

Fort Smith Police and Fire Scanner Information

Citizens who have been monitoring Fort Smith Police Department and Fort Smith Fire Department radio transmissions in the 400 megahertz (MHz) frequency range may have noticed an unusual silence on their analog scanners since mid-July, 2008. The two agencies recently converted to a new 700 MHz digital radio system. Consequently, the older style analog scanners no longer receive transmissions from these agencies anymore.

In early 2006, after voters supported a temporary sales tax increase, Fort Smith and Sebastian County officials signed a contract with Motorola to build the new 700 MHz digital trunked public safety system. This new system was needed because the 30- year old UHF system was no longer reliable for public safety personnel.

After building towers, installing new equipment and testing for problems, the 700 MHz was deployed in June 2008. During the transition to the new system, the police and fire departments were able to link the old and the new system to assure the new system worked flawlessly. In mid-July 2008 the old 400 MHz system was switched off leaving the police and fire departments with the much safer and more effective 700 MHz radio system. So far the new system has provided better radio coverage with less interference. The system has also opened up many other talk groups to be available for officers or fire personnel working major events or transferring sensitive information.

The unfortunate consequence of this switch to newer technology has been that the analog radio scanners used by citizens to receive fire and police calls are no longer able to receive the new digital 700 MHz signals broadcast by the police and fire departments. Analog scanners that are 700 MHz compatible will only hear a hissing or buzzing sound if they tune to the digital signals. Additionally, much of the radio traffic, including conversations giving personal information, will be encrypted to protect citizens from identity theft. The main police and fire talk groups (formerly Police Channel One and Fire Channel One) will still be available for listeners to monitor the excitement of local police and fire radio.

As of July 2008, citizens who are interested in listening to Fort Smith fire and police primary talk groups (as well as many of the Sebastian County Sheriff's and Emergency Services talk groups) must acquire a DIGITAL, TRUNKING SCANNER, THAT IS APCO 25 COMPATIBLE. Currently, *Radio Shack and Uniden/Bearcat* are the only two manufacturers who are marketing such a scanner. Scanners may be purchased at local electronics stores and online with prices starting at \$500.00.

Buyers should take care to assure the new scanners they are purchasing are able to receive transmissions from the new local system. It is also strongly suggested that the buyer of a digital, APCO 25 compatible, trunking scanner purchase the programming software and cables that allow the use of a personal computer to simplify the scanner's programming process.

** The City of Fort Smith, The Fort Smith Police Department nor the Fort Smith Fire endorse any particular equipment manufacturer or retail outlet regarding the sale or operation of radio scanners or any other equipment necessary to receive local public safety transmissions.*

LOCAL TALK GROUP FREQUENCIES

764.20625
764.45625
764.70625
764.95625
765.20625

765.45625
765.70625
765.95625
774.08125
774.33125

774.58125
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