COMPANION GUIDE TO ONLINE TRAINING

Use alongside the online lessons at fortunefavorstheprepared.com/com-01-landing/

COM-01: PACE COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING STUDENT COMPANION GUIDE

The Operator's Field Reference

Primary, Alternate, Contingency, Emergency
Tier Assignment · Failure Triggers · PACE Plan Template · Beyond Communications

Edition v1.0 · 2026

Semper Paratus, Semper Gumby

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COM-01: PACE COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING — STUDENT COMPANION GUIDE

Companion Guide to Online Training

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> This companion guide is designed to be used alongside the COM-01 PACE Communications Planning online training series at fortunefavorstheprepared.com/com-01-landing/. The online lessons are the instruction. This guide contains the PACE framework reference, systems-by-tier tables, failure trigger worksheets, and the PACE Plan Template only — it does not contain the instructional content. It cannot be used as a standalone document.

ONLINE TRAINING ACCESS

The five online lessons are available online. Support the development and availability of these courses by subscribing to my Patreon:

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INSTRUCTOR-LED GROUP TRAINING

Group sessions and facilitated training are available. Contact:
fortunefavorstheprepared@protonmail.com

How to Use This Companion Guide

> **THIS GUIDE IS A COMPANION TO THE ONLINE TRAINING**
> This companion guide is designed to be used alongside the COM-01 PACE Communications Planning online training series — the online lessons are the instruction. This guide contains reference tables, planning templates, and blank worksheets only. It is not a standalone document.

Support the development and availability of these courses by subscribing to my Patreon: patreon.com/fortunefavorstheprepared

Online curriculum: fortunefavorstheprepared.com/com-01-landing/

What this guide contains

For each of the five online lessons: a condensed reference summary covering only the key terms, metrics, and scoring standards — not the instruction. The PACE tier reference, systems-by-tier table, and failure trigger worksheets are included as working tools. The PACE Plan Template is in Part III. The instruction is delivered online — this guide is what you use in the field.

Required workflow — online lessons BEFORE using this guide

> **ORDER MATTERS**
> Do not open any section of this guide until the corresponding online lesson has been completed. The condensed summaries here are reference material, not instruction. The sequence below is required, not suggested.

- Step 1 — Support the development and availability of these courses by subscribing to my Patreon: patreon.com/fortunefavorstheprepared
- Step 2 — Access the online lessons at fortunefavorstheprepared.com/com-01-landing/
- Step 3 — Complete all five lessons including knowledge checks
- Step 4 — Use this guide during group planning sessions and exercises as a field reference

> **THIS GUIDE IS NOT STANDALONE**
> The instruction for each lesson is delivered through the online training series. This guide contains condensed reference tables and blank worksheets only. If you have not completed the online lessons, this guide will not teach you the material — it will give you tables whose meaning you do not yet understand.

Guide Map — What to Reference When

When you need...	Turn to...
The PACE framework at a glance	Part I, Chapter 1
Systems plan vs. frequency plan	Part I, Chapter 1
Tier assignment criteria	Part I, Chapter 2
Communications systems by tier	Part I, Chapter 3
Relationship-specific planning notes	Part I, Chapter 3
Failure trigger examples (weak vs. strong)	Part I, Chapter 4
Documentation and distribution checklist	Part I, Chapter 4
Tier test types and rotation schedule	Part I, Chapter 5
PACE applied beyond communications	Part I, Chapter 6
Failure mode catalogue	Part II, Chapter 7
A blank PACE plan worksheet	Part III — PACE Plan Worksheet
A blank tier test log	Part III — Test Log Worksheet
A group PACE summary card	Part III — Group Card Worksheet
Doctrinal sources behind the framework	Part IV — Doctrinal Sources

PART I — FRAMEWORK REFERENCE

Chapter 1: The PACE Framework and Its Foundations

PACE — Primary, Alternate, Contingency, Emergency — is the military communications planning framework that ensures you always have a way to communicate, even when your first choice fails. It is a systems plan, not a frequency plan: it names entire communications methods and decides in advance which one to use and when to switch.

What PACE Is — and Is Not

PACE IS	PACE IS NOT
A pre-decided, ordered sequence of communications systems	A frequency plan or list of channels within one system
A plan with a different failure mode at every tier	Two frequencies on the same repeater or infrastructure
Documented, distributed, and tested before the emergency	An informal understanding kept in one person's head
Applicable to any domain requiring redundancy	Limited to radio communications alone

> **THE NON-NEGOTIABLE SEQUENCE**
> The order of PACE is not a suggestion. Every tier transition requires a specific, observable, pre-agreed trigger — a time window, a number of attempts, or a confirmed observation — that any group member can recognize independently. The trigger eliminates the decision. Under stress, you execute the plan instead of inventing one.

