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Report of the Week

I can't hear anything

12/09/2010

Report Number: 10-0000184

Report Date: 01/28/2010 11:23

Synopsis

Radios malfunction during structure fire.

Demographics

Department type: Volunteer

Job or rank: Fire Fighter

Department shift: Respond from home

Age: 25 - 33

Years of fire service experience: 7 - 10

Region: FEMA Region III

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

Event type: Fire emergency event: structure fire, vehicle fire, wildland fire, etc.

Event date and time: 12/06/2009 02:45

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Cloudy and Dry

Do you think this will happen again?

What were the contributing factors?

- Equipment

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Other
- Lost time injury
- Life threatening injury

Event Description

While operating on a mutual aid apartment fire, I found that the radio that I keep with my gear had stopped working along with my partner's radio. The radio that I had was a second-hand radio that had previously belonged to an out of town police department. This is the same radio that I have had trouble with since I received it a few years ago. The radio that my partner was using had a dead battery.

Lessons Learned

I found that the radio that I had been using was not suitable for the needs of the fire department. It had been repaired several times before the apartment fire. Since then, I have obtained another more reliable radio to use instead. I have also notified a chief officer that the radio I had before was malfunctioning and unreliable.

I can't hear anything

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Report of the Week

The radio has evolved into an essential piece of equipment for firefighters. We rely on it as the principal means of communicating when we cannot conduct face to face communication. The technology of the equipment can vary from department to department. Departments operate on 800 MHz and VHF frequencies. The trend is 800 MHz. Some personnel become comfortable with the technology quickly, while others struggle on a day to day basis if assigned to any frequency other than their comfort "zone."

"While operating on a mutual aid apartment fire, I found that the radio that I keep with my gear had stopped working along with my partner's radio. The radio that I had was a second-hand radio that had previously belonged to an out of town police department. This is the same radio that I have had trouble with since I received it a few years ago. The radio that my partner was using had a dead battery.

Reliable radio communications make the difference between smooth emergency scene operations and heart stopping moments for incident commanders and firefighters alike. The failure of a radio is never convenient. It can usually be boiled down to a technology error or user error. This week's featured report, [10-184](#), provides a worst case scenario for a firefighting team; both portable radios fail for different reasons. Once you have read the entire account of [10-184](#) and the related reports below, consider the following:

1. Place yourself in the shoes of one of the firefighters in [10-184](#). What would be your next action after realizing your radio and your partner's radio was not working?
2. If your department is using radios from another agency, are the batteries intrinsically safe?
3. How can you identify an intrinsically safe battery from a non-intrinsically safe battery?
4. How often are your radios sent to the repair shop for a bench test and tune up?
5. List five ways heavy radio traffic can be reduced during incidents.

Related Reports – Topical Relation: Radio Malfunction

[05-572](#)

[06-126](#)

[07-936](#)

[08-061](#)

[09-687](#)

Submit your report to www.firefighternearmiss.com today so everyone goes home tomorrow.

Note: The questions posed by the reviewers are designed to generate discussion and thought in the name of promoting firefighter safety. They are not intended to pass judgment on the actions and performance of individuals in the reports.