

FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 2-3

ISSUE: RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

Firefighters should have a method of two way communication that provides contact with the Officer in Charge and with firefighters located outside the hazard zone, without removing the face piece of their self-contained breathing apparatus.

Coroner's Jury Recommendations into fatalities of firefighters emphasize the need for effective communication devices and procedures as a critical component in emergency operations. Communications devices and procedures should be used in conjunction with entry control and incident command systems and common plain text language should be used.

Desirable features when purchasing new communication devices should include:

- Compliance with the NFPA 1221-2002 Standard and APCO 16 and 25 Public Safety System Standards.
- For radios that may be used in potentially flammable and explosive atmospheres, compliance with CAN/CSA-C222 No. 157-92 or Factory Mutual Standards. The Section 21 Committee encourages fire departments to conduct a risk analysis on their need for intrinsically safe radios using the APCO Public Safety Standard.
- Multiple frequency operation to enable communication independent of normal dispatch channels.
- Safeguards against accidental shut off.
- Durability (i.e. resistance from damage due to water, chemicals, temperature extremes, rough handling).
- Ease of operation (i.e. controls that may be operated with gloved hands).
- A reliable maintenance and repair program.
- Where possible, radios should be checked in local area with other emergency services to prevent cross channelling at scenes (i.e. police, ambulance).
- Repeaters may be of use in areas where portable radios will not reach desired personnel (i.e. Dispatch, Incident Command or Firefighters away from their units).

- Hands free units may be of assistance in certain aspects of the fire fighting roles that require both hands to operate equipment.
- Simplex Channels (talk around) should be a capability of the radio system.

Once a radio has been chosen for specific duties, the appropriate training in regard to the capabilities of issued radios is required.