Chapter 2: Tier Definitions and Assignment Criteria

Tier	Role	Key Requirement
P — Primary	Everyday go-to system — highest capability, most familiar	All members trained on it; assumed available under normal conditions
A — Alternate	First backup, activated on a specific trigger	Must have a different failure mode from Primary
C — Contingency	Austere option, minimal infrastructure	No shared infrastructure with Primary or Alternate
E — Emergency	Last resort — must work when all else fails	No shared dependency with any higher tier

The Four Tier-Assignment Criteria

Criterion	Question to Ask
Infrastructure dependence	Does it require cell towers, repeaters, or internet to function?
Power dependence	Does it need grid power, or does it run on battery, solar, or hand-crank?
Range	Does the system's range match the communications relationship it covers?
Skill threshold	Can every member who might need to activate this tier actually operate it?

> **THE MOST COMMON PLANNING ERROR**
> A group that lists “Primary: repeater on 146.940, Alternate: backup repeater on 147.315” has not built a PACE plan. Both tiers depend on the same repeater infrastructure. If that site fails, both tiers fail simultaneously. A real Alternate must use a different system with a genuinely different failure mode.

Chapter 3: Communications Systems by Tier

Every system in your group's kit has a specific infrastructure profile, power requirement, range, and licensing requirement. Those characteristics determine which tier it belongs in.

System	Typical Tier	Infrastructure	License	Key Limitation
Cell phone / SMS	Primary	Cell tower + grid	None	First to fail — network overload and infrastructure damage
GMRS handheld	P or A	None (direct)	GMRS (FCC)	Short range; line-of-sight limited by terrain and power
FRS handheld	P or A	None (direct)	None required	2W limit; no repeater access; very short range
VHF/UHF via repeater	Alternate	Repeater site + power	Amateur (Tech+)	Repeater site is single point of failure
VHF/UHF simplex	Contingency	None (direct)	Amateur (Tech+)	Short range only; line-of-sight

HF voice / digital	Contingency	None (HF antenna)	Amateur (General+)	Requires more equipment and operating skill
Satellite (inReach)	Emergency	Satellite only	None (subscription)	Subscription cost; one-to-one; can lapse
Runner / courier	Emergency	None	None	Range limited by human endurance

PACE Plans Are Relationship-Specific

One PACE plan does not cover all your communications. Different relationships require different system stacks because range requirements change everything.

Relationship	Range	PACE Planning Note
Household / immediate team	< 1 mile	FRS or GMRS simplex adequate as Primary; runner viable as Emergency
Neighborhood / block group	1–5 miles	GMRS Primary; repeater Alternate if licensed; simplex Contingency
Regional / county network	10–100 miles	Repeater Primary; HF Contingency; satellite Emergency
Out-of-area / family check-in	100+ miles	Cell Primary; HF or satellite required for all lower tiers

Chapter 4: Failure Triggers, Documentation, and Distribution

A failure trigger is the specific, observable, pre-agreed condition that tells every member to move to the next tier. It must be specific, observable independently, and time-bounded.

Transition	Weak Trigger (avoid)	Strong Trigger (use this)
P → A	“Phone isn't working”	No cellular signal for 30 minutes AND outbound texts are not delivering
A → C	“Repeater is down”	No response on repeater net after three scheduled check-in windows
C → E	“Nothing is working”	No contact by simplex within 24 hours of last confirmed communication

Documentation and Distribution Checklist

- Written on paper — not only digital storage, because devices fail when you need them
- Laminated card distributed to every member: go-bag, vehicle, and home kit

- Reviewed at every regular group meeting — not filed away between activations
- Updated after every test based on what actually worked

Chapter 5: Testing Every Tier

A tier that has never been tested is a guess, not a tier. Testing is part of the plan, not an optional extra.

Test Type	When	What It Proves
Scheduled monthly test	Rotate through P, A, C, E on a calendar	System works; equipment operational; members know the method
Unannounced drill	Declare “Primary unavailable” without warning	Members identify the trigger and switch without guidance
Full cascade test	Start on Emergency, activate up through all tiers	Every tier and trigger works in sequence
Documentation audit	Quarterly or after any group change	Every card is current; every trigger is still specific

Chapter 6: PACE Beyond Communications

The four-tier framework transfers directly to any planning domain requiring redundancy. The structure, the requirement for different failure modes between tiers, and the test discipline all carry over unchanged.

