Section

1

COMMUNICATION

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1 COMMUNICATION

1.1 OVERVIEW

This section provides teams with necessary information for contacting *FIRST* staff and other key people during the season. This section also contains help regarding the use of the *FIRST* logo, finding materials on the web site, updating the Team Information Management System (TIMS), tips on reserving hotels, and other informational topics such as the Judges' Information Page.

1.2 *FIRST* HEADQUARTERS- CONTACT INFORMATION

You can reach *FIRST* via mail, phone, and fax, or get information from our web site at www.usfirst.org. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., EST. Refer to the sections below for the appropriate help resource. ***Be sure to provide your team number on all communications!***

Mailing Address	200 Bedford St, Manchester, NH 03054
Email Address	frcteams@usfirst.org
Phone Numbers	(603) 666-3906 (800) 871-8326
Fax Numbers	(603) 666-3907 (main) (603) 647-5772 (finance)

1.3 TEAM SUPPORT

The Operations (Team Support) Group is ready answer program-related questions regarding registration, team record maintenance, the Kickoff, shipping and drayage, etc. All are ready and eager to help your team. You may contact them via email or telephone.

1.3.1 Emails and Subject Lines

Our program requires that many requests must be in writing, so email may be your best communication tool and the best way to get a quick answer or solution to your problem. Emails save money, time, prevent phone tag, and provide information for a researched, more accurate answer. To facilitate a quick reply, include your team number and reference in the subject line.

1.3.2 Please Do Not Duplicate Efforts

We ask that you do not contact or copy multiple persons about the same problem. Being a small group, we must work efficiently and avoid having more than one person working on the same item. We can usually answer questions or requests within one working day.

1.4 CONTROL SYSTEM SUPPORT

National Instruments Corporation

Contact National Instruments Corporation for help with the cRio and its modules. Remember to provide your *FIRST team* number in the subject line.

Tech Support Phone:	(866) 511-6285
Web site:	www.ni.com/first

1.5 SOFTWARE CONTACT INFORMATION

Autodesk

Autodesk has created a web site area devoted to *FIRST* teams, called FIRSTbase. Please go to www.autodesk.com/firstbase for information on the software downloads, training, the Autodesk design competition, Autodesk kit of parts, technical support, their sponsorship, *FIRST* alumni, resources, frequently asked questions, the pressroom and feedback. You can find the initial email on the archive page www.usfirst.org/community/frc/content

If you can't find answers to your questions from the above web site, please contact Autodesk via first@mail.autodesk.com and use the "Feedback form."

PTC

PTC has dedicated a portion of their Education Program web site to FRC teams. Please visit http://www.ptc.com/go/frcregistration for information on the software downloads and training. You can find the initial email on the archive page www.usfirst.org/community/frc/content

If you can't find answers to your questions from the above web site, please contact PTC via firstsupport@ptc.com .

1.6 *FIRST* ROBOTICS COMPETITION WEB SITE

Visit *FIRST* Robotics Competition at its FRC "community" area where you can find answers to administrative concerns and link to other areas of support.

- Check deadlines and dates for the Team Information Management System (TIMS), entries, grants, registration and payments, robot shipment, and awards submissions. www.usfirst.org/community/frc

- Find the "Documents and Updates" area, with link areas on the new "Consent and Release Form," the Email Blast Archive, FRC Q&A Forum, the "2009 Robot Shipping" page, FRC Team Manual sections, events, and a list of the Regional Contact persons, etc. www.usfirst.org/community/frc

- Find fundraising support materials such as the photo gallery, video clips, and program information. www.usfirst.org/community/resourcecenter

1.6.1 Getting Answers To Your Competition Questions

Manual and Updates: The *FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) Manual is available on the *FIRST* Web site at www.usfirst.org/community/frc. Sections relating to the game will be posted after the Kickoff. *FIRST* will add to the Update page twice a week to provide teams with new information and clarifications about *FIRST* Robotics Competition events.

> **Updates and additions to the manual, should they be necessary, will be posted in this area of the website. Please be sure to check this area often during the build season to ensure that you have the latest information.**

FRC Q&A Forum: Shortly after Kickoff, *FIRST* provides an on-line forum for questions and answers (Q & A). It is accessible at the above web site for each section of the Competition Manual, such as "The Game," "The Robot," etc. Anyone can view questions and replies on this system. Only those team contacts with a special team username and password can post questions to this system. This username and password have been sent to the team's Main Contact. Teams may post directly to the moderators of the forum. Until a moderator accepts the questions, others cannot see them.

