

5-5-5 Explanation

Long before telephones and radios, fire departments used the telegraph to communicate. When the handle was pulled on the once-familiar red fire alarm boxes found on nearly every street corner of America, a special code was transmitted to every fire station.

When a firefighter died in the line of duty, the fire alarm office would tap out a special signal. That signal was five measured dashes, then a pause, then five measured dashes, another pause...then five more dashes.

This became universally known as the Tolling of the Bell and was broadcast over all telegraph fire alarm circuits.

This signal was a sign of honor and respect for all firefighters who had made the ultimate sacrifice and has become a time-honored tradition.