

WHY FALCON DIRECT NO LONGER SUPPORTS P25

The original objective of P25 was a good one. Basically, the idea was to develop an open standard for digital radios that would provide interoperability at reasonable cost with greater spectrum efficiency. The concept was good. The captains of industry agreed with the government bureaucrats and major user groups that this would benefit all concerned. It hasn't!

The reason it hasn't is because those charged with administering federal funding have caved in to corporate and political pressure. We all know that P25 is the only currently approved federal standard for digital communications (with LTE being an exception for developmental projects). Accordingly, P25 is specified as the only technology approved for federal funding. Additionally, the use of P25 as defined by federal SAFECOM standards is backwards compatibility to provide communications interoperability with analog radios. Lastly, the standard calls for open architecture (i.e. all radio brands tested and compliant with P25 standards must be able to talk to each other). The program has failed in every single area!

The federal grant process has been abused by applicants applying for P25 and then purchasing other equipment, and defrauded by applicants who worded their grant applications in such a way that it would appear that they intended to purchase P25 when in reality they intended to purchase an alternate technology such as DMR (MotoTRBO) or NXDN (Nexedge). To make matters worse, senior executives of leading manufacturers encourage their dealers and users alike to find ways to circumvent a national interoperability plan.

On numerous occasions, Falcon Direct has taken an uncompromising stand in supporting P25 only to find that the federal agencies responsible for enforcing grant administration standards have simply turned a deaf ear. When you are the only the only soldier on the battlefield, it is time to retreat or join the winning side. We are not very good at retreating, so our position is, *if you can't beat them, join them.*

Perhaps the most bizarre act is one where a dealer sold an Alabama Sheriff's Department a P25 system that will work only with the products offered by a single manufacturer under the total control of the dealer. The control of the dealer is such that the dealer tells the user what they can and cannot do with their system.

The customer wanted to use analog surveillance radios. When the customer attempted to use the surveillance equipment, he found that his new P25 radio system had been purposefully programmed to function only in the digital mode in clear violation of operational protocols requiring both analog and digital compatibility, not to mention interoperability with other systems. Does anybody care? Apparently not!

This is not to say that we have given up. We have two complaints on file with the DHS Inspector General and two requests for information under the Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA) at this time. They have been "pending" for over a year.

And now we are looking at P25 Phase Two with no provisions for conventional or talk around capability, and no defined technical standard. This is simply Incredible! The fact is that public safety communications had better interoperability over fifty years ago than we do today. That's a shame! But, facts are facts, and we have to accept them and so do you. Maybe one day we will get back to the concept of working together for a common goal for the benefit of all concerned. Maybe one day, but not today.....