NETWORK SAFETY CRITICAL COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL

M1 METRO NORTHWEST AND BANKSTOWN LINE

INFORMATION

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1 Introduction

To define the communication systems, protocols, and contingency arrangements for workers conducting Safety critical tasks including electrical switching activities in the MTS Network. This ensures consistent, safe, and effective communication in accordance with:

- MGE 204 Network Communications
- MGE 230 Communications Equipment
- MPR 721 Spoken and Written Communication
- Electrical Switching Communication Procedure

The protocol incorporates industry good practice principles/behaviours, including the use of lead communicators, structured protocols, and safety-critical terminology. It also outlines protocols to use when communicating equipment utilised for safety critical communication fails. **Note that Rail Safety Rules (RSRs) are available on MTS website.**

2 Scope and Applicability

This procedure applies to all workers, including Protection Officers, Possession Protection Officers (PPO), Possession Support Officers, Traffic Controllers, Engineering Controllers, Electrical Switching Operators /field workers and anyone else undertaking safety critical tasks when:

- conducting or supporting work on track in the MTS Network;
- conducting safety critical tasks that require adherence to Safety Critical Communication as defined in Section 3;
- undertaking spoken communication for electrical switching activities as noted within Electrical Switching Communication Procedure.

3 Definitions

Safety-critical communication: Any communication that, if not delivered, received, or understood correctly, could result in death, serious injury, or significant damage to property, infrastructure, or the environment.

Lead communicator: A designated worker who is responsible for managing and directing the flow of safety-critical communications to ensure clarity and mutual understanding.

Active listening: A communication technique that requires full attention, confirmation of understanding, and appropriate feedback to avoid miscommunication.

4 Communications Principles

All communication related to Safeworking and/or safety critical tasks including Electrical switching activities must be as follows.

- Clear, concise, and unambiguous.
- Relevant to the task at hand.
- Acknowledged and confirmed before being acted upon.

- Undertaken on a recorded device if available.
- Recorded in required format in permanent form and/or system where mandated.
- All spoken communication must follow MGE 204, MPR 721 and Electrical Switching Communication procedure protocols including:
  - Use of phonetic alphabet, spoken numbers and use of 24-hour time.
  - Correct use of Safeworking designation and location/Equipment identifiers.
  - Use of standard terms (e.g., “Over”, “Out”, “Emergency, Emergency, Emergency”).
  - Confirmation via read-back for authorities/action required and critical information.

5 What Good Looks Like – Good Practices vs Poor Practice

5.1 Communications Behavioural Standard

Workers who undertake communications in the MTS Network must exercise good practice communication behaviours to meet the performance expectations of this protocol. The following table contains good and poor practice behaviours, arranged by key communication element. They are intended to support the identification of desirable communication behaviours and provide a model by which communication behaviours can be consistently monitored.

Table 1 Communication Behavioural Protocols

Key communication element	Communication Behaviours	
	Good Practice ✓	Poor Practice ✗
Opening a conversation	*Identifies themselves, and their role, and location if required, and confirms who they are talking to.*	*Does not identify themselves or confirm who they are talking to.*
	Identifies the purpose of the conversation early on.	*Does not clearly establish the purpose of the conversation.*
Structuring communications	*Provides key information in a planned and logical order.*	*Does not give information in the right order, or overloads receiver.*
	Repeats back critical information.	*Does not repeat back critical information.*
	Leads and refocuses the conversation if it goes off topic.	*Gets distracted and allows the conversation to go off topic.*

	Asks relevant questions to confirm a shared understanding has been reached.	*Assumes shared understanding without confirming or questioning.*
	Restarts a communication from the beginning if it is interrupted.	*Continues after an interruption, assuming the earlier part was correctly understood.*
Speaking professionally	*Controls tempo using short, simple sentences.*	*Uses inappropriate tempo, speaking too fast or too slowly.*
	Uses clear descriptors and standard spoken terms including the phonetic alphabet.	*Speaks casually or uses slang when giving or receiving information.*
	Speaks confidently, calmly, and treats others with respect.	*Is offensive, aggressive, or obstructive.*
	Confirms accurate read-back and repeats a message if there are errors.	*Does not correct inaccurate read back.*
Ending conversation	*Makes sure that other parties have no further questions before ending the communication.*	*Ends the conversation abruptly without clearly summarising and clarifying the communication.*

6 Primary Communication System

The primary communication method for Safety critical activities in the MTS Network is:

- MTS issued radio and/or;
- mobile phone network and/or;
    - (Note: mobile network is used for voice calls between Qualified Workers undertaking safety critical tasks.)
    - (Note: mobile devices must be tested for signal prior to commencement of work.)
- fixed phone line.

