

Is Your Building “Emergency Communications” Safe?

“How often do you enter a building and think about whether or not emergency first responders will be able to properly communicate in order to keep you and your employees safe?”

Safety is the number one priority when First Responders enter a scene. If communication breaks down, even for a second, the consequences can be extremely serious. During a crisis situation, First Responders need to be able to effectively communicate with one another to deescalate a situation and keep the public safe. Due to the materials used and location within the building, signal for First Responders two-way radios can be lost. This could be due to, but not limited to, the installation of Low E Glass, cement walls, metal building structures and entrances to internal rooms and basements.

In response to the increase of tragic events locally, nationally, and around the world, public safety organizations have placed an emphasis on first responders’ ability to communicate to each other in order to limit harm to themselves and the public. The International Fire Code (IFC) has created codes specifying signal strength in regards to public safety radio coverage within buildings. The Enactment of IFC510 states that:

- All new buildings should have approved radio coverage for emergency responders within the building.
- Radio signal strength requirements must be met in 95% of all areas on each floor of the building.
- All existing buildings should have radio coverage throughout the building and are required to retrofit the building with radio coverage if the existing wired system is not able to be repaired or is being replaced; or per a time line as identified by the jurisdiction.

How Do Public Safety Responders Communicate?

Bi-Directional Amplifiers (BDAs) are signal boosters that enhance two-way radio communications throughout a facility. BDAs increase and distribute two-way radio signal covering various frequencies. BDAs are used to bring facilities into compliance with Public Safety DAS and radio enhancement system mandates under IFC510 and the National Fire Protection Association standards NFPA 72, Chapter 24. Not only do many localities now require Public Safety BDA installations within new buildings, and as part of renovation permits or inspection certifications, but they have enacted ordinances to enforce such requirements. BDA systems play a big part in keeping EMTs, police and fire personnel, building occupants and the community safe.

Communication in a Crisis

