

Gabrielle Sharkey, Triple C Communications



In Building Coverage Code...An *Unexpected* For Contractors

The policeman, the fireman, the first responder- public safety personnel are more significant to us today than ever before. The one thing we hear over and over from these front line champions is that vital, clear communication saves lives.

How can a team be effective if they are in the dark about the changing situation around them? How can critical resources be requested if all that is on the other end of their radio is static.

They can't. Welcome the birth of the In Building Coverage Code.

These requirements are more prevalent as individual city, county and fire districts adopt and add variations of this addendum to their existing fire codes. Because this is not a universal building code, but a locally adopted ordinance, many contractors have found this an unexpected item to deal with.

Certain parameters surrounding these codes are fairly standard:

- 1) New buildings and structures greater than 50,000 square feet or additions and/or modifications which cause the buildings to be greater than 50,000 square feet (for these purposes, area separation walls cannot be used to define separate buildings).
- 2) All basements over 10,000 square feet where the design occupant

load is greater than 50, regardless of the occupancy.

- 3) Any building that creates a "special hazard" for emergency services communication in addition to the normal hazard of the occupancy.
- 4) Any building additions or remodel work involving over 20% of the building.

A few of the variables that tend to occur relate to the actual frequencies that must be passed, the transmission strength required, and the testing method employed.

The fire district may require only its own emergency channels to be covered, or they can make additional frequencies a stipulation as well. Summit County as an example, currently asks for their local VHF police and fire channels, the state DTR, as well as the Nextel PCS frequencies to be maintained.

In regard to testing procedures, these ordinances will give field transmission strength requirements (that vary from district to district), but they may also deem that testing include not only strength readings, but field tests to show the transmissions are both "reliable and intelligible." These are both subjective terms quantified by the authority enforcing the code. These ordinances generally include a clause requiring annual testing as well.

Regardless of who does the work, the owner of the building is ultimately accountable for the system performance. They are responsible for repairs or replacement if there is any degradation of signal due to their on site system, remodeling, or adding on to the existing building.

The implementation of signal boosters such as BDAs (Bi-Directional Amplifiers) and leaky coax systems are becoming a more accepted and recognizable solution. Signals that would otherwise be greatly reduced or lost when passing through the elements of a building are amplified and then distributed throughout the structure. The responding signal is then carried back to the amplifier and relayed back to the initiator. This provides excellent incoming and outgoing communication for emergency personnel.

The cost associated with installing such systems understandably causes some owners to resist. This is why the local codes have become so necessary in order to provide some manner of protection to the public inhabiting and working in these spaces every day. Many owners, however, have accepted this as part of the cost of doing business. They see the long term value of having these systems in place where safety and liability issues are concerned.

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A 30 minute "BDA Basics" class covering basic BDA design, applications, cost factors, and examples of existing In Building Coverage Codes in Colorado is offered through Triple C Communications and can be done at your location. For details, please contact Gabrielle Sharkey at (303) 210-4320.

Triple C Communications, an AGC/C member, specializes in Emergency Amplification Systems, two-way radio (equipment, service, and repair), cellular amplification systems, and is an authorized Sprint/Nextel dealer. www.tripleccom.com

career development and education

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Spring Classes

Our 2006 Spring Education Catalog provides a schedule and description of our classes, seminars and workshops. A variety of Stormwater training classes will be offered throughout the spring.

In February we will offer a special Asbestos Program. It will be of particular interest to any company dealing with the need to handle asbestos and what the ramifications are when something goes wrong. A panel will provide the "lessons learned," EPA will provide "what to expect when it doesn't go right," and then an afternoon training session on "handling asbestos."

The class will be offered in two parts, a two hour session with the panel and an opportunity to ask questions of those who have experienced the worst case scenario with regulators and the afternoon session to train those working with asbestos on the job. The class is being offered at a reduced cost because the companies involved in the non-compliance are supplementing the cost of the program. Call the AGC office if you would like to register for the program.

AGC/C Recognizes Volunteers

In early December, more than 100 volunteers were recognized for their outstanding service and dedication to the AGC of Colorado association. Throughout the course of the year, AGC/C maintains a roster of nearly 250 individuals who participate on boards, committees, and task force groups. We couldn't do it without all of you ... thank you!

At the luncheon the crowd was entertained by the Dakota Ridge EagleAires, a vocal jazz ensemble from Dakota Ridge High School in Jefferson County. The music was high-spirited, which lent to the camaraderie of the event.

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