To: GACCs, MACs, ACs, ICs

Subject: Frequency Misuse

Date: August 11, 2000

Firefighter safety is being compromised and the Fire and Aviation Directors for the Department of the Interior and USDA, Forest Service will not tolerate any such actions. Crews, engines, firefighting and aircraft personnel are not adhering to assigned frequencies for use on division tactical, command, and air operations. Many are using unassigned frequencies not authorized by the Communications Unit Leaders, National Telecommunication Information Administration (NTIA), Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and operating outside of the Incident Communication Plan (ICS-205).

As an example, on August 9, 2000 a strike team of engines was operating on an unassigned frequency and the Division Group Supervisor was unable to alert them to a potential emergency fire situation that was about to overrun them. The Communications Unit Leader alerted them via the unauthorized frequency and they were able to retreat to a safe area. If they had not been notified, they might have been injured or a possible loss of life may have occurred.

The use of unassigned/unauthorized frequencies creates a direct hazard to all personnel. By placing them off of the assigned net and not following the ICS-205 Communications Plan there is no way of notifying these units in the event there is emergency traffic much less normal incident traffic.

Frequency abuse, and use of Family Radio Service units, the “Satan channel” 166.666 MHz., and home unit frequencies are not authorized in any case. Those units identified using unauthorized/unassigned frequencies are subject to administrative action.

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