

Subject: An Interesting Sequence of Events

From: Frank Benn <11-17@nsfd.net>

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To: "ggreen@isabellacounty.org" <ggreen@isabellacounty.org>, "taxladyesther@yahoo.com" <taxladyesther@yahoo.com>, "jjaszynski@isabellacounty.org" <jjaszynski@isabellacounty.org>, "jimhortonrph@charter.net" <jimhortonrph@charter.net>, "j.moreno@frontier.com" <j.moreno@frontier.com>, "ling1da@cmich.edu" <ling1da@cmich.edu>, "mfisher@isabellacounty.org" <mfisher@isabellacounty.org>

CC: 11-0 David Livermore <nsfd110@yahoo.com>, 11-1 George Flaughner <nsfd111@yahoo.com>, 11-10 Dan Mills <danm@michco.com>, 11-11 Randy Hall <gearhall@netscape.net>, 11-12 Jamie Smith <jamiesmithbuilders@yahoo.com>, 11-14 Keith Mills <kjmills2011@gmail.com>, "M.McAvoy_Isabella_County_Administrator" <mmcavoy@isabellacounty.org>, nancy_grace@cnn.com

Dear Isabella County Commissioners:

I have to apologize for my tunnel vision. During recent interviews with various Isabella County employees, I realized that the fire service digital radio fiasco might not be totally due to incompetence. It now seems to have some of the characteristics of a long-term business plan. Please feel free to correct me if I'm wrong about any of the following:

The Isabella County Transportation Commission was the first agency in Isabella County to go digital with their 2-way radio system. The drivers discovered lots of dead spots. Thousands of dollars were spent upgrading equipment to get the system working just with high-power truck radios. This was, most likely, a very profitable venture for some commercial radio service.

Ignoring (or ignorant of) the ICTC digital radio issues, Isabella County officials decided to convert Isabella County Sheriff's Department radio system to a digital system. A digital VHF system was purchased and installed. It didn't last long because officers could not reliably communicate with dispatch or each other throughout Isabella County. Maybe they perceived the failure of the new system as a safety issue (sound familiar?). More profits for a commercial radio service?

Next, Isabella County officials decided that the Sheriff's Department communications should be handled by the state-wide 800 MHz digital system operated by the Michigan's Public Safety Communications System (MPSCS). A large quantity of very expensive 800 MHz digital radios, both mobile and hand-held, were purchased and installed. Regardless of where the money for the purchases came from, I wonder who sold the radios to the County?

Here's the really astounding thing. Knowing that serious issues were encountered with the ICTC and ICSD VHF digital systems, Isabella County officials were somehow able to be convinced that the fire service communications should be converted to digital. Surprise!! The

VHF digital system didn't work for all the fire departments, either. More profits?

Next, instead of just fixing the digital VHF system, (or going back to the analog system that actually worked well in NW Isabella County for a quarter-century) the fire departments were asked to try the MPSCS 800 MHz digital system. Predictably, the tests of the hand-helds and pagers went pretty well in some areas, not so well in others.

However, implementing the 800 MHz plan for the fire departments will cost over **a million dollars** for new radios and pagers, and that's not all. They will have to pay an activation fee of \$250 **for each device** that uses the MPSCS 800 MHz system. That's \$250 for every portable radio, every truck radio, every base station (and maybe every pager). If a radio gets damaged or lost, it will cost another \$250 to activate the replacement. **One chief estimated \$240,000 to purchase radios & pagers for his department, alone.** That doesn't include the thousands of dollars of activation fees (12 mobile radios, 20 portable, hand-held radios = \$7,500 activation fees). Would a commercial radio service be interested in generating more than a million dollars worth of sales?

That whole sequence of events was probably just coincidental, right? But, if it was a plan... that's what I call a **very** crafty long-range business plan. The term "**government cash cow**" would fit a plan like that. It's the kind of thing taxpayers like to read about.

One more thing: The MPSCS system probably isn't the end game. Coming soon to a government near you: ***First Net: the nationwide public safety broadband network (NPSBN). Using nationwide 700 MHz spectrum, FirstNet will put an end to decades-long interoperability and communications challenges and help keep our communities and emergency responders safer. (Sure it will!)***

Respectfully yours,

Frank Benn
Firefighter/EMT
for an Anonymous F.D. in NW Isabella County

**READ HOW ISABELLA COUNTY OFFICIALS
HAVE ENDANGERED N.W. ISABELLA COUNTY
FIREFIGHTERS AND THE PEOPLE THEY SERVE**

[http://www.bennsci.com/Digital Radio Fiasco/digital_fiasco.html](http://www.bennsci.com/Digital%20Radio%20Fiasco/digital_fiasco.html)

The only thing more expensive than education is ignorance.
- Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is
for good men to do nothing.
- Edmund Burke (1729-1797)

A MAJOR INCENTIVE FOR CRIMINALS:
Law abiding citizens are almost always unarmed.

THE SAFEST PLACE TO COMMIT A CRIME:

A "no gun zone".

"The right of self-defence never ceases. It is among the most sacred, and alike necessary to nations and to individuals..."

-James Monroe,
President of the United States, 1818.

Smith & Wesson: One of the best life assurance companies in the world.

<http://www.bennsci.com>

- The Isabella County Digital Radio Fiasco
- Yellowstone National Park pictures & more.