

Bangor Fire Department Chooses KENWOOD NEXEDGE® for its Reliability and Versatility



Photo Credit: Natalie Williams

PROJECT OVERVIEW: Unreliable and aging radios presented a performance challenge to public safety departments in Bangor, Maine. After intensive trials and the purchase of KENWOOD NEXEDGE radios by the police department, Bangor used Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) funding to purchase P25 capable KENWOOD NEXEDGE radios for its fire department.

It is the most densely forested state, with the oldest and tallest pine trees in America. The state's unique and dramatic terrain was carved out by the last ice age. It also has the distinction of having only one other state on its border, sharing its other borders with Canada and the Atlantic Ocean. This makes the state of Maine a magnet for tourism and a powerhouse in industry and manufacturing. It is also what makes it challenging for radio communications coverage.

In 2020, the Bangor, Maine fire department was facing a radio communications challenge unrelated to the state's topography. Burdened with aging radios, repairs were being made using parts bought on eBay. "With the old radios, we constantly ran into problems," recalled Chandler Corriveau, Assistant Fire Chief, Bangor Fire Department. "At one point, we lost five radios while responding to three fires in 24 hours. That was typical. We were on our last leg with these radios, days away from a catastrophic problem."

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Because Bangor relies on a fire department-based EMS, most of their 10,000 calls a year involve life threatening emergencies and rescues, making reliable radios are even more critical to public safety.

The Bangor Fire Department's successful application for funding to purchase new radios through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program enabled the department to secure KENWOOD NEXEDGE portables and mobiles that are P25 capable, a requirement of AFG grants. "The NEXEDGE radio is the only radio on the market that allows a department to operate in analog, DMR and P25. Other brands don't do that, you're limited to DMR or P25," Corriveau observed.

Before the purchase, both KENWOOD radios and competitive brands were put to the test. "We trialed other models from other manufacturers and it was obvious that they were all more of a business radio. The speaker mic would fall off. The knobs spun continuously. With one, we could only get a full keypad option, which isn't what we wanted," said Corriveau.

"Our new KENWOOD radios are a public safety radio. They're designed for the harsh environments that firefighters operate in," Corriveau noted.

The larger mic and buttons on the NEXEDGE portables, make the radios easier to use when wearing gloves, Corriveau observed. He also called out the "nice, big and easy to read color display" on the NEXEDGE

radios. Corriveau programmed the department's radios to mirror the radios they replaced, which made it easy to teach people to use the new radios. "That kind of stuff really helps sell it to users," observed Corriveau. "There are so many positive changes in what the radio is made of and its performance, but having it be easy to learn is a huge positive for us in getting user acceptance."

Within twenty-four hours of the new radios going into service, they were put to the test with three building fires in one evening. Corriveau recalls, "The feedback on the radios from the firefighters was good. In fact, no negative feedback at all. Mics got wet. They still worked. Audio clarity was perfect, no problems at all. Firefighters were happy to see that."

The Bangor police department was the first to transition to KENWOOD NEXEDGE radios in 2019. "We had some Homeland Security funding and because the police department radios were in worse shape than

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Bangor, Maine



Bangor, Maine Fire Department

ours, they upgraded to KENWOOD before us," said Corriveau. "The police department has even seen a significant increase in coverage. And no negative feedback on the radios from the police officers."

"Most fire departments are volunteer. Radio purchases must make sense economically. The built-in DMR and analog capabilities of NEXEDGE, with the option for P25, is a sensible budget choice for a fire department," pointed out Scott Rivard, President of Radio Communications Management, Inc. (RCM). RCM is the KENWOOD authorized dealer that worked with the Bangor police and fire departments on their conversion to KENWOOD NEXEDGE. They also work with Penobscot and other Maine public safety agencies. Rivard sees evidence of a shift towards KENWOOD DMR on NEXEDGE with many users in his state. "Some vendors are pushing P25 and many of our customers don't have the money. DMR gives customers lots of options, like multiple talk paths and inexpensive simulcast or seamless roaming. Plus it is reliable. Cost-wise, DMR is substantially less."

The City of Bangor has mobile command vehicles from FEMA, and those mobile radios have been replaced with KENWOOD. "If that truck goes anywhere, we can program it to any radio frequency," said Corriveau. "We can go anywhere in the state, program the radios and be an asset on the scene in terms of communications."

"Security at our colleges and universities, our two large hospitals, all the concert venues, festivals and parades use UHF," said Corriveau. "We use the multi-head/multi-deck capabilities of NEXEDGE in our assistant chief, chief, deputy chief and one other duty vehicle. We only use two heads but get the capability of three mobiles: 2 VHF and 1 UHF. That means that on-duty crews can hear what's going on with security at the hospitals and during events that use UHF without having to deploy a separate mobile command vehicle. These vehicles now have the same capabilities."

News Center Maine, the NBC-affiliated television station in Portland, Maine, broadcast a story about the KENWOOD radio purchase by the Bangor Fire Department, concluding, "This is a significant upgrade, designed to operate in any environment and in any emergency."

Corriveau is familiar with KENWOOD radios, having used them at other Maine fire departments. "I'm a 100% advocate for KENWOOD radios based on my own professional experience," Corriveau said. "At one department, we had 53 building fires in one year and the KENWOOD radios never once let us down. I have no doubt in my mind that it will be same for Bangor."

LOCAL DEALER PARTNER:



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