1.6.2 Email Blasts

Email blasts are important communications *FIRST* sends to the Main and Alternate contacts for all FRC teams. All team email blasts are sent to the main and alternate team contacts identified in TIMS and are also archived on the website beginning in September. This system will provide team members and mentors easy access to information *FIRST* provides to, and requests from, teams. This feature is especially helpful for teams that register later in the season. We suggest that you have several team members in charge of updating and informing relevant persons on the team.

1.6.3 Email Blast Archive

An e-mail blast is a message sent to all FRC teams via e-mail. The blast will have a relevant subject line for easy reference and will contain items such as new or updated information, a deadline reminder, or an opportunity for teams. *FIRST* archives them from the beginning of the season in September so all teams can refer back to their contents. This is especially helpful for teams who register after the mailings and enables all team members and mentors to keep abreast.

1.6.4 Team Updates

After the Kickoff, Team Updates provide rules updates, important information about parts, administrative reminders/deadlines. These documents are posted on the *FIRST* Web site. Our Team Updates schedule is Tuesday by 5PM and Friday by 5PM.

- We work hard to meet these commitments. Unexpected circumstances may, on occasions, delay their publication.

- Additional updates may be released if necessary.

- Occasionally, *FIRST* will publish revisions to manual sections.

Teams often ask one person to read all *Team Updates* and make sure the right team members are informed about their contents. After the Kickoff, you will find the updates on the "*FRC Community*" page at www.usfirst.org/community/frc/

1.6.5 Recruitment & Public Relations Materials

You can find information on the *FIRST* Web site to enhance your team's recruitment efforts. Find PowerPoint presentations, video clips, and statements about the Impact of *FIRST*, our Vision, testimonials, and *FIRST* financial information at:
www.usfirst.org/community/resourcecenter

1.7 THE TIMS - SUPPLYING INFORMATION TO *FIRST*

(Team Information Management System)

The TIMS is the on-line system used to register your team and provide information to *FIRST* as the season progresses. For details about using the TIMS, please reference Section 2.3. Refer to the "Calendar of Important Deadlines" to check program deadlines www.usfirst.org/community/frc/content.aspx?id=454. When teams use the system properly, the TIMS provides *FIRST* with necessary, up-to-date information including:

1) Team Names: Official, Nickname
2) Team Contact information for important, team messages, shipments, and *FIRST* email blasts
3) Team Partner (Sponsor) information
4) Event attendance information for each team
5) Team's FedEx, UPS, or Purolator shipping account number
6) Team Judges' Information Page

Additionally, the TIMS "Team Information" provides options for:

- Teams willing to mentor other teams
- Teams wanting mentoring
- Entering team web site address/link

1.7.1 TIMS Maintenance

Communications between *FIRST* and teams is essential, and each team-designated contact person should inform the team's Main or Alternate Contact of any change in phone numbers, mail address, or e-mail address so he/she can update the TIMS. Multiple phone numbers and e-mail addresses are necessary so we can contact team contacts during vacations, school shutdowns, and while the team is traveling.

Pre-college aged team members are not allowed in the TIMS. It is essential that the team record is kept up-to-date. We also suggest that you keep a hard copy of your team's contact information. Use pencil so you can make changes and distribute updated copies to the team.

1.7.2 TIMS Access for Both Main and Alternate Contacts

At the teams' requests, we have made it possible for each team to have two **adult** TIMS access persons*.* Both the adult Main and Alternate contacts can enter the system with their logon information and make additions and changes. They are responsible for accessing the TIMS, keeping the information current, and providing necessary information by the set deadlines. Keeping the information provided in the TIMS current and accurate is critical.

1.7.3 International Teams

Please be sure to supply your country code and city code as part of all of your phone numbers in TIMS. This is especially critical during Kit of Parts and robot shipment times because it is sometimes necessary to speak with Shipping, Main, and/or Alternate Contacts.

1.7.4 "Off Season" and Current Contact Information

Each team contact listed in the TIMS is responsible for informing the Main or Alternate Contact of any changes or additions to the team's TIMS record, including phone numbers and addresses. This is especially crucial during team travel times and during school vacations.

