



CALIFORNIA FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION
ENDORSES FIRESCOPE PLAN
FOR NAMING RADIO INTEROPERABILITY CHANNELS
January 24, 2007

When the East Bay Hills Fire in Oakland, California needlessly destroyed homes and lives in 1991, the State Legislature mandated that all public employees be trained to the same standard. The Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS), modeled after the Incident Command System (ICS), became the standard for the management of all major emergencies.

Central to the effectiveness of multi-agency operations is common terminology, a basic tenet of ICS and SEMS. The Board of Directors of FIRESCOPE, an element of the Fire and Rescue Branch of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, is charged with setting interoperability standards for the California fire service. One of the standards they are called to approve is common terminology.

The California Fire Chiefs Association strongly supports the FIRESCOPE proposal for naming radio interoperability channels. That proposal is based upon existing federal and state nomenclature and sound principles of industrial psychology. The result is a simple, practical and user-friendly channel name. Since the vast majority of all the mutual aid incidents in the U.S. occur in California, the FIRESCOPE proposal is based upon a wealth of experience managing disasters.

The current names are perhaps not perfect, but they are widely used and well understood. Any change to this system must be collaboratively developed and thoroughly tested by line firefighters and police officers before a new standard is adopted.

By law, state and local agencies are responsible for disaster management, so interoperability standards must first meet their needs. Efforts to deny federal funding to states and local agencies that object to the cumbersome NCC proposal are neither collaborative nor productive.

Interoperability is enhanced by common terminology, but only if it is easily understood and not likely to be mistaken by those who need it during an emergency.

Contact:

John Penido, Fire Chief
City of San Marino
California Fire Chiefs Association representative to the
California Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee
626.300.0735
jpenido@smfd.us