

KMBC.com

Kansas City Radios Need To Be Replaced

Cost Of Replacing Radio System Comes During Budget Squeeze

POSTED: 5:20 pm CST January 29, 2009

UPDATED: 6:54 pm CST January 29, 2009

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- In the midst of a budget crunch, Kansas City is looking at the possibility of spending \$30 million for a new emergency radio system.

KMBC's Micheal Mahoney explains why the subject has come up, and why this may seem like a familiar story.

Around 10 years ago, Kansas City, Mo., purchased a state-of-the-art emergency radio system. Some have called the system a "lemon," because it didn't work well when it was first installed. The problems were ironed out, but now, like many electronics, it has to be replaced.

Another problem is that the walkie-talkie features on certain cell phones are on or near the same bands as the emergency radio system -- and that's crowding the city's system.

Every time there's a fire, Kansas City Fire Chief Richard "Smokey" Dyer said there are concerns whether a radio failure could cripple the department. While Dyer doesn't think things are that bad right now, he added, "We're limping."

The police, fire, and ambulance radio system is rapidly growing obsolete. The manufacturer doesn't make replacement parts any more.

Assistant City Manager Richard Noll said, "And some of the secondary markets we go to include eBay, to get some of our equipment."

The price tag for a new radio system is \$37 million. The city is already short of money and is considering cutting the police and fire budgets.

But then Chief Dyer told the city council what happened when a fire broke out recently in a Westport apartment building: "When our dispatcher tried to send out the united, they couldn't. There was no radio system."

The council doesn't think it has the option not to spend the money on the new system. Noll assured Mayor Mark Funkhouser that the city would not have to put up with the same problems experienced by the last "new system."

Related To Story



Video: Kansas City Radios Need To Be Replaced

The city may borrow the money to pay for the new emergency radio system, but the council may also ask voters for more money for the basics. Deb Herman, the city council finance chair, said, "Part of the what the council will do soon is look at what we might ask voters for, and this is one of them."

Copyright 2009 by [KMBC.com](http://www.kmbc.com). All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.