TACTICAL CALLSIGNS
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One thing hams, as well as police, fire, military, government, and EMS personnel find useful while communicating during an incident is the use of *tactical call signs*. A tactical call sign represents a group name, function, or geographical location, such as *Medical 3*, *Lookout Point*, or *Grid 27*. It's not the same as your FCC-issued call sign, and does not replace it, but can be used as a shortcut or abbreviation during an exercise or emergency.

They help keep things simple
During an actual call-out it can get really tedious, if not confusing and frustrating, for all parties involved, if you had to remember or read back a series of call signs, fumbling with dyslexic numerals and letters as you try and get some important information to a far-away team. Simply say,

> ***Team 2, this is Incident Command***

and then whomever is Incident Command replies with,

> ***Incident Command, go ahead***

That's a little easier easier than,

> ***KG7ZSC, I mean KC7ZSZ, this is KB7BVP***

only to have the other party say,

> ***Was that KC7ZSZ or KC7ZFZ?***

and then you say,

> ***Kilo-charlie-seven-zulu-sierra-zulu, this is kilo-bravo-seven-bravo-victor-papa***

By the time you've figured out the call sign, the patient has died.

They keep station locations organized
Another advantage to tactical call signs is that there is no need to keep track of which call sign is where. Imagine Incident Command needing to get an update on a forest fire line advance.

> ***KC7ZSZ, this is KB7BVP***

with a reply of,

> ***This is N7YHU, KC7ZSZ had to leave***

Incident Command then asks,

> ***Ok, how about KG7UFU?***

with a reply of,

> ***No, KG7UFU had to go too***

Incident Command then says,

> ***Well, who's still there, who can give me an update?***

What a time-wasting mess! Instead, try this:

> ***Hilltop Overlook, this is Incident Command***

with a reply from Hilltop Overlook of,

> ***Hilltop Overlook, go ahead***

and then,

> ***Could you please give me a fire-line status?***

In this case, Incident Command doesn't know, but more importantly *doesn't care*, who's at Hilltop Overlook; he just wants an update from somebody there who's qualified to deliver the update.

They're assigned by NCS
So, whose job is it to assign tactical call signs? It's the responsibility of Incident Command. If IC doesn't care, or has delegated it, it's the responsibility of Net Control, who is typically the *Incident Command shadow*, but Net Control must then communicate them to IC, so that IC can keep an overall picture of the incident by location or group name. If IC starts calling a group *Hospital Deck*, that might be a good clue that you should also call it by that name, because that's familiar to him. And if you're the person making up these tactical call signs, please make them as short as you meaningfully can. Instead of giving one team a name of *Samuel Thornton Fluke Memorial Site 3* maybe simply *Site 3* is good enough.

Now, all that being said, every ham is still required to transmit the FCC-issued call sign every ten minutes and at the end of the communication, regardless of tactical call signs. One way to do this during a drill, exercise, or incident, is by adding to the confusion and stating your actual call sign every time you speak, which is not recommended, because you need to say less, not more. The recommended approach is for Net Control to ask everybody to say their call signs every ten minutes, all at the same time. Yes, you'll be doubling with thirty other people, but you've satisfied the rule, to transmit your call sign; there is no requirement that anybody actually *hear* your call sign.