

**United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Office of Fire and Aviation  
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To: SDs, Center Managers

From: Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Subject: Issue Paper on Use of Fire Funds for Radio Related  
Costs in FY2001

At the National Information Resource Management Advisory Committee (IRMAC) meeting held in Santa Fe, NM, 1/23-25/01, there was a briefing by John Gebhard, Chief, IRM, Office of Fire and Aviation, on planned funding from the fire program for radio related items. The following table summarizes the information:

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
Towers	\$1,600,000	requested \$1,000,000	requested \$1,000,000

NIRSC Cache (3,000-3,500 handhelds)	\$1,000,000	requested \$1,000,000	requested \$1,000,000
Mobiles (10- year replacement plan)	\$300,000	requested \$300,000	requested \$300,000
Portables (10- year replacement plan)	\$1,500,000	requested \$1,000,000	requested \$1,000,000
Radio Infrastructure (mountaintops, power, grounding, consoles, etc.)	\$3,000,000	requested \$3,000,000	requested \$11,700,000
Total	\$7,400,000	requested \$6,300,000	requested \$15,000,000

It should be noted these fire funds are in addition to the funds that States have planned for replacement/upgrade of their radio equipment and infrastructure. At the conclusion of the presentation, there was concern expressed by the State Chief Information Officers (SCIOs) including:

- 1/3 of FY2001 is already gone;
- the allocation of these funds is not included in the Annual Work Plan about to be released, and it is not clear how or when they will be allocated;
- for FY2001, most of the radio infrastructure funding should be allocated for radios, but consideration given to other high priorities decided upon through coordination between the SCIO's and State Fire Management Officers (SFMOs);
- contracting is going to be saturated later this fiscal year; and
- fire season will start soon and changes to radios during the season is risky.

The consensus of the group was that we need to get the funds out as soon as possible, that they did not think a long drawn out process involving a data call was the best way to go, and that we should come up with a reasonably equitable means to allocate the money as soon as possible and require the States to submit plans for the use of the funds to meet high priority fire program radio needs.

As a result of these concerns, John Gebhard, Andy Smith, Ron Strong and Mike Howell were requested to coordinate on a proposal and make a recommendation to address these concerns by February 2.

### **Options for Determining Allocations**

Four options for determining allocations of these fire dollars were reviewed. They ranged from generating a data call to request more detailed information from the States to allocation of the fire funds based upon each State Fire Program Most Efficient Level (MEL) of funding.

### **Recommendation**

John Gebhard, Ron Strong, Andy Smith and Mike Howell held a conference call on 1/31/01 to discuss the options and develop a recommendation per the IRMAC request. The following facts came out during the call:

1. Radio Towers - The headquarters engineering group has issued another data call to the States with criteria to prioritize their radio tower projects. Those projects already funded for FY2001 from sources other than fire may be authorized to proceed as planned. When fire funds are allocated, there is no set formula (and no need for one) to specify the amount of funding fire will contribute and the amount other programs will contribute on a tower-by-tower basis. Since the results of this data call should drive the allocation of \$1.6 million fire funds for radio towers, the recommendation is to hold the funds until the responses from the States are available and work with the engineering program to allocate the funds based on those responses.
2. NIRSC Cache, Fire Mobile Radios, and Fire Portable Radios - The new Racal digital radios have not been operationally field tested and approved for fireline use. Testing was planned to be completed in July, so the approval and purchasing could not realistically proceed until the last two months of the fiscal year. This would result in a very short time to proceed with the

procurement before the year end shutdown (usually starts in mid-August depending on the size of the procurement). The recommendation is to accelerate the testing by a month to be completed by June 1 to provide one more month to proceed with the procurement. This is if the new Racal digital radios needed for the operational testing can be provided from the manufacturer by the requested delivery date. If not, then the due date for the testing results would be July 1. We recommend that the measure of success for this year probably needs to be obligation of the funds, not expenditure and not delivery of the product given the testing scenario. We further recommend that State funding levels for purchase of digital P-25 equipment is re-identified. We also recommend minimizing the purchase of P-25 digital radios for fireline use until the operational fireline testing is completed. A separate IM will be issued shortly identifying the specifics associated with the operational fireline testing.

It is also recommended that when we do proceed with the procurement, that it be conducted as a centralized national purchase with delivery to the involved States for contracting efficiency and the best bulk purchase price. If States have a need to make critical purchases of Racal Radios in the meantime with other funds, they need to be instructed that those radios should not be used for critical safety situations such as on the fireline unless a redundant means of radio communications (i.e., existing wideband King radio) is also provided. States may also want to consider providing this redundant capability for employees not directly involved in fire operations. The funds for these radios should be allocated based upon the ten-year replacement plan. The attachment to this IB provides the fire mobile and portable inventory back to the States and asks them to separate the fire radios from the

law enforcement radios in that inventory.

3. Radio Infrastructure - (mountain tops, power, grounding, consoles, etc.) - It was suggested that this is an area where the States need to focus their attention this year, and where we could proceed to sort out the funding needs as quickly as they can identify prioritized lists of funding needs. However, there is a concern that we also need to coordinate this effort with engineering so we do not develop conflicts or double counts with the deferred maintenance five-year plan for facilities. The recommendation is to request States validate their existing infrastructure replacement plans and provide an updated prioritized list (if needed) to Ron Strong, BLM Telecommunications Manager, to coordinate the allocation of funds with the engineering program.

**Recommended Management Decision Process:**

1. John Gebhard, Ron Strong, Andy Smith and Mike Howell will provide their recommendations to the IRMAC for review and comment.

2. The Assistant Director for IRM, Assistant Director for Minerals, Realty and Resource Protection, and the Director of the National Office of Fire and Aviation should be briefed on the recommendations and the IRMAC comments since the decisions will involve the fire, IRM and engineering, and lands programs.
3. An instruction memorandum be jointly issued between their staffs conveying the final decisions, including interim policy direction and a request for the data needed to allocate the funds. Fire funds will be allocated as early in the fiscal year as possible based on:
  - the results of the engineering data call for the towers;
  - the identification by the States of fire mobile and portable radios in the ten year replacement plan; and
  - a validation by the States of a prioritized list of equipment, facilities, and other related infrastructure costs.

If you have any questions concerning this IB, please contact John Gebhard 208-387-5164 or Ron Strong 303-236-6635.

Signed by:

Timothy M. Murphy  
Acting Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Authenticated

by:

Pat Lewis  
Supervisory  
Mgmt. Asst.

1 Attachment

1 - List Mobile and Portable Radios by State

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## List Mobile and Portable Radios by State

This list shows the number of radios by state proposed for replacement using fire funds. Please review this list for accuracy and ensure that these numbers are only for fire radios.

<b>State</b>	<b>Mobile</b>	<b>Portable</b>
Alaska	15	294
Arizona	76	174
California	97	376
Colorado	40	155
Idaho	170	269
Montana	66	196
New Mexico	25	102
Nevada	115	368
Oregon	147	565
Utah	50	435
Wyoming	25	261

Attachment 1