

OPERATIONS BULLETIN #28

Subject: *White Fire and VFIRE Frequencies - Radio Communications*

1. Introduction

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has designated radio frequencies for public safety use. Within the public safety frequency pool, certain frequencies have been designated specifically for Fire Intersystem communications use.

In California, three of these Fire Intersystem frequencies (154.2650, 154.2800, and 154.2950 MHz) have been known as the “WHITE” channels. The California Statewide Interoperable Executive Committee (CALSIEC), in cooperation with the California Fire Chiefs Association, are responsible for determining policies and usage of these channels. The Cal EMA Fire and Rescue Division serves as the focal point for daily coordination of these efforts, supported by the Cal EMA Telecommunications Branch.

Beginning early this year, several of these channels will be undergoing significant changes including narrow-banding as required by the FCC, as well as a change to the channel names in order to be compatible with national interoperability efforts (see Section 3 Narrow-banding, below). In Spring 2011, the White 2 and White 3 channels will be narrow-banded, and the names changed to VFIRE 22 and VFIRE 23. Additionally, VFIRE 26 will be added as a new Fire Interoperability tactical channel. The White 2 and White 3 naming conventions will no longer be used on incidents in California, effective June 1, 2011. White Fire 1 (154.280) will stay the same until the end of 2012.

2. Policy

The WHITE and VFIRE channels are to be used to provide for radio communications between two or more fire agencies for coordinating fire response activities during mutual aid incidents.

The channels, maximum radiated power, and authorized types of units are:

Name	Frequency	Maximum Radiated Power*	CTCSS	Base	Mobile	Portable
WHITE 1	154.2800	110 Watts	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
VFIRE 22	154.2650	10 Watts	No	No	Yes	Yes
VFIRE 23	154.2950	10 Watts	No	No	Yes	Yes
VFIRE 24	154.2725	10 Watts **	TX156.7	No	Yes	Yes
VFIRE 25	154.2875	10 Watts **	TX156.7	No	Yes	Yes
VFIRE 26	154.3025	10 Watts	TX156.7	No	Yes	Yes

* By FCC Regulations, operations in aircraft are limited to 10 Watts Max. Radiated Power.

** VFIRE 24 & 25 will not be available until 2013 when White 1 is narrow banded. Do not program these channels into your radios until that time.

The State of California and Local Government entities eligible to hold authorizations in the Public Safety Radio Services are directly responsible for the FCC licensing of the WHITE channels. Industrial fire departments wishing to use the WHITE & VFIRE Channels must be approved by the Chief of Cal EMA Fire & Rescue Division and must be sponsored by a Local Government entity with jurisdiction for their facility.

Permitted Uses

WHITE 1 may be utilized by fire department resources (including Strike Teams) to contact a fire dispatch center

- when outside of their normal response area
- when their own dispatch center suffers a communication failure

Announcements of special weather alerts or other emergency related information is acceptable.

WHITE 1 can be used as the initial contact channel for resources reporting to a staging area.

WHITE 1 is reserved for field unit-to-dispatch center communications, incident staging and dispatch center-to-dispatch center contact.

VFIRE 22, 23 and 26 can be used for tactical operations on incidents involving more than one fire agency

The WHITE and VFIRE channels may be used for multi-agency training exercises as long as the use does not interfere with other emergency operations.

Prohibited Uses

The WHITE and VFIRE channels are not to be utilized as a travel channel. The only acceptable VHF channel to be utilized statewide as a travel channel is the California Emergency Services Radio System (CESRS) channel.

On scene tactical operations should not be coordinated on White 1.

Announcements of a non-emergency nature (e.g. funerals, drills, etc.) are prohibited.

The use of Continuous Tone Coded Squelch Systems (CTCSS) or Digital Coded Squelch (DCS) is prohibited on the White Channels. Exception: VFIRE 24-26 have (CTCSS 156.7) on TX, the RX is carrier squelch.

The use of digital emissions (e.g. P25) is prohibited. All transmissions shall be analog.

The use of the White or VFIRE channels for paging or dispatch alerting notifications is prohibited.

The use of fixed or portable repeaters, including cross-band links from other bands such as 800 MHz systems, on WHITE 1 is prohibited.

The use of PTT ID signaling (MDC 1200) is prohibited.

Console patches from WHITE 1 to another channel are prohibited.

Tactical Audio Switches (e.g. JPS ACU-1000), and/or mobile relay equipment (extenders) are prohibited on WHITE 1.

Use by a single entity for intra-agency communications except as part of a multi-agency operation is prohibited.

Non-fire activities (e.g. air-to-ground contact with non-fire-based air ambulances (helicopters), non-fire-based ambulances, law enforcement, or other inter-discipline use is prohibited on any WHITE or VFIRE channels. The California On-Scene Emergency Coordination Channel ("CALCORD," 156.0750 MHz) is specifically designated for inter-discipline use, and its use for such activities is encouraged. To obtain authorization to operate on, or for more information regarding CALCORD, contact the Cal EMA Telecommunications Branch (916-845-8600).

3. Narrowbanding

On December 31, 2012 the wideband use of VHF public safety frequencies, including WHITE 1, will no longer be allowed by the FCC. All entities licensed to use the WHITE 1 channel must apply for a modification to their existing FCC license(s) as soon as possible in order to be compliant with the new narrowband licensing requirements. A new narrowband license will not automatically be issued by the FCC.