

Public Safety Communications Upgrade Q&A Document

Q:	Is Fire and EMS being dispatched on the same channel? Our current system does not operate in this manner and other 911 Centers do not use the same channel to dispatch Fire and EMS agencies.
A:	Yes, the channel plan for the new radio system does provide for Fire and EMS paging on the same frequency. This will be a change from our existing system, although we do dispatch an ambulance squad on the fire dispatch frequency today. Based on the available frequencies we have to work with, paging could easily be accomplished on a single frequency saving other frequencies for much needed voice communications. Paging Fire & EMS on the same frequency is not uncommon and County's are making changes to frequency plans as they address their own radio upgrade projects based on frequency usage and frequency availability (or lack thereof). As an example, neighboring Ulster County is in the process of moving their fire paging to the same frequency as EMS paging, Dutchess and Essex County also page on a single frequency.
Q:	How many channels will each new radio tower have? We have been told that each new tower is only capable to have 6 frequencies.
A:	The towers have been engineered to support future expansion and additional antennae loading. Sullivan County has purchased 6 frequency pairs from Motorola which will comprise the simulcast system and those frequencies will be available at all tower sites. There will be additional transmitter/receivers available at different sites for different disciplines including wide-area repeater communications, national/state interoperability frequencies, town highway, hospital communications, etc. The Motorola system ("the core") is capable of handling many more base station inputs leaving the County plenty of room to expand when/if additional VHF frequencies become available.
Q:	If each tower will only have 6 channels, how many of those 6 will be for Fire?
A:	Again, most towers will have more than the 6 frequencies available for communications, each tower will differ. Of the 6 simulcast frequencies, there will be a combined fire paging frequency and a primary fire communications frequency. Subject to a finalized channel plan and communications SOP, since ALL first responders will now be operating in the same frequency band (improving interoperability) co-channel use could be easily accomplished if the need arises. In addition the fire service will have access to the VHF, UHF and 800Mhz national interoperability calling and tactical channels, 6-8 on-scene tactical frequencies and a wide area repeater frequency as well. In total there will be approximately 12 channels the fire service would have access to during an incident.
Q:	Who are the other agencies that will be using the 6 frequencies and how many will they have?
A:	Of the 6 Motorola simulcast frequency pairs, planned use is as follows: (1) Fire & EMS paging; (2) Fire Communications; (3) EMS communications; (4) 911 Law Enforcement; (5) Sheriff's Communications; (6) DPW Communications. Each having one (1) primary operating frequency. Each discipline will also have access to non-simulcast interoperability frequencies including VHF, UHF and 800Mhz national/state interoperability calling and tactical channels, 6-8 on-scene tactical frequencies and a wide area repeater(s) as well.
Q:	How many channels can the 911 Center transmit and receive communications over?
A:	With the new system, tentatively, the 911 Center will be monitoring 15 frequencies with the ability to transmit and receive.
Q:	Has the County purchased pagers for Fire and EMS agencies in the county? If so, how many were purchased, what brand and model are they and what are their channel capabilities?
A:	The County has purchased pagers utilizing grant funding to help supplement Fire and EMS agencies equipment needs once the new radio system is up and running. The County has purchased approximately 250- Motorola Minitor V, 2 channel pagers; and approximately 250- Motorola Minitor VI, 5 channel pagers.

Q:	Our Company would like to see the preliminary operational plan for the radio system. We understand the fine points of the system have not been worked out but we would hope that there is a plan that shows how many frequencies the new system will have and what is the capability of the 911 Center. We have asked for this plan and were told there is no plan.
A:	A formal communication operations plan/SOP for the new radio system has yet to be created. In response to the requested information the tentative channel plan is attached which outlines channel configurations. It's important to reiterate that this configuration is tentative and subject to change based frequencies the County currently has FCC license to and/or may be able to license at different tower sites prior to build out of the system.
Q:	At the last County Chief's meeting in April we were told once an incident reaches the point it needs to be moved to an alternate channel, the 911 Center and Incident Commander will not be able to communicate on the alternate channel.
A:	The Incident Commander will be able to communicate with the 911 Center at all times on the channel designated for Fire Communications or an alternate channel subject to the final County communication plan. The 911 Center will not monitor or communicate on channels that are designated for mobile-to-mobile on-scene communications/operations.
Q:	Currently, when the county is dispatching they cannot communicate to the fire chief/incident commander until said dispatch has been completed, will this change on the new system? Will the chief be able to communicate with the 911 center while dispatch is occurring?
A:	We have made it clear to our consultant and Motorola that 911 must have the functionality to page and speak to incident command at the same time. They have indicated the system will be capable of this dual communication at the same time.
Q:	Will all VHF radios work on the new system or just P25 radios?
A:	The new system will operate in an analog conventional mode. Therefore, you will want to be sure your high-band VHF radio with a band range between 136-174 MHz, is narrowbanded, and is capable of MDC-1200 signaling. These are pretty standard features in most commercial brands. You can also purchase P25 capable radios as long as they can be used in analog mode as well.