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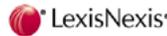
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Maine firefighters seek return to analog radio
FireRescue1 News



November 18, 2009



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Maine firefighters seek return to analog radio

By Meghan V. Malloy
The Kennebec Journal

AUGUSTA, Maine — Augusta firefighters are asking to switch emergency radio systems after the new one failed to send Hallowell firefighters to a structure fire Thursday.

The incident is one of three an Augusta firefighters' union cited in a letter Sunday requesting the city switch back from a digital radio system to an analog one.

Hallowell Fire Chief Michael Grant said digital radios failed during a structure fire Thursday on Second Street.

"The tone went out, but then the radio failed," Grant said. "There was a point where we didn't know where we were supposed to be going."

The fire was started when a flooded oil burner ignited during repairs at 93 Second St., a commercial property. While there was no substantial damage to the structure, the oil burner and wires were damaged and the sprinkler system was set off.

No one reported injuries, Grant said.

"By the time (firefighters) got there, it had burned out," Grant said of the fire. "The sprinkler system saved the day."

In the letter to City Manager William Bridgeo and Augusta Fire Chief Roger Audette, Local 1650 president Randall Gordon said he and fellow union members have been concerned that dispatch consoles have been going out of service, resulting in communication problems.

Three November incidents were cited. Gordon said in the letter he did not know if there were additional communication problems.

Sunday's letter was the second correspondence Gordon said he's sent to city officials on the union's behalf. The first was sent Oct. 9, he said.

"Hallowell Fire recently had an incident with the console being out of service during a fire call," Gordon's most recent letter said.

"These events are unacceptable. Local 1650 is recommending that we return to the analog system ASAP."

Saturday night, the console in Augusta went out of service again, Grant and Audette said, during an alarm call in Hallowell.

The call failed to reach firefighters.

"We don't want to add fuel to the fire, because Augusta knows there is a problem that needs fixing," Grant said. "But it has been an issue."

Audette and other city officials met with union leaders after the Oct. 9 letter, Audette said Monday.

"During that meeting, we identified the specific problems and made a plan to correct those," he said. "Some the goals have been reached, some are in the process (of being reached). But right now, we're at the mercy of waiting while the system is fixed."

The city began using a new digital communication system at a cost of \$1 million within the last six months. All but \$250,000 of funding came from federal grants.

Although the new system "has bugs that need to be worked out," Audette said, the department has been vigilant in making repairs. He expects all repairs to be completed in four to six weeks.

"I think anytime you install a new system, there will be bugs in it that need working out," Audette

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said Monday. "I'm confident the corrections being made now will fix the system."

Ralph St. Pierre, assistant city manager and finance director, said improvements are being made to the system as funding and grants come through.

"It's not like we got \$1 million and did everything right away," St. Pierre said. "You do things as money comes available."

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Motorola is going to rape you on project 25 radios because you have no choice but to use their crap.

If you want your project 25 radios to actually work then try these guys. http://metrocommnj.tripod.com/

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