

# LAKEHEAD FIRE DEPARTMENTS MUTUAL AID ASSOCIATION

[www.ci.duluth.mn.us/city/fire/lakehead](http://www.ci.duluth.mn.us/city/fire/lakehead)

September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007

Dear FCC,

The Lakehead Fire Department's Assn. consisting of 34 emergency responding agencies in south St. Louis County pages all agencies off VHF. The communication system for paging consists of about 15 radio towers with repeaters, duplexers, etc, over 600 pagers and about 350 portable radios which also serve as paging devices.

The communication system was initially constructed in the early 1970's and has been augmented and updated as additional emergency response agencies have been added to the system. The County, which is the primary agency for 9-1-1 communications is faced with a massive upgrade of the communication system to be compatible with the Minnesota communication plan. In the southern ½ of the County, total expenditures, according to estimates, will be in the millions of dollars. This compatibility upgrade does not allow paging on the same frequency. The existing system would need to be maintained for paging purposes. With the expenditures faced by the County, there will not be any finances available for local emergency response departments to upgrade the paging system.

The fire and emergency medical response departments are not able financially to replace the existing paging system, nor replace existing pagers and portable radios. It has taken us over 30 years to get to the level of communications that we have now. A required change in the paging system would leave most fire and medical responders without pagers. If paging is not allowed on VHF, we could be back to having only officers and other designees receive emergency pages and in-turn would need to activate an emergency calling tree to notify emergency responders when an emergency call is received.

The proposal to not allow VHF paging would not result in a positive step forward and would greatly hinder the ability to provide emergency services.

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