

**NARROW-BANDING Of VHF and UHF Radio Frequencies by the FCC
(Revised to include companding restriction)**

It is the policy of the State Interoperability Council that all statewide VHF common mutual aid and interoperability channels be converted to narrow-band operation between the dates of April 1, 2011 and November 1, 2011.

The statewide common mutual and interoperability channels that must be converted to narrow-band operation include: EMS A, EMS B, EMS C, FG BLUE, FG RED, FG WHITE, IFERN, MARC1, MARC2, MARC3, MARC4, NATSAR, POINT, WEM CAR and WISPERN.

Revision: On October 13, 2009 this policy was revised by the Interoperability Council to restrict radios with “companding” features enabled on mutual aid frequencies. Companding methodologies vary by radio manufacturer and inconsistencies between radio brands can result in communication failures. Because Wisconsin public safety agencies are free to purchase radios from a variety of manufacturers and these radios may use incompatible companding methodologies, radios with a companding feature are not permitted on Wisconsin’s mutual aid frequencies. Equipment purchased for use on mutual aid frequencies with homeland security grant funds that are programmed with the companding feature are out of compliance with grant conditions.

While this policy deals specifically with mutual aid frequencies, agencies should be aware of the potential for communication failures for any shared systems where radios with companding features manufactured by multiple vendors are used.

Background

Most current public safety radio systems use 25 kHz-wide channels. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has mandated that all non-Federal public safety licensees using 25 kHz radio systems migrate to narrowband 12.5 kHz channels by January 1, 2013. Agencies that do not meet the deadline face the loss of communication capabilities.

Public safety agencies need to aggressively develop a strategy to meet narrowband deadlines to avoid cancellation of existing wideband FCC authorizations. Agencies are encouraged to plan well in advance.

Establishing a limited and reasonable timeframe for narrow-band conversion by Wisconsin agencies is intended to reduce the number of times agencies will need to reprogram radios (reducing costs and effort) and will result in fewer communication system performance problems. This policy addresses the need for a coordinated statewide approach.

The State Interoperability Council was established as the coordinating body for the Wisconsin Interoperability Initiative under Wis. Stat. §16.9645.

Adopted: April 9, 2009

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