

OPERATIONS BULLETIN # 28

Subject: VFIRE Frequencies - Radio Communications

1. Introduction

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

In California, all six (6) VFIRE frequencies are in use. The California Statewide Interoperable Executive Committee (Cal-SIEC), in cooperation with the Cal OES Fire and Rescue and the California Fire Service is responsible for determining policies and usage of these channels. The Cal OES Fire and Rescue Branch serves as the focal point for daily coordination of these efforts, supported by the Cal OES Telecommunications Branch.

2. Policy

The 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.

Portable repeater use on VFIRE channels is not authorized. Portable repeater use for mutual aid operations can only be coordinated on VTAC34 through VTAC38.

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

| Name | Frequency | Maximum Effective Radiated Power* | CTCSS | Base | Mobile | Portable |
|---------|---|-----------------------------------|-------------|------|--------|----------|
| VFIRE21 | 154.2800 | 110 Watts | RX/TX 156.7 | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| VFIRE22 | 154.2650 | 10 Watts** | RX/TX 156.7 | No | Yes | Yes |
| VFIRE23 | 154.2950 | 10 Watts** | RX/TX 156.7 | No | Yes | Yes |
| VFIRE24 | 154.2725 | 10 Watts** | RX/TX 156.7 | No | Yes | Yes |
| VFIRE25 | 154.2875 | 10 Watts** | RX/TX 156.7 | No | Yes | Yes |
| VFIRE26 | 154.3025 | 10 Watts** | RX/TX 156.7 | No | Yes | Yes |
| CALCORD | 156.0750 | 100 Watts | RX/TX 156.7 | No | Yes | Yes |
| * | By FCC Regulations, operations in aircraft are limited to 10 Watts Max. Radiated Power. | | | | | |
| ** | Operations on VFIRE22 through VFIRE26 shall be at 10 Watts or the lowest power setting above 10 Watts available to the radio. | | | | | |

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VFIRE21, VFIRE22 and VFIRE23 are designated by the Federal Communications Commission as “Intersystem” channels, and are intended solely for interagency fire operations, i.e. mutual aid. VFIRE22 and VFIRE23 are intended for on-scene use and mobile only.

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 VFIRE21.

The State of California holds the FCC license for mobiles operating on VFIRE21 through VFIRE26 and CALCORD. Long-term operations by State of California and Local Government entities must be coordinated through Cal OES Fire and Rescue. Industrial fire departments wishing to use VFIRE22 through VFIRE26, must be sponsored by a Local Government entity with jurisdiction for their facility.

Permitted Uses

VFIRE21 may be utilized by fire department resources (including Strike Teams) to contact a fire dispatch center:

- when outside of their normal response area
- for dispatch center-to-center contact
- Announcements of special weather alerts or other emergency related information is acceptable.

VFIRE21 can be used as the initial contact channel for resources reporting to a staging area. Upon arrival, strike teams will be advised of which channel to listen to for assignment.

VFIRE22 through VFIRE 26 can be used for tactical operations on incidents involving more than one fire agency.

The 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 VFIRE channels shall **not** 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, 153.7550 MHz

Dispatch centers are prohibited from dispatching their own resources on VFIRE21 when their dispatch center suffers a communication failure.

Onscene tactical operations shall **not** be coordinated on VFIRE21.

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

The use of Digital Coded Squelch (DCS) or Digital PL (DPL) is prohibited on all VFIRE channels. VFIRE21 through VFIRE26 utilize analog PL/CTCSS of Tone 6 (156.7 Hz) on

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Transmit and Receive.

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

The use of the VFIRE channels for paging or dispatch alerting notifications is prohibited. Exception: Dispatch center to dispatch center notifications of an incident response is authorized.

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

The use of fixed or portable repeaters, including cross-band links, tactical audio switches and/or mobile relay equipment (extenders) (e.g. Technisonic Aviation Radios, JPS ACU-1000/2000, etc.) from other bands such as 800 MHz systems on VFIRE21 are prohibited.

Tactical Audio Switches (e.g. JPS ACU-1000/2000, etc.) in support of an incident on a "temporary basis only" are permitted on VFIRE22 through VFIRE26.

VFIRE channel 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 strictly prohibited on any VFIRE channel. 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 licensing authorization or for more information regarding CALCORD, contact the Cal OES Telecommunications Branch at (916) 845-8602.

For additional information or questions regarding Operations Bulletin #28, contact the Cal OES Fire and Rescue Branch at (916) 845-8711.