

# New Police Radios Get Cool Reception

BY RONALD KOZIOL.

The Illinois Department of Law Enforcement wants every police car in the state equipped with a new \$562 radio.

To further this aim, the department has spent \$1.8 million in tax money to buy more than 3,200 of the radios and has asked for additional funds from the state and federal governments to buy even more.

There is just one catch.

## Many Don't Want Any

Scores of police departments in Illinois don't want the new radios. A few departments won't even accept the radios as gifts from the state. Several police chiefs say privately they consider the plan a huge waste of money.

The Department of Law Enforcement, headed by Herbert Brown, a former Winnebago County sheriff, sold the idea of the radios to the state legislature in 1969 as a means of linking every police department in Illinois by radio. The legislature appropriated \$2 million for new radios. The plan originally was advocated in 1964 by Gov. Ogilvie when he was sheriff of Cook County.

Each new radio is to be attuned to the Illinois State Police Radio Network [ISPERN]. Advocates of the plan say the setup will allow messages to be passed easily and quickly between different police departments, will aid in capturing criminals and will be invaluable in dealing with major riots and natural disasters, like tornados.

## Sophisticated Program

But critics point out that the 10,000-man Chicago Police Department—by far the largest in the state—cannot install the radios because of its already sophisticated communications program.

Police officials in communities such as La Grange and Northbrook say they don't want the radios. Some others, including those in Peoria, say they will take the radios on a trial basis only.

Many policemen, tho wholeheartedly approving of the ISPERN concept, insist that the project is unnecessarily expensive. Radios now in most police cars could be converted to the ISPERN frequency for considerably less than \$562 for new radios, they say.

## Totally Impossible

William H. Ives, project director for ISPERN and a close friend of Brown's, disputes

this. "Sure the idea of converting existing sets was discussed, but it was decided that we could not economize if we did it," he says. "This concept is totally impossible."

## Created Six Years Ago

Gerald Bear, an owner of Chicago Communications Service, 4158 W. 54th St., disagrees. Hundreds of police radios in the Chicago metropolitan area could easily be converted to the ISPERN frequency for \$85 each, he says.

If a special scanner device, which locks into the frequency when a message is broadcast, is added, the total cost would reach about \$200, he says.

Over the years, a number of police departments have been purchasing radios which include the ISPERN frequency. The frequency was created almost six years ago but was never adopted by departments thruout the state.

One police chief, Howard Heinan of La Grange, says he has had all of his police car radios equipped with the ISPERN frequency for five years, "but never used it once."

Heinan, who refuses to accept the radios, says: "It's just not worth it to us because we change cars every six months, and the installation cost would be prohibitive. Another thing is that 95 per cent of police cars in the state are equipped with Motorola radios, and the new ones are General Electric. This would increase costs with a new service contract."

## Not Enough Room

Chief Glenn Ford of Northbrook, a supporter of the ISPERN idea, says his cars just don't have enough space for another radio. "We are going to convert our present radios to the ISPERN frequency, and we will monitor all calls in the police station," he said. "The state just doesn't seem to understand our problems in a small police department."

The idea of a separate radio in each police car tuned only to the ISPERN frequency apparently has many supporters. Ives says 570 police departments and university security forces, out of almost 900 police departments in the state, have joined the network.

Included in these are the Cook County sheriff's police with 292 radios and the village of Oak Lawn with 16. All of the radios for both of these departments currently are equipped with the ISPERN frequency but the departments still will receive the new radios.

## Shift Original Concept

Altho the original concept of the project was to have a separate radio tuned to the ISPERN frequency, this plan already has been abandoned by state officials.

Capt. Herald Crockett, chairman of the ISPERN governing board, composed of police officials thruout the state, says, "Certain police departments are being allowed to install our radio in place of their present radio, but the ISPERN frequency will be the priority channel."

"This in one way defeats the purpose of the project," he says, "but there are only a few departments who want to do this."

However, one south suburban chief says: "We'll take the radio and tie our own frequency in on it. After all, it's not costing our department anything."