

Subject: 800 MHz

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

Date: 3/5/2016 12:25 PM

To: Stoddardb@michigan.gov

CC: ShinewT@michigan.gov

Dear Mr. Stoddard:

This inquiry is personal and not authorized by the fire department of which I am a member or by any county or township official.

I am a 36.3 year veteran of the Nottawa-Sherman Fire Department located in Weidman, Michigan. I currently serve as a firefighter, EMT and Safety Officer for our department.

Normally, I would seek answers to my questions from our county officials. However, since I have recently been somewhat critical of their actions (and lack of action) regarding fire service communications in our county (Isabella), I will feel more confident in information coming directly from your agency.

In spite of hundreds of thousands of dollars being expended, the **VHF** digital system installed last year by Pro Comm Inc. for Isabella County fire service communications has failed miserably, **twice**. First for the law enforcement community and, currently, for the fire & medical first responder agencies. Conversely, the analog system it replaced had been working well for our department right up to the day it was shut down by Pro Comm Inc..

I, and many of my colleagues, feel that we are being "herded" into the MPSCS 800 MHz network. Our three main concerns are the cost to our department (estimated at \$140-150k), functionality and interoperability. Not only is our safety and the safety of our citizens at stake, but it will be our tax dollars that pay for the equipment and fees.

As taxpayers, firefighters and medical first responders some of our concerns about the MPSCS 800 MHz system are:

- the 800 MHz equipment is 2-3 times more expensive than VHF digital equipment;
- personnel may have to carry two different portables to facilitate maximum interoperability with departments providing mutual aid;
- the MPSCS charges a one-time \$250 connection fee for every radio using the system;
- the \$250 fee is charged again if a radio is replaced even though the total number of radios on the system remains unchanged;
- repairs to 800 MHz devices are much more expensive according to agencies now using them;
- even if we could get permission from MPSCS to add a 800 MHz tower/repeater in a weak/zero coverage area, it would be horrendously expensive (compared to our

- current analog system repeaters/towers);
- field testing with portable (hand-held) radios in our area has been very minimal considering the enormity of the investment;
- once on board with the MPSCS 800 MHz system, we will have absolutely no control over coverage issues;
- interoperability with departments in adjoining counties has already suffered with the implementation of VHF digital. A move to 800 MHz would not solve that issue;
- the MPSCS has total control over the rules of use and who is allowed to use the system;
- the MPSCS has total control over usage fees and can impose new fees at will;
- digital networks (computer controlled) are subject to hacking and software upgrade glitches;
- if the MPSCS system goes down due to a natural disaster or terrorist attacks, how will our various county/township emergency personnel and LEOs communicate with each other?
- reports of catastrophic failures of the Motorola digital 800 MHz systems in other areas (e.g., Detroit, Philadelphia, Port Richmond, Omaha) are disturbing.

If you, or some other person from your agency, could take the time to respond to these concerns it might lessen local controversy.

Thanks for your time,

Respectfully,

Frank Benn
Firefighter/EMT/Safety Officer
For an Anonymous F.D. in NW Isabella County

READ ABOUT HOW ISABELLA COUNTY OFFICIALS
HAVE ENDANGERED N.W. ISABELLA COUNTY
FIREFIGHTERS AND THE PEOPLE THEY SERVE
<http://www.bennsci.com/digital.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".