



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Renton RFA to Enhance Encryption to Radios in Early 2026

Protecting the public's sensitive and private health information.

Renton (WA), June 17, 2026 – Renton Regional Fire Authority (Renton RFA) will enhance encryption to radios used for tactical communications among our fire personnel. Encrypting radio communications means that radio transmissions can only be heard internally by the intended audience. The primary reason Renton RFA has chosen to encrypt radios is to protect the public's sensitive personal and health information from being shared to a wide audience. Encryption also enhances the safety of community members and first responders.

This technology upgrade is possible because of the move to a new digital radio system in King County as part of the initiative. The new radio system allows first responders, particularly law enforcement and fire, fire and EMS, to better communicate and dispatch emergency and other government services countywide. The new PSERN radio system has improved coverage, capabilities and security versus traditional analog radio systems.

Reasons for encryption:

Fire personnel frequently transmit a patient's vitals and details regarding their injuries over the radio to trauma and medical doctors at hospitals. This is protected health information that should not be shared broadly in part due to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Additionally, information regarding door, gate and key box codes, and other access data is communicated to gain entry to buildings during emergencies.

Firefighter/EMTs and paramedics often respond to scenes where individuals are injured as a result of a violent act, such as a shooting or stabbing. Encrypting channels where information on these incidents is communicated preserves operational integrity and improves the safety of the police officers and the communities they serve. When channels remain open, they can be accessed by all individuals, including some who may be actively engaging in criminal activity or behavior.

What's changing:

Renton RFA's dispatch channels, which communicate when and where incidents are occurring, will remain open for the public to hear via radio scanners. The department will encrypt channels that transmit the following:

- Private health information
- Sensitive building access data
- Tactical communications, including for Scenes of Violence responses

Committed to sharing information:

Renton RFA remains committed to sharing information with the public and media about significant incidents as they are unfolding. Here are ways to stay informed:

- Follow @rentonrfa on X, Facebook, and Instagram
- Subscribe Renton RFA's monthly e-newsletter at www.rentonrfa.com/news

The right to access information:

Encryption does not change the public's legal right to access information.

About Renton Regional Fire Authority

Renton Regional Fire Authority serves the communities of Renton, Fire District 25, and Fire District 40. With a coverage area of 38 square miles, Renton RFA provides fire and life safety services to over 138,000 community members. The Renton RFA team abides by the guiding principles of professionalism, integrity, leadership, loyalty, accountability, and respect, and continually works to build an organization that reflects the unique diversity of the Renton community. Learn more at www.RentonRFA.com or call 425-276-9500.

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