COMPANION GUIDE TO ONLINE TRAINING

Reference companion to the COM-08 online course

COM-08

Dead Drop and Courier Protocols

STUDENT COMPANION GUIDE

NON-ELECTRONIC MESSAGE PASSING FOR EMCON-HEAVY SCENARIOS

Reference material for dead drop site selection, signal plans, and courier protocols — adapted from SOE/Camp X courier doctrine for disaster-response teams and MAGs.

6 Lessons · 3 Worksheets · 2 Reference Tables
Edition 1.0, September 2026

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COM-08 — Dead Drop and Courier Protocols

Companion Guide to the Online Training Course

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This companion guide is a reference supplement to the COM-08 online training course. Support the development and availability of these courses by subscribing to my Patreon.

It does not replace the course and does not contain course knowledge-check content.

ONLINE TRAINING ACCESS

The full COM-08 course — all six lessons, knowledge checks, and the completion certificate — is available at fortunefavorstheprepared.com under the Communications track.

INSTRUCTOR-LED GROUP TRAINING

MAGs and response teams can request instructor-led delivery of this course for group training. Contact Fortune Favors the Prepared through the website for scheduling.

How to Use This Companion Guide

GATED CONTENT NOTICE
This guide supplements the gated COM-08 online course — it is not a standalone substitute.

What This Guide Contains

- Part I — Quick Reference: one page per lesson, summarizing key points
- Part II — Worksheets: blank grids for your site selection, signal plan, and courier roster
- Part III — Appendix: Glossary, Quick Reference Card, Doctrinal Sources, and Open Items

REQUIRED WORKFLOW
1. Complete the online course lessons in order (Lessons 1 through 6).
2. Use Part I as review after finishing each lesson.
3. Complete the Part II worksheets as you go — the Lesson 6 capstone assembles them into your team's SOP.
4. Reference Part III as needed, during or after the course.

NOT A STANDALONE COURSE
This guide does not teach the material — it assumes you've completed or are completing the online lessons.
It contains no knowledge checks and is not a substitute for the course.

Guide Map — What to Reference When

When You Need...	Go To
A quick refresher on a lesson's key points	Part I — Quick Reference
To draft your site, signal plan, or courier roster	Part II — Worksheets
A term definition	Part III — Glossary
The Method Selection Matrix or Drop Cycle at a glance	Part III — Quick Reference Card
Source citations	Part III — Doctrinal Sources

PART I — QUICK REFERENCE

Lesson 1 — Course Introduction

- COM-08 protects that a message moved; COM-07 (OTP) and COM-12 (DRYAD) protect what it says — pair them for anything sensitive.
- EMCON risk comes from the transmission existing, not just its content — direction finding doesn't require decryption.
- Doctrine source: SOE courier tradecraft as taught at Camp X (STS 103), adapted for disaster response, not clandestine operations.

Lesson 2 — Dead Drops, Live Drops, Brush Contacts, Cut-Outs

- Dead drop: no personal contact, slowest, lowest exposure. Brush contact: direct, fastest, highest exposure.
- Cut-out: a compartmentalized intermediary — the two parties never meet or identify each other.
- Match method to urgency: routine coordination defaults to a dead drop; urgent or duress messaging justifies a live drop or brush contact.

Lesson 3 — Dead Drop Site Selection

- Five criteria: concealment, plausible cover, weatherproofing, low-suspicion access, no camera coverage — all five, not just one or two.
- The drop site and the signal site are never the same location.
- Container discipline protects the message physically, not its content — encrypt sensitive content first (COM-07/COM-12).

Lesson 4 — Signal Plans

- Minimum required states: loaded, clear, and duress.
- Design the duress signal first, not last — it's the most important and most often skipped.
- Signal meanings stay local to your team — never publish or standardize them beyond the people who need them.

Lesson 5 — Courier Protocols

- Compartmentalize courier briefings — need-to-know, not distrust.
- Vary routes and timing so no single trip creates a predictable pattern.
- Compromise procedure: withdraw immediately, don't approach, don't investigate, report through an uncompromised channel.

Lesson 6 — Capstone: Team SOP

- The deliverable integrates method selection, site selection, signal plan, and courier roster/procedure into one SOP.
- Completing your FEP Workbook's MESSAGE DROPS page is part of the capstone, not a separate task — the SOP work is what makes those entries workable.

PART II — WORKSHEETS

Worksheet 1 — Site Selection

For each tier, record a candidate site and check it against the Lesson 3 criteria. This feeds directly into your FEP Workbook's MESSAGE DROPS page.

Tier	Location Description	Conceal	Cover	Weatherproof	Access	No Camera

Worksheet 2 — Signal Plan

Define your signal site, indicator, and read method for each required state. Design the Duress row first.

State	Signal Site (separate from drop)	Indicator	How It's Read

Worksheet 3 — Courier Roster & Compromise Procedure

List each courier, their recognition procedure, and how they vary their routes. Add rows as needed; confirm each courier has rehearsed the compromise procedure.

Courier Name	Recognition Phrase / Procedure	Route Variation Notes	Compromise Report Method

PART III — APPENDIX

Glossary

Dead Drop	Concealed location where a message is left for asynchronous, no-contact pickup.
Live Drop	A brief, planned in-person exchange.
Brush Contact	A direct, momentary in-person exchange.
Cut-Out	An intermediary who carries a message between two parties who never meet or identify each other.
Signal Site	A location, separate from the drop site, passed at a distance to confirm a drop's status.
Duress Signal	An indicator telling the team to stay away from a compromised site.
Compartmentalization	Limiting what any one person knows, to limit exposure if that person is compromised.
EMCON	Emissions control — protecting the fact that a transmission occurred, not just its content.

Quick Reference Card

Method Selection

Dead Drop	No contact · slowest · lowest exposure · routine coordination
Cut-Out	Compartmentalized link · moderate speed · low exposure if held
Live Drop	Brief planned contact · fast · moderate exposure
Brush Contact	Direct momentary contact · fastest · highest exposure

Drop Cycle

Load	Message placed at the drop site.
Signal	Status indicator set at the (separate) signal site.
Clear	Message picked up; signal reset.
Confirm	Cycle repeats — duress can interrupt at any stage.

Doctrinal Sources

Source	Title	Description
SOE / Camp X (STS 103)	Courier & Dead-Drop Tradecraft	Historical source doctrine for site selection, signal plans, and compartmentalization, adapted for disaster response.
COM-04	EMCON	Defines the conditions under which this course's methods replace radio.
COM-06	Authentication & Challenge/Reply	Recognition procedure for live drops and brush contacts.
COM-07	One-Time Pads (OTP)	Strongest content-protection option for what goes in the drop.
COM-12	DRYAD Sheet Encryption	Lighter-weight content-protection alternative to OTP.
COM-11	Message Formats	Content/format discipline for whatever is physically carried.
INT-09	OPSEC for Households	Compartmentalization and need-to-know principles.
PLN-05	COMCON	Condition-level triggers for shifting to non-electronic methods.
FEP Workbook	MESSAGE DROPS Annex	Where Primary/Alternate/Contingency/Emergency drop points are recorded.

Open Items

PENDING

One-pager and companion guide files are pending upload to WordPress; Course Map and landing-page download links are placeholders until real media URLs exist.

The landing page and Course Map are not yet linked from the main training curriculum page.

Lesson pages do not yet write a completion flag back to the Course Map; sequential unlock currently runs on visit, not confirmed completion.

The FFTP logo image was not available in this build session; the header/title-page logo placement is left blank pending the asset.