

Rodent chews wires, snags fire dispatch communications in Atkinson, Plaistow

By Jason Schreiber, December 2nd 2016, Plaistow

Part of a radio communications tower used by fire personnel and dispatchers from Atkinson and Plaistow was on the fritz this week after a pesky rodent chewed on wires and caused a short circuit.

Atkinson Fire Chief Michael Murphy said the problem was discovered Wednesday when the fire department noticed some interference in radio transmissions from the Plaistow dispatch center, which provides police and fire dispatch services for Atkinson.

Plaistow Fire Chief John McArdle said his department also experienced the interference when talking with dispatch. A technician from 2-Way Communications was sent to take a closer look at the tower on High Hill and found that a mouse, squirrel or other small rodent had crawled into the communications cabinet and gnawed on the wires, Murphy said.

Murphy said repairs were being made and were expected to be finished Friday.

The problem affected a radio repeater that was installed on the tower about a year ago to boost the signal to cover a wider area. Murphy said the repeater was put in as part of a grant aimed at improving communication.

With the repeater down over the past few days, Murphy said the fire department's communications returned to the way they had been before it was installed.

While he said there's a weaker signal resulting in some possible "dead spots" in town, Murphy said communications between the fire department and dispatch center are still up and running.

"We're still receiving everything we need to receive from Plaistow," he said.

He said the problem did not affect any police communications with dispatch and didn't interfere with the fire department's response to emergencies.

"It didn't prevent us from answering any calls," he said.