Palo Alto Neighborhoods
an independent umbrella group to enhance communications
and mutual support for the Palo Alto Neighborhoods

Block Preparedness Coordinator

Communications Training 1

Palo Alto Medical Foundation
A Sutter Health Affiliate

STANFORD HOSPITAL & CLINICS
Stanford University Medical Center

PALO ALTO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

American Red Cross
Palo Alto Area Chapter

Palo Alto Unified School District

Revision: 8/15/08 (K. Dueker)

Core Goals

- *The City wants residents and businesses (etc.) to be resources, not victims.*
- People, not plans in a binder, are the key to response and recovery. Must have COMMUNICATIONS to achieve.
- Community can provide information to City:

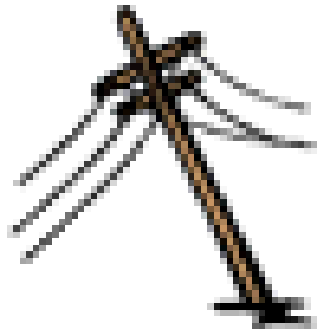
- Initial Damage Estimate
- Transportation Status
- Incident Reporting
- Resource Sharing

"Eyes and Ears" Function

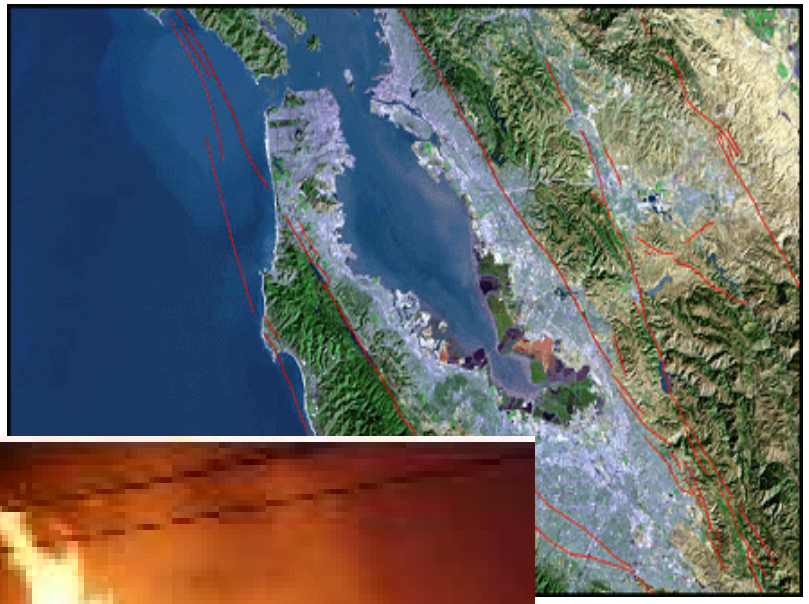
Daily Emergency Communications

- Reliance upon infrastructure: phone & Internet
- Many-to-one paradigm: people dial “911”
- Reliance upon government (first responders)
- Limitations: people & technology

Fully-Impaired Scenario



- Absence of (reliable) infrastructure: phone & Internet out
- Emergency Public Information (Community Alerting and Notification System)
- Community Communication
- Link to government must follow span of control



When the “big one” occurs, communications methods and priorities change:

- No more calling “911” (or perhaps any phone)
- Highest value communication is with your neighbors [and community based orgs], not government
- Need to handle events at a local level, not wait for first responders or other external resources

Radio is NOT a substitute for 911

Greensburg, KS, Tornado, May 2007 – photo courtesy USAR TF-3

Community Response Structure

- Neighborhood Prep. Coordinator (NPC)
  - Serves as a command post for (area of) neighborhood
  - “down-link” = talk to neighborhood
  - “up-link” = talk to gov’t
  - 30 neighborhoods, but radio range, capacity, and span of control require “sub neighborhoods” = possibly 50 NPCs total

We won’t know the actual number, until testing is conducted.

