



ONONDAGA CUTOFF

RADIO PROTOCOL

Welcome to the Onondaga Cutoff! Set in the mid-1990's, this operation relies heavily on radio use to as the official form of communication between crews and the Mohawk Dispatcher, Onondaga Yardmaster, and the Trainmaster, as well as with crew members when working along the route.

Conrail in this era was a member of the Northeast Operating Rules Advisory Committee (NORAC) used by many railroads east of Chicago and the Mississippi River. Since Conrail uses NORAC, this is what we use on the Onondaga Cutoff and so we will refer to the 1993 NORAC rules for the purposes of discussion and operations.

Generally, employees are directed to use the radio only for operating needs. NORAC Rules 700 through 713 specifically address radio use. Transmissions are expected to be short and to the point. Use of profanities and such is prohibited. Crews identify their employing railroad, the movement or engine number, location, and who they are trying to reach via radio. Railroad crews must also use the following key words which distinguish railroad communications from police, fire, EMS, or other traffic:

"ROGER" – to signify that the message was received and understood.

"OVER" – at the close of each transmission to which a response is expected.

"OUT" – at the close of each transmission to which a response is not necessary. This must be preceded by proper identification.

"EMERGENCY" – transmitted three times to obtain use of the radio channels for initial report of conditions endangering train movements.

General protocol:

- The Onondaga Cutoff uses FRS Channel 18.01 for Road Channel 1, and FRS Channel 2 for yard operations.
- Begin every transmission by listening for the channel to be open. (There isn't a railroader alive that doesn't know how to wait.) Then press the 'push to talk' button on the side of the radio. Every transmission begins with identifying the employing railroad, followed by the train symbol and lead locomotive number, and to whom the call is addressed.
- In this era there was no 'dispatch' on the railroad. With multiple dispatchers on some frequencies, Conrail crews are required to state the name of the dispatcher they are calling.
- The talking defect detector at Camillus, NY, will announce on the radio. Be sure to wait 3 full seconds after the transmission to reply.

Example:

"Conrail T.V. 200 to the Conrail Mohawk Dispatcher, over."

*[NOTE: **not** 'Conrail TV200 to dispatch.']*

"Conrail Mohawk answering the T.V. 200."

"T.V. 200 ready to go here at C.P. 295, over."