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## **CITIES OF VACAVILLE, FAIRFIELD IMPLEMENT JOINT RADIO SYSTEM Agreement brings higher level of service, safety to residents of both cities**

The cities of Vacaville and Fairfield have signed a memorandum of understanding, finalizing an agreement that will allow public safety agencies in both cities to communicate more easily with each other via radio.

“The beauty of this agreement is it gives both Vacaville and Fairfield full interoperability,” said Lt. Jan Makowski of the Vacaville Police Department. “There have been incidents when we have needed to work together on high-speed pursuits and other high-risk enforcements. This will provide better coverage for our communities and a higher level of officer safety.”

Makowski cited a recent example of a robbery that took place in Suisun City that resulted in a high-speed chase through Fairfield that headed toward Vacaville. Officers in both cities were able to listen in on what each agency was doing in terms of the pursuit, bringing it to a quick, safe resolution.

“You just can’t beat that level of communication,” Makowski said. “Plus, it allows us to better manage our resources.”

Fairfield Fire Chief, Vince Webster added, “Radio interoperability between Fairfield and Vacaville is necessary between our two cities because we regularly provide assistance to each other. In the past, both fire agencies had to get approval to utilize a separate radio frequency from the County dispatch center to talk to each other or we had to make sure the fire engines were given a portable radio from each department. Now, by simply changing the dial switch on the radios we use everyday, we can transmit critical emergency communications to our neighboring agency.”

The idea of radio interoperability began a couple of years ago when the two cities began discussing a plan to share radio systems. Since then, both cities purchased and installed new equipment, changed radio frequencies to accommodate the new systems, and signed a memorandum of understanding.

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Departments taking advantage of the new system include police, fire, public works and transit agencies in both cities.

In 2007, the Federal Communications Commission mandated a rebanding of the 800 MHz public safety spectrum. Vacaville was one of the first agencies in the country to complete this rebanding, which was the final step in an overall upgrade of Vacaville's communications system that included the purchase of new, programmable radios and the replacement of old equipment such as repeaters and other radio broadcasting equipment. That frequency change laid the foundation for establishing interoperability between Vacaville and Fairfield.

The City of Fairfield worked with the City of Vacaville to negotiate space at a desirable radio transmission site within Solano County. This agreement was one of many key decisions that lead to the success of the project.

Interoperability was achieved by expanding the existing Vacaville radio system into Fairfield. This expansion greatly enhanced the wireless coverage for both cities, putting communications "dead spots" to rest.

The new radio system is currently home to over 1,300 users with room to grow. Suisun City Police are currently in the planning stages to join the system as a member agency. This would allow them to communicate with Fairfield and Vacaville officers when needed.

The system has the capacity to expand as new member agencies seek to join. Other agencies coming on board as mutual aid partners include Solano County and the Cordelia Fire District. The Vacaville-Fairfield interoperability effort also dovetails into the Solano County Emergency Communications Authority plans, without duplicating efforts or resources.

"The new radio system has a bright future. There are upgrade paths for emerging standards and expansion opportunities with more agencies within Solano County and beyond by linking with similar systems in the Bay Area and Sacramento Valley," said Chief Webster.

The project was made possible through the cooperative work between the Cities of Fairfield and Vacaville. This effort allows both cities to leverage similar resources, thus increasing capacity and promoting fiscal responsibility.

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