

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **NJ DEPUTY FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS REGIONAL COMMUNICATION AUTHORITIES**

By Chuck Aughenbaugh | March 24th, 2011 - 2:54pm  
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A system of Regional Fire and EMS Communication Centers, with trained and certified dispatchers, has been advocated by the New Jersey Deputy Fire Chiefs Association for years.

Our pleas to modernize our communication systems have in the past been ignored by State Legislators, and halted by lack of cooperation among Mayors, County Freeholders, and jurisdictional disputes with state agencies of how federal funds were to be spent. What has developed has been a mismatched communication system that resulted in the lack of computer terminals or GPS Systems in fire trucks and ambulances. Many of the largest cities and towns still have their Fire and EMS Units counting on paper maps to respond to Mutual Aid calls.

With each town having its own radio frequency or sharing with its next door neighbor, there is a problem when emergency units respond on Mutual Aid. Responding units on a Mutual Aid call may not be able to be in radio contact with the Incident Commander. Firefighters working inside a fire building that find themselves in trouble and call a "Mayday", only to have their call for help received by their own fire units or their own dispatch center, which may be many towns away. That dispatch center receiving the firefighter's "Mayday" then has to call the dispatch center of the town where the fire is and tell them there is a firefighter in trouble inside the fire building. In some counties or regions there is a single county emergency frequency that is in the fire trucks or ambulances but not in the portable radios that the emergency personnel carry.

This is in a time when 5th grade students in New Jersey use the internet to play chess with other students in France, England and many other countries around the world.

We have to admit that a lot of the opposition comes from New Jersey's Fire Services itself. One Fire Department doesn't want to work with another Fire Department because one is volunteer and the other is career. Some career Fire Departments don't want to work with another because they belong to a different union. It's time for everyone to wake up and realize there are financial problems in New Jersey and a "Regional Communication Authority" for Fire and EMS dispatching will save the towns' money, the Fire Department's money and maybe even some jobs.

What is our proposed "Regional Communication Authorities"? The "Regional Communication Authorities" would supply all dispatching service for all Fire and EMS within that region, along with the purchase of computer terminals, radios, portable radios and maintenance service, to ensure the economy of scale.

THE REGIONAL AUTHORITY COULD BE EXPANDED IN ITS SCOPE, TO PURCHASE ALL THE EQUIPMENT THAT THE FIRE DEPARTMENTS AND EMS UNITS NEED. For example, the purchase of fire hose that have the same threads, which is not now the case. Air Packs that firefighters wear would be the same, which is not now the case. Computer terminals and GPS units would be put in all fire trucks and ambulances instead of relying on paper maps that many of them are using.

Common radio procedures, common training would go along with the implementation of "Regional Communication Authorities". All the EMS supplies that an ambulance would need, from blankets, sheets, oxygen and other medical necessities would be acquired through this central purchasing agency.

For those naysayer's, who contend such a system cannot work, we ask them to look at the Borough of Manhattan across the Hudson River. Transpose the geographical area of Manhattan onto a map of New Jersey and you may understand the capabilities of a single dispatch center compared to the number of dispatch centers in New Jersey.

The "Regional Communication Authorities" would require start-up funds from the State to realize the long term savings of a single

regional dispatch center, based upon a single county or region. We have had Legislative Hearings and State Commissions to discuss regionalization proposals, along with support by Governors, present and past.

New Jersey's financial condition and the future of us all, demand that Democrats, Republicans, Independents, from all areas of the State, whether young and old, work together to solve our problems. Our proposed "Regional Communication Authorities" offer one area where the State, Towns and Fire Departments can save money.

**THE TIME FOR TALKING IS OVER, THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW!**

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