

Big Tree Volunteer Fire Company, Inc.

Standard Operating Guideline

High-band Portable Radios

Revised May 20, 2002

PURPOSE:

Effective communications is a vital part of success at an incident. Two areas that are greatly impacted by effective communications are firefighter safety and operational efficiency. High-band portable radios can be used as a tool to enhance both firefighter safety and efficiency at the scene of an emergency.

POLICY:

The Big Tree Volunteer Fire Company provides high-band portable radios for use by any firefighter that rides Engine 1, Engine 2, Rescue 1, Ambulance 8, as well as for all 4 Chiefs, Accountability Officers and the Company Safety Officer. The portable radios are 16 channel VHF radios with scan capabilities. There are several frequencies programmed into them allowing for communications with other agencies that operate on high-band frequencies.

Big Tree firefighters will primarily operate on the Big Tree frequency, which is digitally displayed on the screen. Unless otherwise instructed, the radio should remain on the Big Tree frequency and should not be used in the scan mode.

All personnel responding to any incident that requires an engine or rescue should carry a high-band portable radio. Interior turn out gear and extrication jumpsuits have radio pockets on them so firefighters do not have to carry the radios in their hands. The high-band radios are equipped with a lapel mic, which should be affixed to clothing in an area that allows the firefighter to hear and make transmissions without a great deal of effort. **The chiefs, officers, and any crew leader must also carry a low-band portable radio to be able to communicate with the dispatch office, command post, and other mutual-aid personnel operating at the scene.**

The high-band radio will allow the Big Tree members to communicate with each other. It is inevitable that crews will get separated at an incident. Being able to communicate with each other and allowing the officer of the engine or rescue to track his crew enhances firefighter safety. The accountability officers and chiefs can track the movement of personnel throughout the building or fire-ground. Members can be warned of hazards more quickly. Firefighters needing help can call for it immediately. Finally, since low-band radios often fail to work inside certain structures and in the presence of RF interference, the high-band portables may frequently be the only reliable means of communication at the scene of an emergency.

Use of high-band radios also improves operational efficiency. The firefighter assigned to hydrant detail will have radio contact with the pump operator; Members at a motor vehicle crash or at a building can request tools and equipment from members at the vehicles saving time and energy; Outside ventilation personnel will have radio contact with the entry team. The benefits that come from on-scene personnel having the ability to communicate by radio on their own frequency are countless.

The high-band frequency should not be used for idle conversation. The users of these monitored airwaves must be professional at all times. When calling another member on the high-band frequency, it is advisable to call the other person by their last name or by the task they are performing. For example:

*Hydrant to Driver of Engine 2 – Driver of 2 on - Did you want the hydrant shut down?
Safety officer to Paul Krause – This is Krause, go ahead Safety – Are all of the FF's out?
Command to the crew on the roof – Roof on, go ahead command - Is that roof opened yet?
Captain Jones to Carter - Carter on – You can shut those lines down and pick up.*

The engines, ambulance, rescue and and chief's vehicles are also equipped with high-band mobile radios. This provides better reception and transmitting capabilities. When a call is dispatched, members waiting for a crew should contact the other Big Tree station on the high-band mobile to see what manpower they have. In cases where manpower is needed for a specific vehicle at the other station (for the rescue vehicle or a mutual-aid pumper), the manpower status at the other station can be obtained and a plan can be communicated as to how the manpower will get together to man the apparatus. The mobile high-band radios can also provide communications with the chiefs. Orders should primarily be transmitted on the low-band radio. However, the high-band can be used for non-critical transmissions when the low-band radio is in use.

It is critical to remember that the use of the high-band portable radios only allows communication with other Big Tree firefighters. It will not allow communication with mutual aid personnel or the dispatch office. The officers **MUST also utilize low-band radios to have communications with non-Big Tree personnel.**

At no time during an actual incident shall the VHF radio frequency be used for non-emergency or idle chatter by members of the Big Tree Volunteer Fire Company.