

*Statewide
Interoperability
Executive
Committee*

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April, 2010

To: Chief Elected/Appointed Officials in Illinois
Special Attention: Users of VHF/UHF Radio Spectrum (150 to 512 MHz)
From: Illinois Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC)
Subject: Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Mandated Narrowband Deadline for Radio Equipment

All public safety and governmental users that operate radios in the 150 to 512 MHz range must take several urgent actions:

- The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has mandated that radio users in the 150 – 512 MHz radio bands must modify their radio systems on or before **December 31, 2012**.
- Some or all of your radios may not be legally operated after the deadline unless they have been reprogrammed for narrowband operation.
- The FCC can levy fines of up to \$10,000 per day for illegal operation after the deadline.
- Meet with your administrators, chiefs and department heads to make sure that they are aware of the pending migration to narrowband and ask what preparations they have done to become compliant.
- Check your entity's FCC radio licenses to insure that they are current and contain the narrowband emission designator(s) of 11K0F3E, 11K2F3E, 11K3F3E or other appropriate 11K narrowband emission. If the license is lacking a narrowband emission, the FCC may cancel your license after December 31, 2012. Resource information to assist with filing license modifications is attached.
- Inventory your radio assets, including base stations, mobile radios, handheld radios and emergency response pagers to insure they are narrowband compliant. A listing by manufacturer of many known compliant radios is attached for your reference.
- Go to www.ILEAS.org and complete the on-line narrow-banding survey. This information will be used to support and potentially obtain grant funds to offset some costs associated with replacing non-compliant equipment.
- There are no known FCC approved modifications for non-compliant radios. Non-compliant radios must be replaced or face possible FCC enforcement of rules violations.
- **Budget for and replace non-compliant radios before the March 31, 2012 Phase 1 (described on page 2) deadline and before essential statewide, mutual aid, and medical frequencies convert to narrowband, early in 2012.**
- **Budget for programming related costs to reprogram all radios, at least twice, to facilitate the transition to narrow-band operation, and then to remove all wide-band frequencies from your radios. (An FCC requirement.)**

Since 1992, the FCC has been working to satisfy the demand for additional radio frequencies in the 150 Megahertz (MHz) to 512 MHz frequency range. Local and county governments, police, fire, public works, parks and schools are in need of additional radio frequencies to coordinate daily governmental and public safety activities. To meet this need for radio spectrum, the FCC initiated several activities to create additional usable radio channels.

To create the additional radio channels, the FCC modified its rules to shrink the footprint, or bandwidth, of a radio transmission. To use a layman's analogy, currently most public safety radio transmissions flow through a 25" diameter pipe. On or before December 31, 2012, those same transmissions must fit through a 12.5" pipe. Most radios purchased after 2000 are equipped to transmit into the 12.5" pipe.

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Attn: Leslie Ivers, Secretary*

Unfortunately, thousands of radios in daily use throughout Illinois lack narrowband capability.

By now you are probably asking what all of this really means to your governmental entity. Essentially, it means that entities with radio equipment that is wideband only capable, and that is not programmable for narrowband channels, are faced with the expense of replacing some or all of their existing equipment. It would be prudent for you to inventory all of your radio equipment and check with your radio vendor, or the radio manufacturer, to see if your radio equipment is programmable for narrowband usage.

During the next 2½ years, Illinois entities using radio equipment in this affected frequency range must make a coordinated effort to migrate from the current wideband to the new narrow-band channels. Migration to narrowband operations for interoperable radio channels that are used between agencies, and across disciplines, in the public safety environment including IREACH, ISPERN, POINT-to-POINT, IFERN, FIREGROUND and MERCI and MED CHANNELS will be coordinated through the Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee. Local and regional radio systems will also require coordination, at the regional or local level. Without a coordinated effort, entities responding to an emergency could find they are unable to communicate with each other due to the disparity in emission bandwidth, even though they may share common channels.

The SIEC has developed a four (4) phase plan to accomplish narrowbanding of the statewide frequencies:

- Phase 1: Planning for narrowbanding, procurement of required base stations and mobile/portable radios and pagers, modifying FCC authorizations for narrowband operations. TODAY through March 31, 2012.
- Phase 2: Programming all appropriate mobile and portable radios for both wide and narrowband channels. TODAY through March 31, 2012.
- Phase 3: Convert statewide interoperable and mutual aid frequencies to narrowband operation in a COORDINATED manner. April 1, 2012 through October 31, 2012.
- Phase 4: Remove all wideband transmit channels from base radios, mobile and portable radios. November 1, 2012 through December 31, 2012.

Illinois' Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee strongly urges all state, county and local governmental entities to contact your radio service provider, or your in-house radio professionals, to get this process started. **Waiting until 2012 to address narrowbanding will be too late.** Be proactive – to prevent being caught at the last moment without critical radio communications. The FCC can levy fines of up to \$10,000 per day for radio operations that violate their rules.

The following web-links are available to provide additional information pertaining to the FCC's narrowbanding initiative:

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/technology/communication/fcc-narrowbanding.htm>
<http://www.apcointl.com/services/bulletin/documents/Narrowbanding.pdf>
<http://www.ilapco.org/narrowband.htm>
http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/Executive_Summary%20_111608.pdf

Sincerely,



Gary Cochran, Chairman Delegate
Illinois Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee

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