



# Interagency Aviation TECH BULLETIN



February 21, 2008

**NUMBER:** IA 08-01  
**DISTRIBUTION:** All Aviation Users  
**SUBJECT:** P25 Radio Implementation

The interagency fire community is committed to the aviation P25 radio implementation policy which requires P25 digital radios in all fire aircraft by January 1, 2010.

Rumors exist that waivers to this policy will be forthcoming. Such rumors are untrue. This policy was created to implement the Department of the Interior's P25 digital radio policy, which the USDA Forest Service has embraced. P25 digital radios are designed to operate in three modes: analog wideband (the old system); analog narrowband (the current system); and digital narrowband (the future system).

An additional unintended positive effect of this policy is the mitigation of problems associated with the implementation of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) recent narrowbanding plan, which applies to all non-Federal parties. This FCC plan differs from the recent narrowbanding plan required by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), which applies to all Federal Government agencies. The FCC plan has negatively impacted fire operations due to the fact that certain new FCC frequencies are incompatible with some existing analog aviation FM radios. P25 digital aviation FM radios are capable of operating on all frequencies assigned by the FCC and the NTIA.

There are currently only two radios known to meet the fire P25 digital radio requirement: Northern Airborne Technology's (NAT) NPX136D and Technisonic Industries' TDFM-136. It is anticipated that a majority of operators will delay purchasing P25 digital compliant radios until the January 1, 2010, deadline. NAT and Technisonic rely on third party manufacturers for radio components, and these components may take several months to acquire. NAT and Technisonic have assured us that they will not be able to manufacture a large quantity of P25 radios in a short timeframe. Accordingly, it is highly suggested that all aviation operators place their orders for P25 digital radios as soon as possible to avoid delays in aircraft approval.

Effective January 1, 2010, all aircraft requiring an FM radio must be equipped with P25 digital equipment. After this date, any analog-only radio, including mobile and portable radios, will not be acceptable for fire use.

“Aviation P25 Radio Implementation” (policy letter):

[http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/niicd/docs/p25\\_aviation\\_radio\\_memo.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/niicd/docs/p25_aviation_radio_memo.pdf)

Acceptable VHF-FM Aeronautical Radios: <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/niicd/documents.html>

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