Domain	P	A	C	E
Evacuation	Main highway	Secondary roads	Off-road track	On foot via trail
Water	Municipal tap	Stored reserves	Rainwater collection	River/stream filtered
Medical Care	Hospital	Group medic + kit	Field improvisation	Buddy care/self-care
Power	Grid electricity	Generator	Solar/battery bank	Manual methods
Leadership	Designated leader	Second-in-command	Senior member present	Most capable present
Food	Store/supply chain	Group stockpile	Foraging/hunting	Reduced calorie protocol

THE INFRASTRUCTURE CHECK — EVERY DOMAIN, SAME QUESTION

If the tier above this one fails for reason X, does this tier also fail for reason X? If yes, they are the same tier in disguise. Rewrite until each tier has a genuinely independent failure mode. This check applies identically whether you are planning communications, power, water, or leadership succession.

PART II — FAILURE MODE CATALOGUE

Chapter 7: Common Failure Modes by Planning Step

The most common errors at each stage of PACE planning — what the knowledge checks in the online lessons are designed to expose.

Stage	Common Failure Mode	Consequence
Why Comms Fail	Assuming Primary will work because it always has	No backup exists; improvisation when Primary fails at the worst moment
Why Comms Fail	“We have a backup repeater” taken as a complete PACE plan	Both tiers share infrastructure; single failure takes both down
The Framework	Confusing a frequency list with a systems plan	Frequencies change; the system choice is the tier, not the channel
The Framework	Assigning a tier but never testing it	A never-tested tier is a guess, not a plan
Systems for PACE	All four tiers use infrastructure-dependent systems	Single infrastructure failure cascades across the entire plan
Systems for PACE	Assuming simplex range without terrain testing	Range unvalidated; Contingency tier fails at the moment of need
Building the Plan	Writing vague failure triggers (“when it stops working”)	No one knows when to switch; group stays on failing Primary
Building the Plan	Plan kept only in the leader's head	Leader unavailable = no one knows the plan; single point of failure
Building the Plan	Cards never distributed to members	Member at point of need cannot execute their tier
Beyond Comms	Applying PACE only to communications	All other critical plans remain single-tier; failures cascade
Beyond Comms	Plan built once and never reviewed	Equipment, membership, and tested triggers go stale

PART III — BLANK WORKSHEETS

Complete each worksheet during or immediately after a group planning session. Use a separate copy for each communications relationship. All fields must have an entry — write “N/A” rather than leaving any line blank. Date and group identification are required on every worksheet.

PACE Plan Worksheet

Group / Household Name: _____	**Date:** _____
Relationship Covered (local / regional / out-of-area): _____	**Distance (approx. miles):** _____
Plan Prepared By: _____	**Last Reviewed / Updated:** _____

Tier	System / Method	Frequency / Contact Info
P — Primary		
A — Alternate		
C — Contingency		
E — Emergency		

Transition	Failure Trigger (specific, observable, time-bounded)	Last Tested
P → A		
A → C		
C → E		

BASELINE DEVIATION NOTES

Record any tier that has not yet been tested or any equipment gap discovered while completing this worksheet. State the tier, the gap, and the corrective action planned. Do not leave a tier marked complete if it has not actually been verified.

Tier Test Log Worksheet

Date	Plan	Tier Tested	Participants	Outcome / Notes	Action Required

Group PACE Summary Card Worksheet

Complete this card, laminate it, and distribute a copy to every group member. This is the document that gets carried — not the full companion guide.

Group: _____	**Version:** _____

Tier	System / Method + Frequency	Failure Trigger
P — Primary		
A — Alternate		

C — Contingency		
E — Emergency		

Scheduled Monthly Test Day: _____	**Net Check-In Time / Frequency:** _____

PART IV — DOCTRINAL SOURCES

Chapter 8: Sources Behind the Method

Source	Title	Relevance
CISA	Leveraging the PACE Plan Into the Emergency Communications Ecosystem	Primary source for PACE in public safety and emergency communications
FM 6-99	Army Report and Message Formats	Radio procedures and communications discipline underpinning PACE execution
FM 105-1	Signal Support	Military communications planning doctrine — redundancy and fallback procedures
MCRP 3-40.3B	Radio Operator's Handbook	Field radio operator procedures and communications discipline
ARRL / ARES	Field Resources Manual	Amateur radio emergency communications — repeater networks, Winlink, digital modes
NTS MPG 2014	Message Passing Guide	NTS net structure and traffic handling for Alternate/Contingency tier operations