The table below identifies the primary and alternate communication for each role within MTS.

Table 2 Communication Systems

Communication Systems		
Role/Position	**Primary Communication System**	**Alternate / Back Up**
Traffic Controller	Tetra train radio system	Fixed line.
CJC-T	Tetra train radio system	Mobile phone.
CJC-S	Tetra train radio system	Fixed line, i.e. in SMR and Mobile Phone.
Protection Officer	Mobile phone	Fixed line where available – i.e. at Station / Cross passage. Radios, where issued.
PPO's Office Staff	Fixed line	Mobile phone. Radios, where issued.
Engineering Controller	Fixed line	Mobile phone. Radios, where issued.
Switching Operator	Mobile phone	Fixed line. Radios, where issued.
Electrical Network Manager	Mobile phone	Fixed line.
Station Controller	Tetra train radio system	Fixed line.
AET's	Mobile phone	Fixed line. Radios, where issued.
Rail Traffic Operator	Radio	Mobile phone.

7 Communication System Failure

If primary communication is not available or fails during work, perform the following actions.

7.1 Immediate Actions

- Qualified Workers must cease work until effective communication is restored as required or an alternate method has been established.
- The Protection Officer must stop work and move all personnel and equipment to a safe location.
- Engineering Controller (EC) shall make contact with Switching Operator using the EC Mobile Phone, if critical switching operations are required, all communications are to be recorded on the EC Logsheet.

7.2 Alternative Communication Options

The alternate communication method must be used as outlined in Table 2: Communication Systems.

Some examples are provided below:

- Fixed Station Telephones are available at all stations and cross-passages within the tunnels.
- Tunnel Emergency Phones: Installed at regular intervals in tunnel areas.
- Radio (if available): Follow open-channel communication protocols.

7.3 Escalation Pathways

For all safety critical communication undertaken within the MTS Network, if the communication is unclear or there is a dispute regarding the actions required by either party, the matter must be escalated to relevant person in charge i.e. Manager Network Control or Possession Protection Officer (Engineering/Weekend Possession).

If communication is unclear or there is a dispute regarding switching instructions, the Switching Operator must not proceed. The matter must be escalated immediately to the Engineering Manager on call.

8 Emergency Communications

In emergencies:

- Use any available communication method.
- Start with **"Emergency, Emergency, Emergency"**.

Emergency communications must be:

- Given priority.
- Answered immediately.

Provide:

- Name and Safeworking designation (such as Protection Officer, Traffic Controller, etc)
- Location.
- Nature of emergency.
- Required assistance.

Follow steps in MPR 721 Section: Emergency Radio Communications.

9 Relaying Messages

If direct communication cannot be established:

- Use another Qualified Worker to relay the message exactly as received.
- Relayed messages must not be altered or interpreted.

10 Equipment Responsibilities

All communication equipment (mobile phones, radios) must be:

- Fully charged and operational
- Function-tested at the start of shift
- Workers must report any faults or failures immediately and record the fault / failure in Intelex

11 Standard Communication Terms and Structure

Refer to MPR 721 – Spoken and Written Communication Pages 2–4 for:

- Spoken Numbers and Phonetic Alphabet
- Standard Phrases: “Read back”, “Roger”, “Say again”, “Out”, etc.
- Open-Channel Protocols: Identify sender and receiver, confirm understanding, use “Over” and “Out”.

11.1 Standardised Spoken Communications

Use only these standard terms to convey these meanings for spoken safeworking communications.

