



FIRST RESPONDER COMMUNICATION CAPABILITIES IN NEW BUILDINGS

The ability for first responders to communicate during emergencies with one another and their primary communications center is essential. Large buildings have always presented communication challenges for law enforcement due to the materials used to construct commercial facilities and schools.

Police Chiefs should be aware of regulations promulgated in the [International Fire Code](#) to ensure that first responders can effectively communicate in newly constructed buildings. Collaboration with local building and fire sub-code officials is essential to ensuring compliance with fire codes and maintaining adequate emergency communication coverage in new buildings. However, determining any necessary communication equipment in a newly constructed building must begin during the local planning and approval process for the new building. The evaluation process may need to include communications testing near the end of construction before the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) by the local construction office.

Key Actions and Considerations for the Chief of Police

- Review [Section 510.4.2.2](#) of the International Fire Code.
- Initiate a planning meeting with local building and fire sub-code officials and other first responders to discuss or review:
 - The importance of requiring builders to meet the standards when appropriate.
 - Gather input from the Fire Department, EMS, and Emergency Management leaders to identify communication needs.
 - The need for communication capability testing before a CO is issued.
 - The specific radio frequencies used by emergency responders.
 - The location of radio transmission sites and equipment, including transmission power, to ensure adequate optimal coverage.
 - Determine If any signal transmission delay is acceptable and, if not, what steps must be taken to eliminate the condition.
 - The types of construction might contribute to radio interference that sometimes particularly impacts schools, storage facilities, and other large structures.
- Assist, as appropriate, building and fire protection subcode officials in connecting with relevant FCC license holders to obtain technical criteria. License holders may include personnel from police departments, fire departments, and other emergency response agencies.
- Discuss with local building and fire officials and communication professionals what specific technical criteria may be required for the planned building.
- Discuss at the planning meeting the likely responsibility of builders or building owners to install systems to

ensure adequate radio coverage inside buildings as mandated by the code.

Additional Considerations for the Chief of Police

- Although this bulletin is specific to new construction, Chiefs of Police should evaluate the need to conduct communication capacity and radio coverage reviews of applicable large buildings in the community to determine if there are communication gaps. When such gaps are identified, all officers, Telecommunicators, and agency personnel should be aware of these locations, any communication challenges, and the mitigating actions taken or considered to rectify the issues.

Collaboration among local building and fire officials, local first responders, and communications professionals is critical to ensuring officers and other first responders can communicate effectively.

If you have any questions, please contact your Law Enforcement Risk Control Consultant.