- Block Prep. Coordinator (BPC)
  - Responsible for 10-35 residences [and businesses]
  - Trained to assist first responders and PANDA (CERT)
  - May use “low tech” comm, such as runners

Communications Options

Family Radio Service (FRS/GMRS)

- –Short-Range (1-2 miles)
- –No license [but fee-only license for GMRS] *GMRS can be licensed to an individual or a family, but not organizations.*
- –For Block-level communications

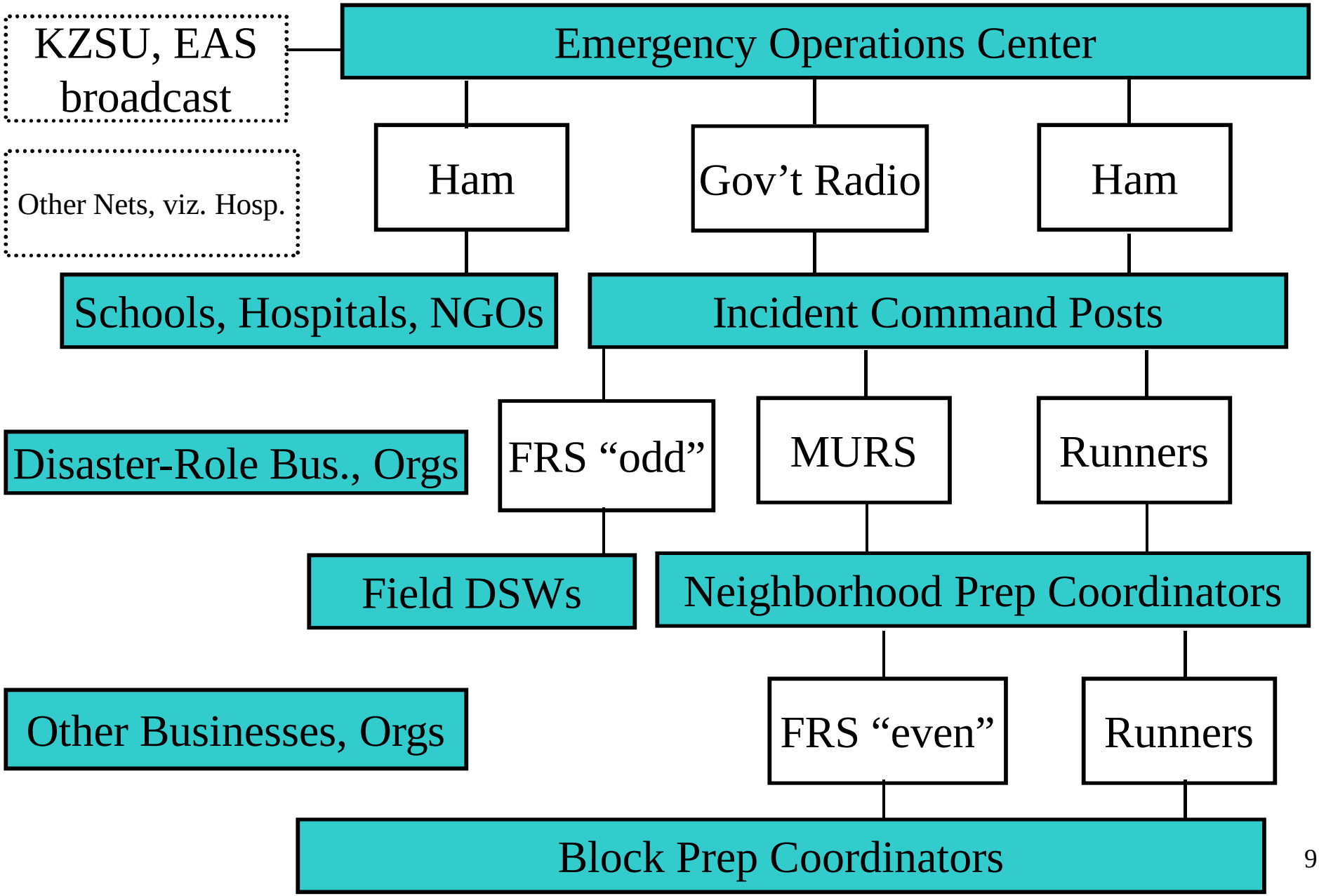
Multi-Use Radio Service (MURS)

