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## Interoperability Using Icom

Mason County in Washington State is "peaceful, picturesque, and diverse" according to the Visitors Bureau, with the Olympic National Forest, Hood Canal, and South Puget Sound as the backdrop to life there.

But as striking as the surroundings are, when things go wrong – a fire, flood, or medical emergency – visitors and residents expect rapid response and service from the 16 Mason County Fire Districts. With new communication tools from Icom and National Interop, the Fire-Rescue Districts stand ready to serve.

Mason County has one of the most complex Fire-Rescue situations in the United States. The Fire Districts have a combination of full-time professionals and volunteers, the county includes state and national parks, and the formidable geography coupled with severe weather can create a lot of challenging emergency situations.



"We worked very closely with the Districts to analyze their existing system and radio programming and found there were numerous opportunities for improvement." said David Billstrom, Chairman of National Interop in Seattle. "With the cooperation of the chiefs and training officers for the Districts, we designed an interoperability programming scheme for their new Icom radios."

The county radios need to have local, state, and national interoperability channels for mutual aid with state park emergency personnel, the Washington State Patrol, the U.S. Department of Natural Resources, and the Coast Guard, among others. Mutual aid is necessary in their location.

"Soon after we finished the system, one of the District Chiefs called to tell me about a mutual aid operation they had on a cliff rescue with the Coast Guard." said Billstrom. "He was excited at how well the radios worked and how easy it was to work together with the Coast Guard because it was so simple to instantly communicate."



It was up to National Interop to build a custom integrated communication system that met all of those needs plus more.

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The county needs both analog and digital capability as they migrate to the Digital P25 standard for digital VHF two-way radio handhelds (portables), mobiles, base stations, and dispatch centers used in local, state, and federal public safety agencies.

“We used IPVoiceCommand™ Dual Head Controllers for their paramedic vehicles,” said Billstrom. “One head is in the cab with the driver and the other head is in the patient compartment. That way, with the flip of a switch, they can control a single radio from the front or back.” This was more attractive than the cost of two radios, let alone the potential for interference during transmit.

They had tight places to install mobile control heads on fire trucks so National Interop built custom ruggedized mounting brackets. The brackets also allowed stacking of multiple control heads, and flush-mounting of remote heads on cabinets in the back of ambulances. A total of 83 vehicles got new mobile F1821D radios.

“We use a ‘best practices’ approach to system design and noticed that many of the older installations had inadequate wiring, corroded antenna mounts, and worn out whips in the high humidity environment.” said Billstrom. “We also added power amplifiers to provide the mobiles with 100W output. These best practices solved a few pesky intermittent radio issues that had frustrated crews over the years.”

The Fire Districts have also purchased over 200 portable Icom F70DTs so it was a huge upgrade. One of the big features of the fleet-wide rollout that National Interop provided was a comprehensive in-depth training program and “Standard



Operating Guidelines.” National Interop provided color-coded laminated cards illustrating the use of multiple zones and multiple channels, which fire personnel seemed to appreciate.

“The training was very specific to their procedures.” Billstrom said. “Plus we had to train many in the evening because they have so many volunteers that are at regular jobs during the day.”

As the tourists and locals go about their activities enjoying the glacier carved terrain of this beautiful area, they can rest easy that the team of National Interop, Icom, and Mason County Fire Districts are working together to provide an emergency-ready county.

National Interop is a Seattle, Washington and Portland, Oregon based systems integration firm that designs turnkey communication systems for many industries and public safety agencies, including VoIP, networks, training, and construction.

**For People Who Make Smart Choices**

## ValueCab Opens Door to Railroad Market



### Important Dates for Short Line & Regional Railroads

#### FCC Dates

**July 1, 2010** - All locomotives in interchange service must be equipped with radios with **both** current wideband channels (25 kHz) and the new narrowband channels (12.5 kHz).

**January 1, 2013** - All locomotives in interchange service must use narrowband channels only.

Like all non-federal land mobile radio users, short line and regional railroads are required to migrate to narrowband communications by Jan. 1, 2013. But unlike other market segments, short line and regional railroads have the additional obligation of upgrading their clean cab locomotive radios, too.

Not only does this put smaller railroads in a cash crunch, it also has many short line and regional railroads scrambling to comply with the industry's self-imposed July 1, 2010, deadline for Class 1 railroads to switch to narrowband clean cab locomotive radios. Clean cab radios are used for two-way voice communications with the locomotive engineer in the cab and for signaling.

While the July 1 deadline applies specifically to Class 1 railroads, short line and regional railroads that interchange with Class 1 railroads must also have compliant narrowband radios in place by this date.

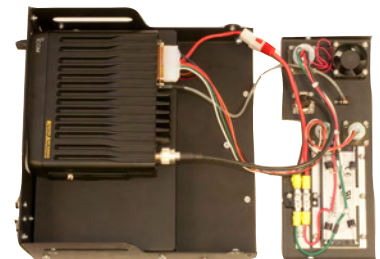


This accelerated deadline adds an additional financial burden for a segment already stretched thin. But with the recent launch of the ValueCab radio unit, short line and regional railroads now have a cost-effective alternative to standard clean cab radios.



Developed by Primus Electronics and Icom America, ValueCab integrates an Icom F5061 radio into a mounting frame for full plug-and-play compatibility. The ValueCab system provides all of the typical AAR channels with the same output power for less than half the price of a traditional clean cab unit.

"ValueCab gives dealers a good-quality, low-cost solution for getting into the short line industry," says Mike Utecht, Icom sales representative. "Icom dealers can now offer the full line-up of IDAS™ 6.25 kHz radios – clean cab, mobile, portable and base stations – to this largely untapped market."



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*For People Who Make Smart Choices*

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Several advantages set apart ValueCab from other clean cab radio solutions. Two key selling points are its affordable price and integrated Icom F5061 radio, which has gained a reputation for high-quality, reliable communications. Built on the NXDN™ air interface, the F5061 IDAS radio offers advanced multi-mode operation and provides 6.25 kHz digital very narrow mode communication.

Because the F5061 supports multi-mode operations, railroads are not required to purchase companion digital radios. 12.5 kHz narrowband analog radios such as the F5021 mobile and F3001 portable can also be used as a lower-cost alternative to digital narrowband.

ValueCab features the same dimensional footprint as a clean cab radio and utilizes the same mounting tray with a locking bolt. An optional internal 72-12 volt converter is available for changing the locomotive's 72-volt power to the 12 volts required for the integrated Icom radio.



“We have had a huge response so far from the railroads,” says Gerry Fritzke, western regional and railroad manager for Primus Electronics Corp., who adds the international market is also ripe with potential.

“Both the large Mexican and Canadian rail markets that interchange with U.S.-based railroads will be required to implement narrowband for locomotive and ground communications,” Fritzke says. “International dealers have a great opportunity.”

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