

FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 2-3

ISSUE: RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

Firefighters should have a method of two way communication that provides contact with the Incident Commander and/or the assigned Sector Officer as the incident dictates. When radio communications devices are used, they should be able to be operated 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. Fire departments should identify dead zones within their response areas and pre-plan accordingly.

In consultation with the Joint Health and Safety Committee or Health and Safety Representative, when considering new or upgrading of radio communication devices, fire departments should take into consideration the following:

- The need for intrinsically safe radio ensembles
- Ease of operation in full PPE – especially gloved hands
- Multiple frequency (talkgroup) capabilities that enable effective fireground communications, removed from unnecessary radio congestion
- Features that may safeguard against accidental shut off or accidental channel changes
- Durability (i.e. resistance from damage due to water, chemicals, temperature extremes, rough handling)
- A reliable maintenance and repair program with SOPs/OGs that cover the regular testing of all radios and radio features, including any emergency buttons or electronic radio identification codes that may exist
- The need for radio interoperability with other emergency response agencies
- In-building radio coverage and the potential need for in-building or mobile repeater solutions
- The need for hands-free radio operation
- The need for simplex (talk around) functionality on trunked radio systems.

Once radio equipment has been selected, the appropriate training is required. Training should include the use of portable radios in conjunction with full PPE.

Mayday and RIT deployment operations are known to cause significant radio communications congestion. Incident Command radio communications procedures to address these operations should be developed.

Reference:

GN # 2-1 Incident Command

GN # 5-1 Firefighter Accountability and Entry Control

GN # 6-11 Rapid Intervention Teams (Rescue)