- Longer-Range (5+ miles)
- No license
- Connects NPCs to City

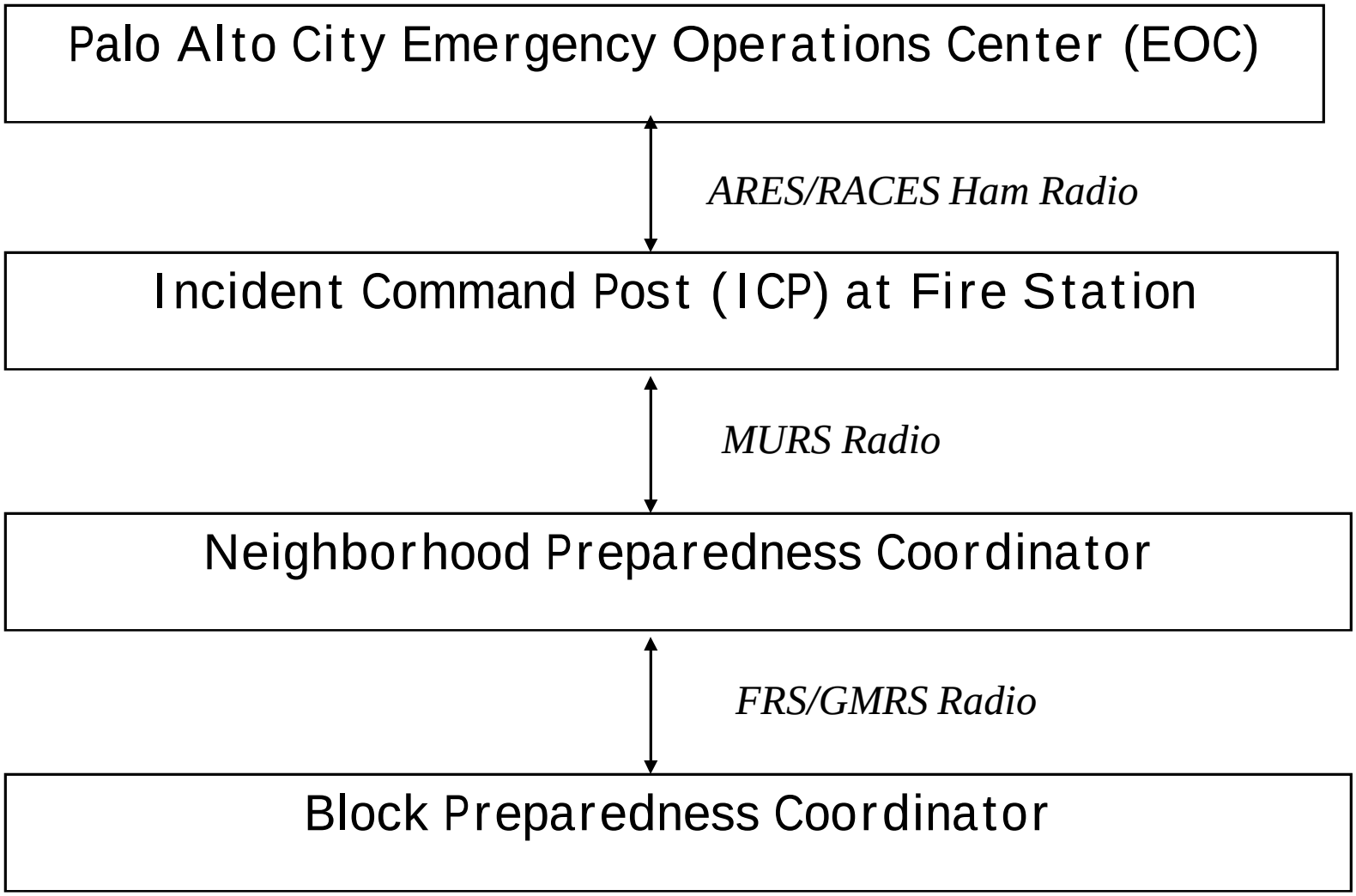
Ham Radio (ARES/RACES)

- Longest-Range (simplex can cover entire city)
- Requires FCC license [35-question exam]
- Highest level of training and practice required

