



**Today's discussion is from the
Miscellaneous Category.**

Radio Narrow banding

The ability to have positive, reliable communication is one of the most important safety considerations we have in Wildland fire. As we are forced to adapt to technological changes, maintaining good radio communications becomes more complex and requires a heightened level of skill and awareness from all firefighters. The following are some facts and suggestions that may make radio communications easier

- Federal Agencies have been congressionally mandated to narrowband their frequencies by January 1, 2005. State and municipal agencies will not have to follow suit until the year 2013. For firefighters trying to determine if a frequency will be narrow banded or not, this means that it is probably a good bet that Federal frequencies (those frequencies between 162.0000 and 174.0000 Mhz) are.
- Operating your radio in the wideband mode while working in a narrowband environment may cause radio communication problems for everyone working on that channel. The symptoms may range from distorted transmissions to no transmission at all.
- Before we were mandated to work in narrowband, frequencies were listed with just three digits past the decimal point. It is imperative that we now convey frequencies with four digits past the decimal point, for example 168.xxxx
- Some firefighters mistakenly believe that if they simply punch in four numbers past the decimal point, the channel will then be narrow banded. This is not true! Each channel must be programmed specifically to operate in wideband or narrowband. Narrowband programming instructions for most handheld radios can be found at www.fireradios.net
Another website that has programming instructions as well as pocket cards that can be printed is: www.fs.fed.us/fire/niicd/documents
- Check your frequency guides, plans and maps to see which mode the frequencies are supposed to be operating on. If these don't have the information you need, find it and make pen and ink notes for yourself.
- If available, have a radio technician check your radio to ensure you are operating in the proper mode on the assigned frequencies.
- Discuss the narrow/wide band concept with all firefighters, managers and pilots.

References:

[Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations](#)

Have an idea? Have feedback? Share it.

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