

To: Municipal, County and Tribal Officials and Agencies Using Public Safety Radio Communications

From: David Steingraber, Wisconsin Interoperability Council Chairperson

Date: August 10, 2010

Subject: **FCC and Wisconsin Deadlines for Narrowbanding of Public Safety Radio Equipment**

This is an urgent communication that requires your immediate attention.

To take advantage of technology advances and to promote better spectrum efficiency for radio communications, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has ordered changes to public safety radio operations that will affect your community. By January 1, 2013, as soon as the clock strikes midnight, all radios operating in the Public Safety license pool must begin to operate on narrow-band frequencies. This means that local communities must take immediate action to ensure continued radio communications and avoid federal fines.

Operators that do not meet the narrowbanding deadline will be in violation of FCC regulations and subject to actions by the FCC. In summary:

- **As of January 1, 2013 most licenses for VHF or UHF systems operating 25 KHz frequencies will no longer be valid.** The FCC has ordered that all local and state public safety licensees operating at this frequency modify their existing licenses and reprogram radio equipment to operate on narrowband channels (12.5 KHz). If equipment can't be reprogrammed to narrowband operations, it must be replaced. Agencies that fail to convert for narrowband operations will lose their FCC license *and* risk fines of up to \$10,000 per day.
- In anticipation of the federal deadline, Wisconsin will modify its FCC licenses for statewide mutual aid channels to narrowband during 2011. Users of these statewide channels should prepare their radios for narrowband operations **between April and November 2011**. Channels affected by this conversion include: EMS A, EMS B, EMS C, FG BLUE, FG RED, FG WHITE, IFERN, MARC1, MARC2, MARC3, MARC4, NATSAR, POINT, WEM CAR and WISPERN. All radio units (local, state, or tribal) using these channels will need to be reprogrammed or replaced during this period to ensure reliable communications using statewide mutual aid channels.
- Public safety agencies that use their local VHF or UHF system for both mutual aid *and* day-to-day operations will need to **carefully coordinate the conversion to narrowband with neighboring jurisdictions** to minimize disruptions to local operations and regional mutual aid communications.

The process to move to narrowband began in 1991. The conversion deadline of January 1, 2013 was set by the FCC in 2004. Hopefully, your community is well on its way to relicensing and reprogramming radios or replacing any equipment as needed.

For more information, please review the attached information about recommendations for local action and check our website: www.interop.wi.gov.