

August 11, 2013

To: Geographic Area Coordination Groups
From: National Multi Agency Coordinating Group
Subject: Radio Frequency Misuse

Firefighter safety is being compromised due to the misuse of radio frequencies. Crews, engines, firefighters, and aircraft personnel are not adhering to assigned frequencies used on division, tactical, command, and air operations. Personnel are operating outside of the Incident Communications Plan (ICS-205), using unassigned frequencies not authorized by the Communications Unit Leader (COML), National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA), Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

In several cases Multi-User Radio Service Frequency (MURS) have been used. These frequencies managed by the FCC, are set aside for the general public and unauthorized for use on federal incidents. The use of MURS frequencies, home unit frequencies, and Family Radio Service Units, are not authorized. Units and individuals found using unauthorized/unassigned frequencies are subject to disciplinary action, which could include an FCC monetary fine as high as \$10,000 per violation.

The use of unassigned/unauthorized frequencies creates a direct hazard to all personnel. Not following the ICS-205 Communications Plan, personnel are not on the assigned operational net creating gaps that allow for missed emergency communications and situational awareness of normal incident traffic.

This is a very serious issue that deserves diligence on the part of agency administrators, radio and frequency managers, and fire management personnel. It is important to ensure that firefighting personnel are informed and trained on appropriate use of frequencies and the serious consequences of misuse.

Please communicate and distribute this correspondence widely to ensure safe and effective operations and legal/authorized use of frequencies.

/s/ John Segar
Chair, NMAC

Cc: Geographic Area Coordination Centers
Cc: IC/AC Group