



Memorandum

To: Group Manager, Response & Coordination
Manager, Learning & Development
All Regional Managers
All District/Team/Zone Managers

From: Director, Infrastructure Services

Subject: UHF CB Emergency Channels

Date: 5 December 2013 **File No.** DIS13/005

During the recent fire activity the RFS received correspondence from the Chief Commissioner of the Australian Citizens Radio Emergency Monitors (ACREM) regarding the RFS operating on UHF CB Emergency Channels 5 and 35.

Although a licence is not required to operate CB Radio Equipment, it is still governed by various legislation such as Radiocommunications (*Citizens Band Radio Stations*) Class Licence 2002 and the *Radiocommunications Act 1992*. Under Federal Legislation there are certain channels allocated for specific purposes whilst other channels have been designated for certain uses by agreement.

UHF CB Channels 5 and 35 are designated as Emergency Channels. Channel 5 is the primary emergency channel and channel 35 is the secondary emergency channel and also the input channel for all emergency channel repeater systems. The inadvertent use of channel 35 can disrupt communications through a local repeater, rendering the emergency channels useless.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) have declared that CB emergency channels are for “emergency signals”. According to the *Radiocommunications (Interpretation) Determination 2000* an “emergency signal” is defined as:

- a) A request for assistance; or
- b) A signal of distress; or
- c) A message that is related to a call for assistance or a signal of distress.

This definition precludes any use of these channels by any service or organisation, other than for requesting assistance, signalling distress or dealing with such a call.

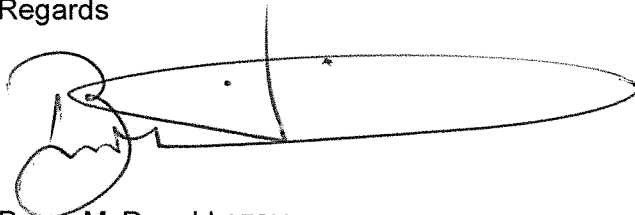
During the recent fires the ACREM sought to resolve a number of occasions where RFS crews and aircraft utilised the UHF CB Emergency Channels 5 and 35 inappropriately.

In the majority of these instances, once the crews and/or aircraft involved were advised of the error they switched to transmitting on a more appropriate channel. Notwithstanding, we have committed to increase the RFS awareness of the practices and protocols associated with UHF CB Emergency Channels 5 and 35.

Attached are a number of posters and Fact Sheets provided by the ACREM, for distribution amongst operational personnel and Brigades to further understanding of legislated and agreed channel allocation for UHF CB Radios.

Please distribute this information amongst your Brigades, communications and operational personnel. I also request that you include this information in future radio communications training to ensure that where UHF CB radio communications are utilised in the future, appropriate channels are chosen.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bruce McDonald', written over a large, light-colored oval shape that serves as a background for the signature.

Bruce McDonald AFSM
Assistant Commissioner

Attachments: ACREM Fact Sheet 1 – Licence Free Radios
ACREM Fact Sheet 2 – Emergency Channels
ACREM Fact Sheet 3 – Repeaters
UHF CB Emergency Channel Poster
This Could Save a Life Poster
UHF CB Channel Allocations