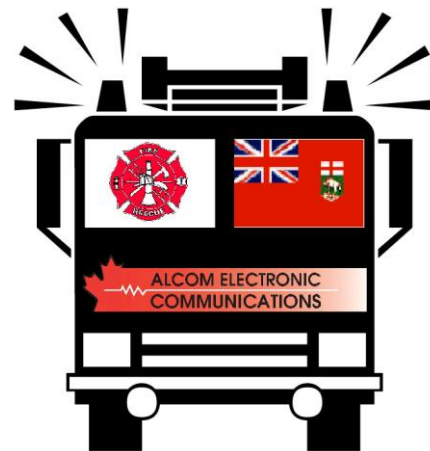


FIRE SERVICE RADIO NEWS

July/August 2016



Paging System Reliability Depends on Basic Maintenance and Backup Battery Power

When there is a public safety issue that requires a response from your department it is your paging system that acts as the critical link between the public and your personnel. The reliability of that link is dependent on regular testing, maintenance, and operational backup battery power. Alcom recommends implementing some basic procedures to ensure the reliability of your paging system.

Cable Connectors: Check that the antenna cable is properly connected to the transmitter and that there is no rust or dirt accumulating. Check the cable connections at the lightning suppressor as well. If you don't have a lightning suppressor call Alcom immediately to arrange for installation of a lightning suppressor as soon as possible.



This damage was caused by a lightning strike. Without a lightning suppressor there is a high risk your paging transmitter and encoder could be destroyed in a thunderstorm.

Antenna Checks: If your paging antenna is mounted at an accessible location do a complete visual inspection of the antenna, the coax cable, and the connectors. For paging antennas that are mounted too high to do a full visual, look for obvious defects. Is it standing straight up as it should? Has the antenna shifted position from wind shear? Is the antenna cable secured to the tower all the way up? Has your coverage area or reception clarity changed significantly? If any of these issues are apparent, it is time to arrange for an Alcom Technician to test and service your system.

Did you know?

Alcom offers annual service contracts that include testing and maintenance service for paging systems.



Our technicians will bring a spare paging transmitter and our mobile workshop to keep your system fully operational while it is being serviced.

Call Kevin Wittmeier for more information.

Back-up Power: Check the operation of your uninterruptible power or battery charging power supply and back-up battery. Testing of back-up power should be done at least once a month as part of your regular system testing procedure. Alcom recommends using a minimum 100 amp-hour battery for back-up power.

System Testing:

1. Familiarize yourself with the normal operational lights and indicators that the paging system displays.
2. Contact E911 dispatch to inform them you will be performing a local system test and that the paging system may be off the air for a short period of time during the testing. (E911 will likely tell you to use your FleetNet radio on your fire group channel)
3. Unplug the AC power cord to remove AC power. The reverting power supply should switch to battery power (make note of the time).
4. Dial into the paging system and perform a test page to ensure the transmitter accepts the page and does not shut down due to insufficient battery power. Perform multiple test pages over 30 minutes to ensure the system remains operational during this time. Once every three months extend the testing period to one hour. Once per year, leave the system unplugged while monitoring it to see how long it will run until it fails.
5. If your system backup fails in under an hour then a replacement backup system or battery may be required. Plug in AC power and check that the reverting power supply charger is back to normal status. Ensure operational lights and indicators are as they were prior to performing the test.
6. Inform E911 that the paging system is operational and have them send a test page to verify.

The physical size of the backup batteries and number of paging transmissions during a power failure will determine the runtime of the paging system on battery backup power. Results will vary for every system. If your back-up power source is not lasting at least 1 hour you should consider replacing it as soon as possible.



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Thank You Irv!

by: Rory Waisman

After 33 years of service as a member of the Altona Fire Department, Irv Braun has retired as Fire Chief, a position he held for the past 19 years. Braun led the department during a period of growth for the fire department and the community in general. When I learned of his retirement I contacted Braun to thank him for his service to the community.

In our conversation, Braun expressed his deep appreciation for the honour of being of service. "I've left a department that is in fantastic shape. We have a better training program than we've ever had before." Admittedly self-analytical, Braun credited many people with the department's progress. "The team is key, absolutely!" he said, and that team includes a lot of people. Braun acknowledged the phenomenal support from all the firefighters he has served with, the Altona town council, the officials at the Office of the fire Commissioner, mutual aid partners in the Pembina Triangle and beyond, and the overall fire service in Manitoba, which Braun insisted is "second to none."

"I'll never forget the help I got from other chiefs in the district when I started out, and from the suppliers in the industry." said Braun. He cautioned that whoever is hired to take over the position will be faced with the expectation that they will take the department to the next level, but he is confident that the new fire chief will receive the same kind of support he had.

Braun is known for his lively sense of humour and quick wit, but when I asked about his most memorable times in the fire service all joking stopped and his voice exposed his emotion. "I'll never forget my first MVC," he remarked, "there were a couple fatalities." This is the kind of memory that will stick with him, a common thread that binds firefighters past and present together. But Braun quickly returned to his positive nature and exclaimed "There's also an awful lot of good memories!" Braun noted that the high point of his career was when his son joined the Altona Fire Department ten years ago; "There's something special about the privilege of working with him in that capacity for ten years." Summing up his 19 years as fire chief, Braun said, "I've had a lot of fun, made a lot of good friends, had a lot of good years." Braun, who has five grandchildren under eight years old, is looking forward to more family time now that he is free of the restrictions of being on call.

On behalf of all the staff at Alcom Electronic Communications, Thank you Irv for putting smiles on our faces and for serving your community. All the best in your next adventures.



Irv Braun has retired after 19 years as Altona Fire Chief.
Photo credit: Red River Valley Echo

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