Provide the Main Contact's information area with a secondary address, home and cell/mobile phone numbers, and email addresses so we can reach him/her. If any of the team contacts leaves the team, add the new information and delete the former contact from the TIMS.

1.7.5 Mentoring Information

If you wish to sign up to mentor or receive mentoring through the TIMS, make sure your Main or Alternate Contact edits his/her TIMS record and clicks "yes" to the question "Share this address?" (or the email, or the phone). Find this in the primary address area.

Under "Team Information," make sure you answer the questions regarding mentoring by clicking the appropriate box regarding the following:
- We are willing to mentor other FRC teams.
- We would like to be mentored by another FRC team.

1.7.6 Team Names –Official, Short, and Nickname Deadlines

Please read below for team name definitions, uses, and the TIMS deadline. Enter the information in the TIMS "Team Information" area.

1.7.6.1 Your Official Team Name

The official team name includes sponsors and schools. We refer to them as Partners. Your team's official name is generated automatically when you enter the Partner information in the TIMS. It is what appears in written materials such as the *FIRST*

Program Books. *Update the Partners area of the TIMS whenever there is a change or addition to your partners/sponsors.*

1.7.6.2 Team Nickname

We must prepare our practice and match lists for the competition season, so teams must enter their nickname in the TIMS by mid January. The announcer uses team nicknames during the game when announcing the play-by-play descriptions.

1.8 JUDGES' INFORMATION

> **The Judges' Information page is crucial and a great opportunity to communicate your team's strengths to the competition judges. Please take advantage of this opportunity and provide this important information.**

The Judges' Information is a team overview page. It is your team's opportunity to share valuable information and statistics with *FIRST* and the judges at the events. These data are very valuable for planning events and very helpful in our efforts to procure funding. *FIRST* may use the robot photos you submit in the Awards Ceremonies. Enter the information under the "Judges' Information" section in TIMS.

The purpose of the Judges' Information page is to provide

- a common starting point for judging each team
- insight for judges into team's workings, history, goals, strengths, and robot
- team data for *FIRST* and its archives

1.8.1 Information Submission and Deadline

The submission deadline is Feb 18, 2009 11:59 PM EST.

(*FIRST* will not grant time extensions to complete this information)

Enter this data via the TIMS in the "Judges' Information" area. We recommend that you complete this exercise early, as you may have problems you can't resolve by closing time. We face a strict printing deadline when preparing for events, and we urge you to start and complete these pages as early as you can. If you ask for help early, Team Support will have time to help, but our small staff cannot help if too many teams wait until the last days.

1.8.2 Team School Demographics Information

To prepare for this project, you may want to gather information about your team. Put in your data in your TIMS record as you gather it. The following is an idea of the type of information you will need for this area:

- Number of years team has been involved
- Name of the Student Leader
- Team Budget for the year
- Robot photo
- Number of female and male students, engineers and technicians, teachers, and parents on the team
- How many freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors
- Teacher/Mentor information
- Percent of your school's student population receiving free or reduced-price lunch (this information is collected for *FIRST* and is not published in the Judges Information book)

Essay Portion – Please answer briefly. This section requires short, written descriptions of:

- Team history
- Team goals
- *FIRST* impact on the team/community
- Community description
- Team strengths
- Most significant challenge the team overcame
- Robot game and strategy
- For which awards is the Team is most competitive this year?
- Funding sources
- Why is the public aware of your team?

Photo: In the designated spot on the web page, insert a single digital photo of the robot. Judges rely on the photos, and they also help *FIRST* with media coverage and awards ceremonies.

Format: The Main Contact for each team will receive the necessary instructions for filling out the form via the TIMS. To ensure proper archiving, carefully follow the directions.

1.9 EVENT-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The *FIRST* Robotics web site includes important information about specific events. We advise that you print and keep copies of the "Site Info," "Shipping / Drayage," and any information you receive regarding the FedEx donated shipping process for the events you will attend.

You will be able to download the below information for the events, and you can find this information on the *FIRST* Robotics page by clicking on Regional Events or Championship. Choose your event and click on "Site Info" or other links for pertinent information, such as pre-order lunch forms. Provide the information to appropriate team members and mentors.

