

Andover Rescue Squad

By Anne Hewitt
Andover Rescue Squad

Andover recently received 44 portable radios through a Homeland Security Grant for use by the fire departments and Rescue Squad. Members who are to receive radios must learn how the radios work and how to correctly and efficiently operate them, prior to distribution and use.

Growing populations and numbers of devices that use airwaves are rapidly occupying available "airspace." The efficient use of "air time" – the time it takes to transmit information – is becoming more critical. Talking to friends on your cell phone is one thing, but the time it takes to direct emergency personnel to a fire or life-threatening emergency is another.

"Clear, concise and consistent radio transmissions are our goal," said K.G. Lockwood, Deputy Chief of Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid (LRMFA). "Think before you speak, use plain English, speak clearly, and keep it short. That's how we get people to where they're needed and how they know what to expect when they get there."

How It Happens

Radio communications are vital to Emergency Medical Service (EMS) operations, fire fighters, and police. Cell phones and wireless Internet access aid interaction, but responders rely on radio to find out where to go and what to do. Dispatchers can advise multiple units over the airwaves of the location, type of situation, and need for equipment. To expedite these operations, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been developed and are regularly updated.

LRMFA is the agency that dispatches service for the Andover and East Andover Fire Departments, the Andover Rescue Squad, and for 44 other towns and agencies. Calls for help come to LRMFA from the state 911 operators, cell phones, radios, alarm companies, and other mutual aid centers.

Our bordering communities to the south and east – Salisbury and Warner – belong to the Capital Area compact. Wilmot dispatches through New London. Andover units must be able to communicate with all of them for



Dave Hewitt, radio programmer, and Phil Hackmann, Andover Rescue Squad Vice President, discuss radio operation and communication during a training session for emergency responders. Photo: Anne Hewitt

response to incidents close to the town line and requests for mutual aid.

When first responders arrive on the scene, they must quickly assess the need for additional people and equipment. Keeping the airwaves open for vital information is critical to getting the necessary response. Severe storms and highly visible motor vehicle accidents or fires can generate dozens of calls to dispatch centers. Dispatchers must quickly sort out all this information and make the appropriate calls based on their training and experience.

Improving Communication

Communication training is a frequent topic of continuing education for emergency personnel. The public's help is also critical in getting the facts about where exactly an emergency is and what's happening.

"A big part of what Emergency Services does involves public education," added Andover Rescue Squad President Ed Becker. "Whether it be injury prevention or how to best get in touch with us, talking to each other is critical to getting the job done. We're always looking for ways to improve communications, and we always welcome input on how we can do a better job."

For more info about the Andover Rescue Squad, call Ed Becker at 735-5338.

POLICE BLOTTER

The Andover Police Department responded to 202 calls for service from August 15 to September 15.

The following is a partial breakdown of those calls.

- Traffic accidents – 3
- Missing persons – 1
- Sexual offender registration – 1
- Harrassing communication – 1
- Criminal mischief – 2
- Animal complaints – 4
- Assist to other police – 8
- Summons – 23
- Warnings – 78
- Criminal trespass – 1
- Suspicious person or vehicle – 6
- Thefts – 2

Arrests

- Sherie Runnels, 23, Lawrence, Massachusetts, Bad checks
- Timothy Currier, 18, Andover, Operating after revocation, breach of bail
- Michael Levesque, 48, Andover, Resisting arrest, breach of bail, domestic order violation, disorderly conduct, stalking
- Justin Renfrew, 21, Andover, Speeding
- Charles Sargent, 45, Northfield, Operating after suspension
- Justin Keyser, 22, Andover, Electronic bench warrant
- Howard Menard, 53, Florida, Operating after suspension

East Andover Fire Department

By Rene Lefebvre

Chief, East Andover Fire Department

I had been planning to write about chimney fires, how to prevent them and what to do if you have one. Though you must be bursting with excitement about that subject, I am compelled to discuss with you another current issue. But if you do have a chimney fire, call 911.

I have been asked what I think about the possibility of Elbow Pond Road becoming a dead end road at Mountain Brook. On balance, firemen do not like dead end roads. Here are some reasons why.

Fire training teaches us that the first engine out of the barn is the attack engine. That truck is placed near the fire, and all water is supplied to that engine. All lines that fight the fire come from that truck.

Step two of the fire bible is to place a second attack engine close to the first to act as a backup. A fireman fighting the fire inside a building depends on the hose lines and water to keep him safe and, in extreme cases, alive. A rock the size of a pea can take a pump out of service, so the back up engine is essential. We need room to make that happen.

Step three is to bring tankers to the scene to keep an ample supply of water.

We often use 1,000 gallons per minute. The good book says that ten tankers are needed for every mile of travel to the water source to be able to meet water supply demands. The best and only way to pull that off is to have the trucks approach the scene, drop their water, and keep going in the same direction, making a loop from the fire to the water source to fill with water and return.

Every seasoned fire officer can recall horror stories of trying to turn tankers around and coordinate trucks returning for water down a dead end road. Those fires generally have poor outcomes.

Lastly is the ambulance. The first commandment of the fire service is "Do not block in the ambulance with a fire truck." Two of our emergencies in the past year have sent three firemen to the hospital. A dead end road often requires us to park our ambulance a long distance from the incident.

As a stubborn Yankee, I support the fact that living on a dead end road offers privacy and a quiet lifestyle without traffic. That is your choice.

As your fire chief, I want people to understand that there is a genuine risk to life and safety, for you and for the emergency responders.

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