Table 3 Safeworking spoken communications terms

Term	Meaning
Emergency, emergency, emergency	This is an *emergency*.
Correct	Yes. You are right.
I read back	I am going to repeat all, or part, of your statement exactly as I received it.
I say again	I am going to repeat all, or part, of my last statement.
I spell	I am going to use the phonetic alphabet.
Loud and clear	Your signal is strong, and every word is understood.
Message received	I clearly received and understand your message.
Negative	No. Not correct.
Out	My transmission is complete.
Over	I have finished speaking, and I am waiting for a reply.
Read back	Repeat all, or a specified part, of my message back to me exactly as you received it.
Receiving	I acknowledge your call. Proceed with the message.
Roger	All your last statement is received and understood.

Term	Meaning
Say again	Please repeat your last statement.
Speak slower	Repeat what you said, speaking more slowly. It is hard to understand you.
Stand by	Wait. I will be back soon.

11.2 Standardised Written Communications

Use the standard abbreviations listed below in written Safeworking communications.

Table 4 Safeworking written communication terms

Abbreviation	Meaning
BF	blocking facility
CAN	Condition Affecting the Network
hr	hours (time of day by 24hr clock)
IBA	Infrastructure Booking Authority
Jct	Junction
km	Kilometre
km/h	kilometres per hour
kP	kilometre post
LPA	Local Possession Authority
BEL	Battery Electric Locomotive
min	Minutes
NIN	Network Incident Notice
Nth	North
No.	Number
PPI	Point Position Indicator
pts	Points
Sig	Signal
Sth	South
TN	Traffic Notice
TOA	Track Occupancy Authority

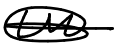
12 Documentation and Record Keeping

Where applicable:

- Record key communications in permanent form within the required Network Form, Safeworking Log, Systems or Diary.
- Use authorised abbreviations and legible writing in accordance with MPR 721.
- Retain records in line with the MTS Rail Safety Rules and Safety Management System requirements.

APPENDIX A: Version History

Approval Record

Function	Position	Name	Signature	Date
Updated by	Senior Technical Writer	Peter Simcic		09/11/2026
Reviewed by	Safety Advisor	Tim Markovich	 Tim Markovic (09/11/2026 12:20:42 GMT+11)	09/11/2026
Endorsed by	Head of Customer Operations	Katarina Oliveri		09/11/2026
Endorsed by	Head of Operations	Peter O'Brien	 Peter O'Brien (09/11/2026 13:16:26 GMT+11)	09/11/2026
Approved by	General Manager, Operations & Customer Experience	Rachel Spencer	 Rachel Spencer (09/11/2026 17:06:35 GMT+11)	09/11/2026
Approved by	General Manager, Engineering & Maintenance Delivery	Michael Leah	 Michael Leah (10/11/2026 09:21:02 GMT+11)	10/11/2026
Approved by	A/Head of Safety, Quality, Risk & Environment *per procurationem* Interim General Manager, Safety, Quality, Risk & Environment	Vishal Singh *per procurationem* Helen Wilkinson	 Vishal Singh (09/11/2026 12:07:46 GMT+11)	09/11/2026

Amendment Record

Date	Rev	Amendment description	By
01/07/2025	01	Document created.	Vishal Singh
30/10/2026	02	Addition of fixed lines in bullet point instructions. Change from EMD Manager to EMD representative. Examples of safeworking roles added.	Tim Markovich / Ajay Singh
07/11/2026	02	Updated to current MTS template standard. Additional content on standardised spoken and written communication terms, extracted from RSR MPR 721.	Peter Simcic

APPENDIX B: Glossary and List of Terms

Term	Definition
AET	Asset Engineering Technician
CJC-T	Customer Journey Coordinator - Trains
CJC-S	Customer Journey Coordinator – Stations
EC	Engineering Controller
PPO	Possession Protection Officers

APPENDIX C: Related Documents

Note: some documents will be closely interconnected and will need to be reviewed when this one is changed. Those will be marked yes in the review column below.

Others are simply related content that supplement the material in this document.

Document #	Document Title	Review
MTS-AEL-PR-78213	Electrical Switching Communication Procedure	Yes
NWRLOTS-NRT-SWD-OM-STD-730204	MGE 204 – Network Communications	No
NWRLOTS-NRT-SWD-OM-STD-730230	MGE 230 Communications Equipment	No
NWRLOTS-NRT-SWD-OM-STD-730721	MPR 721 Spoken and Written Communication	No

MTSMS-SF-PRT-000001-Network Safety Critical Communications Protocol rev02

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