Richards (Independent review by Tom Wolicki)