

25. RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

25.1 – Introduction

1. Use of on-field radio communication is not mandatory. It is down to the judgement of individual crews and officials as to whether they choose to use it or not. This is also the case if there are officials who do not have radios or who choose not to use them.
2. Radio equipment must conform to the technical requirements of the country in which the game takes place. In addition:
 - (a) The use of a headset is mandatory – you need to keep what you hear private and your hands free during the game.
 - (b) Voice activated or "open-mic" radio communications should not be used, since this is likely to clutter the airwaves with noise. "Push To Talk" style radio communications should be used.
3. Radio communications should only be used by officials directly involved in the officiating of the game. These include:
 - (a) On-field officials;
 - (b) Video Judge and Video Assistant;[§]
 - (c) Alternate officials;
 - (d) Assessors;
 - (e) Off-field officials acting as a "buddy"/trainer to on-field officials;
 - (f) Qualified officials attending the game in an official supervisory or training capacity;
 - (g) Qualified officials working as a timekeeper;
 - (h) Prospective officials attending a game to observe the officials (if the crew agrees) – it is appropriate to share radio communications with them in order to aid them in observing how the officials work.
4. Radio communications should not be used by or shared with any non-match officials.
5. If separate crews are working games at the same venue (e.g. a finals day or bowl weekend), as a matter of courtesy, either the succeeding crew should not use or test their radios until the previous crew has finished its game or else the succeeding crew should ensure they are using a different frequency.
6. Any official attending a game in a non-officiating capacity (e.g. spectator, chain-crew, etc.) as a matter of courtesy should not use or listen in on the radio communications being used by the crew without permission.
7. If it is found that any non-official (player, coach, spectator) is listening in to or recording the on-field crew radio communication without permission (eavesdropping), this should be reported as it is in conflict with the spirit of Rule 1-4-11-f.
(Note: It is reasonable for coaching staff or game management to have their own radios to communicate amongst themselves. If officials discover that they are accidentally using the same frequency/channel, change channel. This is not an infraction of Rule 1-4-11-f.)
8. **Be aware at all times that somebody might be listening to what you say, so be professional.**

25.2 – Before the game

1. In the week before the game, the Referee should remind everyone that radios will be used and that they should recharge the batteries.
2. In the pre-game, agree what channel to use (and at least one backup to switch to if there are reception or other problems). Regular users will be able to tell when reception is poorer than usual – this should prompt trying out a different frequency.

3. Before leaving the dressing room for the field and/or when on the field, test that everyone can receive everyone else. Transmission order: R, U, H, L, B, F, S, C, V. §

25.3 – Encouraged uses

The following uses are encouraged (by any member of the crew, unless specified):

1. Relay the game clock time and status.
 - (a) "Time remaining?" Timekeeper (only) should reply.
 - (b) "Ready or snap?" Covering official (only) should reply.
 - (c) Is this a 10-second subtraction situation ("Why did the clock stop?").
 - (d) If there is no visible game clock, [◇]
 - (i) Wing officials should relay the game clock time to their sideline; R and U to offense and defense, where possible.
 - (ii) Relay the mandatory Rule 3-3-8-c notification every time the game clock stops in the last two minutes of each half.
 - (iii) Crews may agree to relay the game clock time at each score, penalty § and change of possession.
 - (e) When the timekeeper relays the time, an official (normally the Referee) should acknowledge it by repeating back the time remaining. ‡
2. Transmitting the time remaining on the play clock (Back/Side Judge) if it can't be done by shouting ("10 seconds") – but it needs to be done at 12 seconds to give the Referee time to relay it to the offense. [◇]
3. Foul called, team and number ("False start, red, 73"). If the calling official doesn't transmit this, the Referee should, after it's reported to him and before doing the rest of the enforcement procedure.
4. When targeting (or a similar serious foul) is called, the calling official should ask "Did anyone else see the hit on white 84?"
5. The sideline official nearest to the offended coach may transmit the head coach's decision to accept/decline a penalty, when enforcement is not obvious.
6. When there is a potential intentional grounding, the Referee may ask "Was there a receiver in that area?"
7. Alerts, e.g.:
 - (a) The down box is showing the wrong number ("Down box should be 3").
 - (b) An official is not in position ("Umpire isn't ready").
 - (c) The ball is dead close to the line to gain ("It's close").
 - (d) Who has goal line responsibility ("Wings have the goal line").
 - (e) What type of try Team A looks like attempting ("They are going for 2 points").
8. The Referee should confirm the score after an extra point, field goal or safety ("Score is now home 21 visitors 7" – home team first).
9. Reminders, e.g.:
 - (a) Hurry-up offense ("Remember, Umpire needs to go and get the ball if the clock is running.")
10. Mechanics snafus, e.g.:
 - (a) An official is in the wrong position or did something wrong ("Jim, that was your out-of-bounds.")
 - (b) Nobody signalled to stop the game clock at the end of the down ("Do we have a first down?")
11. The Referee may tell the crew to switch to onside kick mechanics ("Onside kick; onside kick").

25.4 – Potential uses

The following uses are approved on an occasional basis, but should not be used routinely:

1. Confirming cross-field mechanics ("Line Judge has a spot.")
2. When an official needs someone else to talk to a player on their behalf (give some details, briefly) ("Umpire, please ask red 65 to keep his hands inside the frame.")
3. Confirming the details before announcing a penalty (Referee: "What was the player's number again?")
4. Transmitting the yard line the ball is on after a return ("Ball is on the 33 going out.").
5. Transmitting the Back Judge's key (but only if in serious doubt) ("Back Judge has 88").

25.5 – Prohibited uses

The following uses are prohibited:

1. Profanity, anger, opinions of the teams – remember you may be being listened to.
2. When you would interrupt someone else's communications, e.g.:
 - (a) The Referee is giving (or about to give) penalty announcements (unless you urgently need to correct a significant mistake).
 - (b) The Referee (or another official) is talking (or about to talk) to players or coaches.
3. When the ball is live or about to become live – sound your whistle if you need to attract attention urgently and stop play.
4. Ambiguous messages, e.g.:
 - (a) Talking about a team or an action without identifying a team by its name,[§] colour or as offense/defense.
 - (b) Talking about a player without identifying him by team *and* number.
 - (c) Talking about a side or end of the field without being specific.

25.6 – If a radio unit becomes inoperable

1. Continue with the remaining radio units. Any official with an inoperable unit will need special consideration when it comes to communication.

25.7 – General reminders

1. Radio is there to supplement the current mechanics, not replace them.
2. Don't attempt to talk over someone else.
3. Remember to press the button and pause before speaking.