

COMMUNICATIONS WITH FIRE DISTRICTS AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS

8033

(No.28 October 2014)

CAL FIRE needs to communicate with hundreds of municipal fire departments, rural fire districts and volunteer fire departments where their responsibility areas are contiguous with, or within, CAL FIRE's areas. It is necessary to obtain written permission from these agencies to utilize their radio frequency assignments prior to transmitting on these channels. As it is not possible to obtain a master communications agreement to cover all such situations, it is required that separate agreements must be made with each agency. Such agreements must be made between the local unit Emergency Command Center staff and the person within the local jurisdiction that has authority to grant access to these radio frequencies. It is recommended that such agreements be made using PSCO form TD-400, "Radio Frequency Usage Agreement". This form requires the following information be provided by the local jurisdiction relative to the frequencies being proposed:

- FCC licensed Call Sign
- Number of Authorized Portables
- Number of Authorized Mobiles
- Number of Authorized Fixed Stations
- Channel Designation
- Transmit frequency
- Transmit ERP
- Emission Designator
- Transmit CTCSS / CDCSS Tone
- Receive frequency
- Receive CTCSS / CDCSS tone
- maximum power limits for transmitters
- locations where such frequencies may be used by CAL FIRE
- limitations on the use of the frequencies, i.e., prohibitions against aircraft use

State Administrative Manual (SAM) Section 4525 states that "the engineering, installation or modification, and maintenance of state-owned or state-leased public safety communications systems are accomplished through PSCO. All state microwave equipment must be budgeted, purchased, owned, maintained, and managed by PSCO". In accordance with this section of SAM, the PSCO is responsible for placing such local agency frequencies into radios owned and operated by CAL FIRE. Prior to a radio technician placing such a transmit channel into a piece of equipment, assurance must be given to the PSCO that written permission has been granted to CAL FIRE by the frequency's license holder for CAL FIRE to utilize this channel. A copy of a duly executed form **TD-400** provides this assurance. It shall be the responsibility of the CAL FIRE ECC staff to keep this form on file in the ECC for future reference and to keep the agreement "up to date" in terms of the number of mobile radios authorized, the license expiration date, etc. A copy of this document must also be sent to the Senior

Telecommunications Officer in Sacramento, a copy will be sent to PSCO for filing and informational purposes.

The assignment of frequencies by this arrangement only applies to the use of such channels in mobile or portable radios. The use of local agency frequencies in fixed station equipment (command center base stations, forest fire station base stations, mobile relay stations, etc.) requires an FCC license for that specific location **prior** to the station being placed into operation. Such license is obtained by the PSCO via a form **TD-229 “Radio License Request”**. If such a license is to be held by the State, a letter of concurrence from the local jurisdiction must be attached to the form **TD-229** granting permission to the State of California to license a transmitter on the proposed channel.

Often, a local jurisdiction will **not** grant the State permission to obtain an FCC license on their channel for a fixed station installation. In such circumstances, it is required that the local jurisdiction obtain such a license in their name for this site, and provide a copy of the license to CAL FIRE for posting at the transmitter control point per FCC regulations. It is **imperative and required**, that all transmitters be licensed by the Federal Communications Commission prior to being placed into service. CAL FIRE has been cited in the past for operating on local agency frequencies without the proper authorization, and will be cited in the future if licenses are not properly obtained.

Any agreement requiring expenditure of state funds must be approved by the Deputy Director for Fire Protection. In a cross-communications system between CAL FIRE and fire departments where the benefits are equal to each agency, each agency will assume its fair share of the cost. In any event, cost-sharing must always be proportionate to the benefits to be received.

[\(see next section\)](#)

[\(see HB Table of Contents\)](#)

[\(see Forms or Forms Samples\)](#)