

FIRE SERVICE RADIO NEWS

November/December 2014



Preventative Maintenance Improves Radio Performance and Reduces Replacement Costs

You check the oil regularly and make sure the gas cap is tightened after every fill-up. The pump is tested to spec every year to make sure it is running properly. You maintain your apparatus because you know that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Do you maintain your radio equipment the same way?

Regular maintenance of mobile radio systems is neglected all too often.

The radios mounted in your trucks are extremely reliable pieces of equipment, engineered to work under harsh conditions for years at a time. Here at Alcom, we have found that the majority of service issues with truck mounted radios can be traced to problems with auxiliary components rather than the radios themselves. The performance of any radio depends on the performance of the connectors, cable and antenna that it is attached to.

Here is a summary of the most common problems.

Corrosion. If the truck body has corrosion where the antenna is mounted, the grounding may be inadequate. Corrosion at the top of the antenna mount will lead to a poor connection between the coax and the antenna. Corrosion within the antenna coil can cause the antenna to be mistuned. The older the apparatus, the more likely these problems are to arise.

Old Coax Cable. Environmental conditions take their toll on coax cable. We experience extreme weather fluctuations in Manitoba, and apparatus enters a warm fire hall after hours in the crisp winter air. Under these conditions, condensation can begin to form in between the outer coating of the coax and the shielding that protects the conductor. The coax can begin to show signs of damage in as few as five years.

Loose connections. The vibrations associated with driving on Manitoba's roads can lead to loose connections, where the coax connects to the radio,

where it connects to the antenna mount, and where the antenna screws on to its mount.

When the energy produced by the radio is unable to get through to the antenna, a high standing wave forms. The first consequence is poor radio performance. Poor radio performance is a warning sign that must be taken seriously.



Alcom offers annual maintenance service for all your radio equipment. Our radio technicians will come to your fire hall and thoroughly check all your radios, antennas, cables and connectors. With parts on hand in our mobile workshop, they will be able to solve most problems right on-site.

Left unchecked, the standing wave will cause the power amplifier in the radio to overheat and fail. The risk of overheating is particularly high when the radio is being used intensely. The times when your radios get used intensely are the same times when you need your radios working well – when you are on an emergency scene.

It is far less expensive to fix a minor problem than to wait until that minor problem leads to replacing the radio. Radio failure of this type can be avoided by performing regular maintenance on your radio equipment. The underlying problems can be easily solved, but you have to find them first.



30th
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Minitor VI Voice Pager Delivers What You Asked For



The new Motorola Minitor VI pager has been in the field for over six months now and the response from firefighters has been extremely enthusiastic. They like that the Minitor VI pager is built to be small and unobtrusive.

The majority of Manitoba fire departments we work with have purchased at least one of the new pagers. There are several features of the Minitor VI that have been proving particularly helpful.

1. Lithium-Ion battery: it is a high capacity battery that lasts for several days on a single charge.
2. Improved battery charging contacts: no need to clean out debris.
3. Larger memory: it holds up to 16 minutes of voice recording.
4. Preserved memory: voice recordings are preserved when the pager is power cycled, and even when the battery is removed.

Every Minitor VI pager is put through a series of tests that simulate seven years of operation in the field. They come with a 2 year warranty. To date, Alcom has not had any MINITOR VI pagers brought into our service department.

This is a tough little pager. It is built to withstand searing heat, smoke, grime, water spray and the many other challenges you face in the field.

An available option that is worth considering is the desktop charger/amplifier. It has a built-in audio amplifier that ensures a page can be heard throughout a home or place of business. It also features an external antenna. For buildings in which paging reception is weak, metal clad buildings for example, it is possible to mount an antenna outside the building and connect it to the desktop charger/amplifier. This configuration virtually guarantees that you will not miss a page.



DESKTOP CHARGER
WITH AUDIO AMPLIFIER
AND EXTERNAL ANTENNA

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