



Coffee Break Training - Info Search and Web 2.0

Firetalk – staying abreast of fire service trends and topics via podcasts

No. IS-2009-5 April 8, 2009

Learning Objective: The student shall explain what a podcast is, identify several prominent fire service-related podcasts, subscribe to one using either a News or Media Aggregator, and listen to a podcast on a personal computer (PC).

This lesson builds upon the Coffee Break Bulletin “Harnessing the Power of RSS.” The rapid growth of broadband Internet connectivity in recent years has helped make the distribution of rich media, such as audio or video broadcasts, quick and easy. The fire service community has seized upon this capability by offering a variety of highly informative, easily accessible audio programs otherwise known as podcasts. Podcasts are nonmusical audio files that are distributed over the internet automatically through Really Simple Syndication (RSS). Although podcasts were originally developed for the Apple iPod, you don’t need an iPod to listen to podcasts. In fact, all you need is a computer. When you click on a link to a podcast your PC’s audio software such as Windows Media Player will begin playing the MP3 file automatically. (An MP3 file is a popular compressed format for audio files). Transferring the podcast to a portable MP3 player is optional.

What makes a podcast different from a streaming audio file? Remember, a podcast is basically an RSS feed that encloses and distributes the Web address of an audio file. Just like any other regular RSS feed, you can subscribe to a podcast using a News Aggregator like Google Reader or Bloglines. You can also subscribe to podcasts with what are known as Media Aggregators. Using a free Media Aggregator, like Juice, you can subscribe to a podcast and have any new audio files automatically downloaded to your computer as they become available. Media Aggregators also will allow you to copy any downloaded podcast files to a portable MP3 player easily. If you’d like to learn more about Media Aggregators, visit this Web site: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_feed_aggregators#Media_aggregators.

Here are two popular podcast directories you can search to find great audio content: Podcastalley.com and the Podcast Directory.



The following minidirectory of fire service-related podcasts is not meant to be comprehensive. It’s really just a good starting point. You’ll soon discover that podcasts are a great medium for staying abreast of the latest trends and hot topics in the fire service profession.

- Apparatus Architects: <http://dynamic.firehouse.com/broadcast/category/apparatus-architects/feed>
- Average Joe Firefighter: <http://www.fireengineering.com/podcasts/subscribePodcast.html?headerId=35>
- Campus Firewatch Radio: <http://dynamic.firehouse.com/broadcast/category/campus-firewatch-radio/feed>
- EMS Responder Podcast: <http://www.emsresponder.com/interactive/feed/>
- Fire Marshal’s Corner: <http://dynamic.firehouse.com/broadcast/category/fire-marshals-corner/feed>
- Near Miss Listen & Learn: <http://dynamic.firehouse.com/broadcast/category/near-miss-listen-learn/feed/>
- NFPA Monthly Podcast: <http://feeds.feedburner.com/NFPApodcast>
- Through The Smoke: <http://dynamic.firehouse.com/broadcast/category/billy-goldfeders-through-the-smoke/feed/>
- The Leader’s Toolbox: <http://dynamic.firehouse.com/broadcast/category/the-leaders-toolbox/feed/>
- Venting the Roof: <http://feeds.feedburner.com/hipcast/anJL>

How to subscribe via a Media Aggregator: <http://oneminutehowto.com/Subscribe/Subscribe.asp>