



Highlights:

Concerns Over Failure of Portable Radios Due To Heat

Signal Jammers Cause Problems for Responders

NFPA Report: Geospatial Tech and Wildland Fires

“Palcohol” Powdered Alcohol Alarms Lawmakers

Disclaimer of Endorsement:

The EMR-ISAC does not endorse the organizations sponsoring linked websites, and does not endorse the views they express or the products/services they offer.



The U.S. Fire Administration maintains the **Emergency Management and Response – Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC)**.

For information regarding the EMR-ISAC visit www.usfa.dhs.gov/emr-isac or contact the EMR-ISAC office at: (301) 447-1325 and/or emr-isac@fema.dhs.gov.

The InfoGram

Volume 15 – Issue 2

January 8, 2015

Concerns Over Failure of Portable Radios Due to Heat

Firefighting equipment and gadgets must be developed and made in such a way as to be able to sustain high temperatures; many lives are at stake for this to be an important part of the research and development process. However, new tests show that [portable radios can fail within 15 minutes when exposed to high temperatures](#).

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) released test results showing that [all seven of the radios tested failed to work properly](#) (PDF, 3.46 Mb) shortly after being exposed to temperatures consistent with a fully involved fire, 320 degrees Fahrenheit. After going through a cool-down period after the heat testing, only four of the units functioned properly.

Some firefighter fatalities and injuries have been linked to radio malfunctions or failures, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. While the NIST testing and report is aimed at improving standards for portable radios used in emergency response, the documented effects of heat on these radios is troubling and caution is suggested when relying on them during operations.

(Source: [NIST](#))

Signal Jammers Cause Problems for Responders

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) released a bulletin this week describing the problems signal jammers cause first responders and what to do if you think one is operating in your area. [“Cellular, GPS, Wi-Fi, and other Signal Jammers”](#) (PDF, 140 Kb), a short one-page brief, cites laws making the jammers illegal and shows pictures of common jammers, including disguised devices.

Signal jammers are any device “designed to intentionally block, jam, or interfere with authorized radio communications.” Owning, purchasing, selling, and manufacturing jammers is illegal. Jammers can interfere with emergency communications, including 9-1-1 calls and GPS devices, making them especially dangerous at or near crime scenes, fires, and other emergencies.

The FCC also wants to remind law enforcement agencies use of signal jammers is illegal for them, too. Some agencies have used them to stop unauthorized use of cell phones in prisons. There are also devices designed to stop a cellular signal from detonating a bomb, which [garnered interest during the 2009 presidential inauguration](#).

The InfoGram is distributed weekly to provide members of the Emergency Services Sector with information concerning the protection of their critical infrastructures.

Some indicators of jammers in use include: “dead air” on frequencies normally active, lack of audible click when keying a microphone, and abrupt loss of communications (especially if stationary). The [FCC’s website on signal jammer enforcement](#) offers more information, including how to file complaints, enforcement advisories, public notices, frequently asked questions, and a list of recent enforcement actions.

(Sources: [FCC/DHS](#))

NFPA Report: Geospatial Tech and Wildland Fires

The development of geospatial technology over the years has led to its increased use in emergency situations, especially wildfire response. The ability to visualize large tracts of land and terrain is crucial to the successful management of wildfires, making use of this technology in the emergency services much more than the fad some considered it years ago.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) released a new report detailing how Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Remote Sensing (RS), and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) benefit the wildfire management community. “[A Collection of Geospatial Technological Approaches for Wildland and Wildland Urban Interface \(WUI\) Fire Events](#)” provides an overview of the approaches and applications currently in use in the industry.

The features of the many geospatial programs available vary. Many offer modeling options for fuel load, fire behavior with different variables (fuel treatments, moisture data, and weather), and even how the staffing level affects the fire. Other programs offer mobile options, information sharing capabilities with stakeholders, and the ability to synchronize field data with a central system. Several offer post-fire assessments and mapping.

This report is an overview of current geospatial technology, providing wildfire and Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) responders and land management agencies a way to choose the decision-making tools and support them best.

(Source: [NFPA](#))

“Palcohol” Powdered Alcohol Alarms Lawmakers

On April 8th, 2014, the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau approved “Palcohol” – a [powdered alcohol which can turn water into liquor](#) such as rum. About two weeks later, they rescinded the approval, stating it had been done in error. However, the action brought attention to the product and many started debating its impact on public health.

Though the federal approval was canceled, [several states have already taken steps to ban it](#). Lawmakers fear that powdered alcohol will increase underage drinking, that it will be easier to conceal and sneak into concerts or sporting events, or that some people will try to snort it. Also, because the product will be in a variety of tantalizing flavors, there is concern that children could ingest it and poison themselves.

The website for Palcohol claims its anticipated release date as spring of 2015, though that is entirely up in the air and there are no official updates at this time. The product reportedly also has medical and industrial applications that would be regulated differently if approved.

(Source: [Time](#))

Fair Use Notice:

This InfoGram may contain copyrighted material that was not specifically authorized by the copyright owner.

The EMR-ISAC believes this constitutes “fair use” of copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the U.S. Copyright Law.

If you wish to use copyrighted material contained within this document for your own purposes that go beyond “fair use,” you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

DHS and the FBI encourage recipients of this document to report information concerning suspicious or criminal activity to the local [FBI office](#) and also the [State or Major Urban Area Fusion Center](#).

For information specifically affecting the private sector critical infrastructure contact the **National Infrastructure Coordinating Center** by phone at **202-282-9201**, or by email at nicc@dhs.gov.