- *The 2008-09 Consent and Release Form is the only acceptable version of the form for the 2009 Kickoff and events.* Bring completed copies in case the originals are lost or the person carrying them is delayed. These are due at registration of your initial competition event.
- Site Maps
- Shipping and drayage information and labels
- Copies of pre-ordered lunch forms
- Team social events
- Be sure to include your FedEx information and instructions

1.10 REGIONAL EVENTS HOTEL SEARCH INFORMATION

FIRST will not be offering hotel reservation services for the *FIRST* Robotics Regional event season. Here are some recommendations for *FIRST* team mentors regarding placing team hotel reservations.

NOTE: If you can't get a large enough block from an on line third party web site, contact the hotel directly during normal business hours to speak with a reservations representative who is better suited to make larger blocks.

We suggest that you use the following tips to help with your hotel search.

1) Pick out three or four hotels in the same proximity of your Regional city to confirm approximate pricing for the marketplace within 3-5 miles to the venue. You can find a complete list of venue addresses for the Regionals on the *FIRST* Web site.

2) Use web based online driving direction services to confirm the distance to the venue.

3) Once you make your choices, contact the hotels reservation personnel and ask your questions directly. The following are examples of what features you will want your hotel to have:

- 24 hour security

- Free parking, or at least secure parking if it is in a city environment

- Interior entrance rooms - rooms that have exterior entrances are the ones that have inherent security risks. Also, any team member can wander off at any time.

- Hotels that have been renovated within the past 4 years

- Hotels that will disclose if they have groups in house that are not consistent with or are in indirect opposition to *FIRST* values or any other groups that tend to stay up late and can affect your sleep.

Other items to consider are:

- Will your room block be together on the same floor/area

- Is there a complimentary breakfast

- Is there free Internet access (about 50% of all hotels have it)

- Cheapest should not be the only qualifier. If the quality or location is poor, it can lead to an overall bad Regional experience. Without the proper sleep, you will wish that you had paid a little more for a better quality hotel.

4) Call and make your reservations as soon as possible. What rates you may find available now are not usually the same close to the event date when the hotel is close to its capacity.

1.11 CHAMPIONSHIP HOTEL INFORMATION

FIRST is pleased to announce that Steele Meetings, Inc will be handling the hotel reservation system in Atlanta for the 2009 *FIRST* Championship. The information for 2009 will be in place by December 3rd, 2008 at 12 noon EST. *FIRST* will send out an email blast so teams are able to make hotel reservations for the 2009 *FIRST* Championship. To contact Steele Meetings at any time, please email: first@steelemeetings.com

1.12 *FIRST* LOGOS

You have numerous creative opportunities for designing your own team identity. Every year we see great examples of how teams "brand" their efforts with web sites, incredible team logos on robots, T-shirts, hats, banners, fliers, and giveaways. These branding activities are a wonderful way to include students from art, communications, computer, and language arts classes.

As you manage your own promotion, you may want to incorporate the *FIRST* logo in what you do. Because our mark - the combination of the composite graphic element plus the *FIRST* wordmark - is registered, we have a few guidelines for you to follow when using the *FIRST* logo or the FRC logo. You can find the logos on FRC Communications Resource Center www.usfirst.org/community/resourcecenter

1.12.1 Logo Use

We encourage teams to develop and promote team identity. It is a great way to help *FIRST* judges, announcers, and audiences recognize your team at the competitions, and it is also a way

to help you create a community "buzz" about your team. Please refer to the usage guidelines posted on the *FIRST* website at www.usfirst.org/community/resourcecenter.

Once the game is announced at the Kickoff, you will soon be able to download this year's game logo from the *FIRST* Robotics Competition Communications Resource Center (www.usfirst.org/community/resourcecenter) portion of the web site under "Graphics."

1.13 PROVIDING CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP

For those interested in providing Corporate Sponsorship to *FIRST,* please contact the Development Department for information regarding the opportunity to provide sponsorship at (603) 666-3906 or (800) 871-8326, Extension 461.

1.14 HOW TO VOLUNTEER FOR *FIRST*

Each Competition event depends on an abundance of volunteers with a broad spectrum of talents to support operating needs and competition demands. If you have time, we appreciate and can surely use your help. Please visit the *FIRST* Web site page, and click on "Get Involved" on the gray menu bar. Choose "Volunteers," to find out more about volunteer opportunities. You can register your preferences for events and volunteer positions by clicking on Go Directly to the Volunteer Information & Matching System (VIMS) (https://my.usfirst.org/vims/logon.lasso?page=logon).