

# Alaska Fire Fighters Make Political Action Work

While in her home state, Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) visited a Fairbanks, Alaska, fire station to see a new aerial platform truck, paid for by Homeland Security grant dollars, and to discuss issues important to fire fighters, including collective bargaining.

Mark Drygas, president of the Alaska Professional Fire Fighters, says, "Senator Murkowski was glad to be able to see the grant dollars at work."

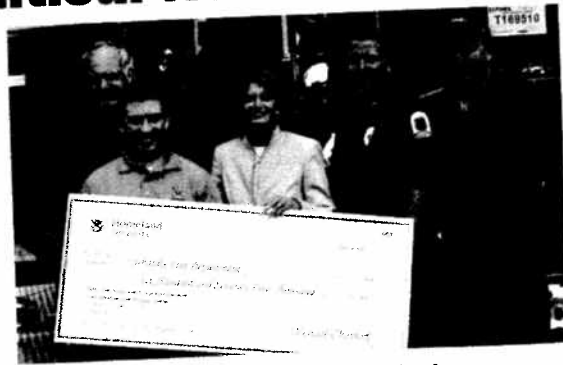
The new apparatus allows a 1995 model ladder truck to be put into the reserves and a 1978 ladder truck to be taken out of use. "There are no fire departments in our area with a ladder truck," says Drygas. "It is important that we have one that is reliable."

Alaska fire fighters also talked to Murkowski about the proposed national

collective bargaining bill. "Our state's affiliates' ability to bargain collectively varies," notes Drygas. "One of our local's doesn't have any bargaining rights at all. It is important to call attention to this issue as much as possible."

Alaska fire fighters have also been lobbying senior Senator Ted Stevens and the state's one House member, Don Young, on the issue.

The bill — sponsored by Representative Dale Kildee (D-MI) and Representative John Duncan (R-TN) has been introduced and referred to the Committee on Education and Labor. The U.S. Senate version is



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sponsored by Senators Judd Gregg (R-NH) and Edward Kennedy (D-MA), but has not yet been introduced. ■

## Critical Questions Remain on Health Risks of Cell Tower Exposure

Fire fighters face many invisible hazards, and the IAFF is currently focusing efforts on preventing the risk of exposure to low-intensity radio frequency/microwave (RF/MW) radiation from cell towers and antennas installed above commercial buildings.

As the wireless telecommunications industry continues to grow and as municipalities continue to generate rental fees from wireless companies, fire fighters increasingly and routinely work near and under cell towers.

"Excessive exposures are completely unnecessary, but still occur routinely," says IAFF General President Harold Schaitberger. "Fire fighters have no idea what the exposure rules are or if even if they are being exposed to an invisible hazard."

An estimated 700,000 RF antennas currently exist in the United

States and Canada, and the number is projected to grow to 1.2 million within 10 years. Meanwhile, the problem is becoming more serious because of the growing number of antennas, as well as the increased use of stealth techniques to hide them.

RF transmitters are being installed anywhere communications companies find a commercial business owner, city, school or church willing to place an antenna. Antenna sites are often installed on these buildings hidden behind fake fiberglass facades or located openly on roofs with no warning placards advising of the location of the antennas or of the inherent hidden dangers.

The IAFF holds that excessive RF radiation is hazardous. The original standards (ANSI C95.1-1966) are based on excessive heating of the eyes and testes. However, current standards (ANSI/IEEE C95.1-2005) are based on health effects that are more difficult to identify, such as

changes in behavior. But because of RF radiation hazards, the federal government (OSHA, FCC) has established legal exposure limits, including requirements to inform workers.

In addition, the FCC rules and regulations have not kept up with the wireless industry's growth, nor has the FCC anticipated the need for a comprehensive RF compliance and safety solution. The first set of RF exposure limits established by the FCC applies to trained RF workers. The other applies to non-RF workers, including fire fighters and the general public. And, while the FCC rules require all antenna licensees to ensure that no one is exposed to RF in excess of the FCC limits, enforcement of the exposure limits is almost non-existent due to lack of federal government funds.

The IAFF is working to ensure fire departments know the location of these hidden hazards before fire fighters respond to emergency calls.

The IAFF also opposes the use of fire stations as base stations for towers and antennas, and will continue to fight against their installation above fire stations until a study with scientific merit and integrity is conducted and proves that exposure to low-intensity RF/MW radiation is not hazardous to the health of its members. ■