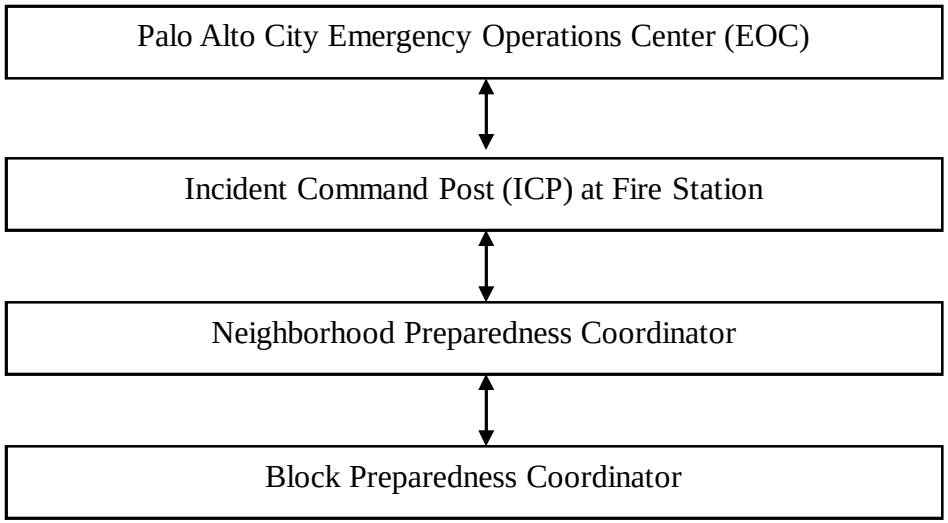
Community-City Comm Links



Communications Links



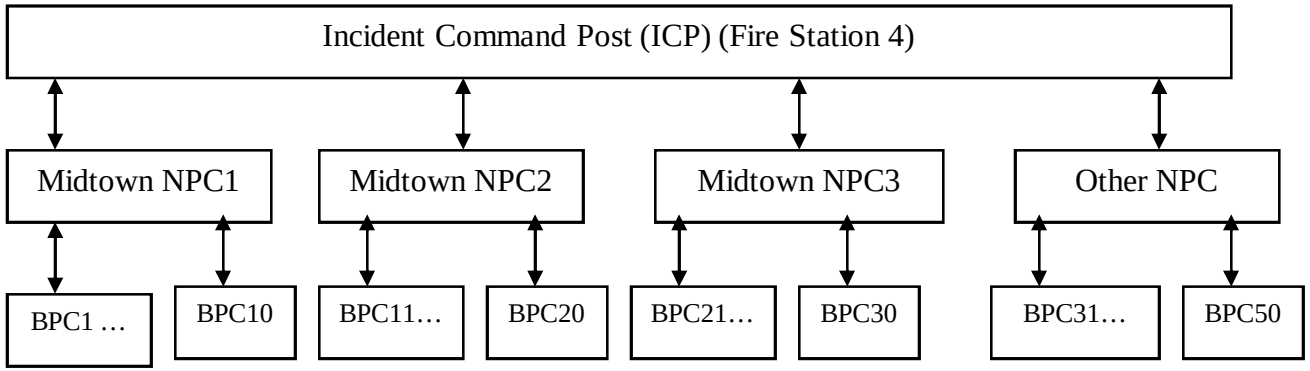
Neighborhood Networks



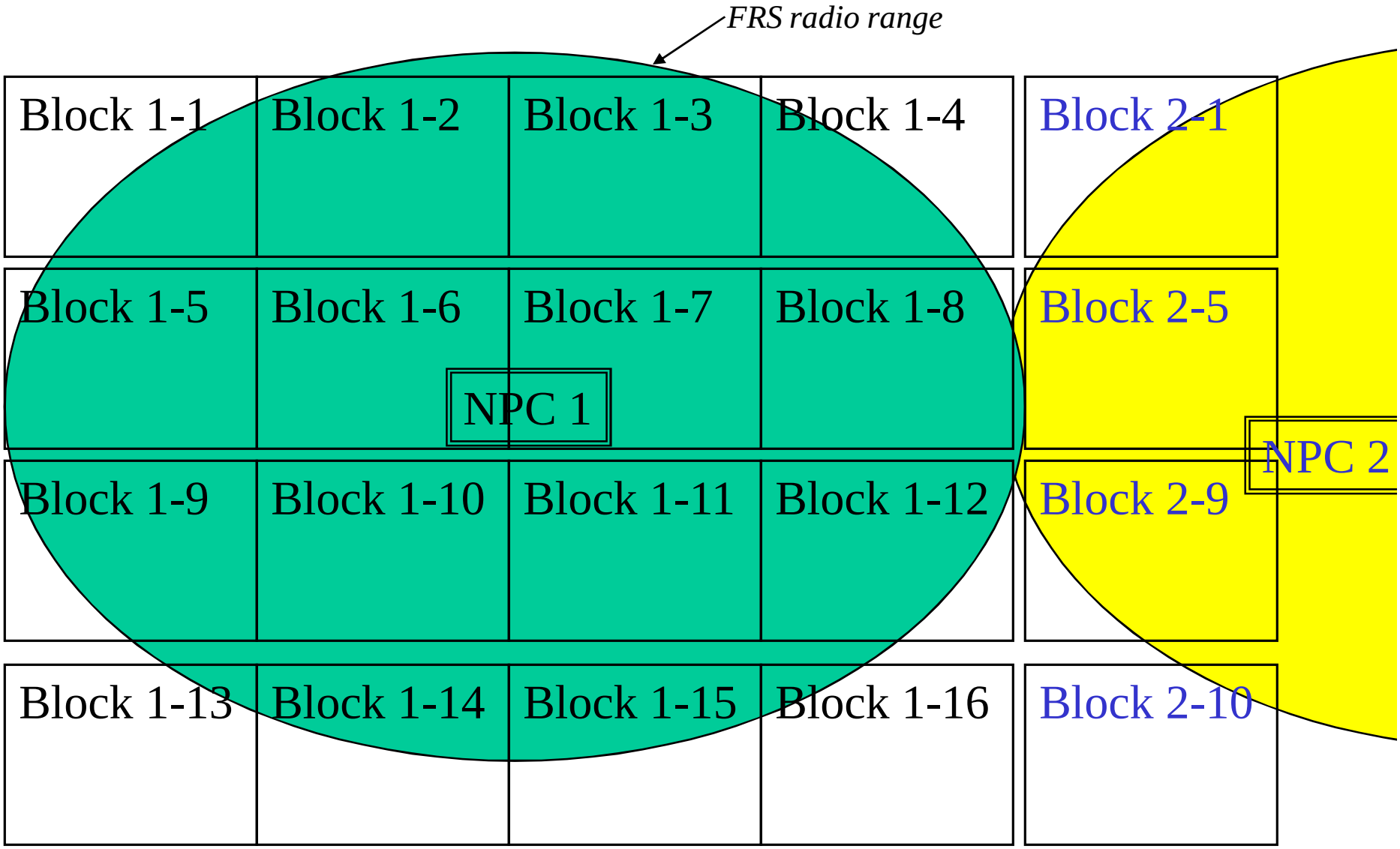
NC must establish 2 links

1. Up-link to ICP
2. Down-link to BPCs

Example of Fire District 4



Neighborhood FRS Diagram



Radio Set Up

- Set radio to appropriate Channel and Tone (Sub-channel)
- Improve range: outdoors, elevation [balcony, if safe]
- Use “relay stations” or runners, if needed
- Consider headphones
- Assign someone to write down messages/info (Scribe)

Tactical Call Signs

- Neighborhood Prep Coordinators should be identified as the name of their neighborhood, such as “Charleston Gardens” [or “Charleston Gardens NPC”].

- The order of call signs is: “[their call sign] (this is) [your call sign]”. If you are calling Charleston Gardens and your call sign is Block-27, you would say: “Charleston Gardens from Block-27”. Charleston Gardens would respond: “Block-27, Charleston Gardens. Go ahead.”

Radio Traffic (Messages)

- There are 5 key pieces of information in each message:
  1. To
  2. From
  3. Date/time
  4. Message [and Priority: urgent, normal, routine]
  5. Location {this is the most-important!}

- When relaying information over the radio, read/speak slowly and clearly, and use phonetic alphabet. See table. If you are reading a longer message, speak in groups of 5 words, pause, say “break” and listen for the receiving station to tell you to continue.

Information Prioritization

What First Responders need to know:

- Initial Damage Estimate (IDE)
- Transportation / egress: what roads are blocked
- Major hazards: potential to spread / where external resources are truly required
- Resources that you can share

Remember: *Just because you see something in front of you does not make it important. Do your best to fully-assess a situation before getting on the air. Remember: Other radio operators may have information to relay that is more critical than what you are dealing with.*

Practice with your team regularly!