

## REGIONAL AND STATEWIDE INTEROPERABILITY

A review of a recent Department of Homeland Security (DHS) report revealed some unexpected insights into the real need for Interoperability at the Federal and State level. As it turns out Federal interoperability has been a working reality for over half a century. The Feds use P25 as the operational standard for all agencies with established infrastructure to support both daily and emergency voice communications for field operations.

State agencies have been encouraged to follow the Federal lead, but in general, little success has been made in this area since most states have their own ideas on what they want to do. Like the Feds, States have enjoyed the benefits of wide area communications since the 50's. Some have followed the Federal lead. Most have not. The reasons may surprise you. They don't NEED additional wide area interoperability either with Federal agencies, county, or municipal agencies. They only need interoperability with each other, and even then, only rarely outside their own agencies.

County Sheriffs work closely with municipalities in their area, but the fact is that the municipalities often operate more radios than the Sheriffs. In the rare event of a traffic chase through multiple jurisdictions, or across county lines; frequencies are already in place for this need. In the very rare event of a municipal law enforcement agency requiring assistance from another agency, they will generally have compatible radios with surrounding agencies. When they don't all 911 centers have the ability to "bridge" differing frequencies through the use of a government funded device known as an ACU-1000.

Ambulance and rescue vehicles have virtually no requirement to talk to other EMS vehicles except at or near a scene. Most communications with the hospitals is conducted by cell phone, although a radio network (HEAR System) is in place for use in the event of cellular service disruption.

Volunteer Fire Departments are the major beneficiaries of interoperability since they are ones most commonly associated with mutual aid between adjoining departments. Rarely do they require assistance outside their home county. On occasion they will have a need to coordinate control of wild fires when working with State or Federal Forestry personnel. Frequencies are already available to meet these requirements.



So the question is *Who needs statewide communications interoperability that doesn't already have it?* The answer is NOBODY! So *where is the real need for municipal interoperability?* The answer is in and around the municipality for and between stakeholders in the community. Amazingly, a single device known as a Rapid Deployment Portable Repeater (RDPR) can provide an incredible level of interoperability across the VHF, UHF, 700 and 800 MHz frequency bands with both analog and P25 digital capability (Phase 1 and Phase 2) as well as both conventional and trunking operation. Now, let us share a little story on why we think it might be beneficial for EVERY municipality to consider the purchase of a multi-band RDPR.

Once upon a time, a very recent time actually, there was a county. In this county was a municipal fire department who was a Falcon Wireless customer. In that same county was a Sheriffs Department who would not even consider Falcon as a supplier.

The reason for our disqualification was allegedly that we were too far away to provide "good" service. After all, we are several hours away, and once when the fire department repeater went down, it took us three hours to replace their repeater with a loaner. The Sheriff recently had a problem with one of his new repeaters (top of the line big brand, don't you know). His local sales and service provider didn't keep spare units. He was told he would have to wait at least three weeks for the necessary parts to repair the malfunction.

The curious thing is that this Sheriff has multiple repeaters (four as I recall), each covered by a service contract (daytime only, 5 days a week, weather related and electrical irregularities excluded - anything else is "extra"). My understanding is that he pays \$100 per month EACH for this "service agreement". Now back to our story.

The fire department had asked us if we could provide a BETTER solution than a three hour response. We told them about a thing called a Rapid Deployment Repeater System. These handy little gadgets are totally transportable, can be operated from AC power or batteries and they can do some absolutely incredible things like operating on VHF, UHF, or 700/800 MHz. You can even set them up to simulcast on all three bands and they can function in either (or both) analog AND digital P25 operating modes. Did we happen to mention that it is made in the United States of America?

We showed our fire department user how to get a grant that paid for the whole thing. The net result is that he has a portable tactical repeater plus a backup repeater for any radio system in the county INCLUDING the Sheriff and it didn't cost him a dime! Within less time than it took the local dealer to diagnose the problem, the fire department rapid deployment repeater was on scene and operational with no technician required to set it up!

Would you like to know what it cost? LESS THAN \$10,000! And you know something else? Even if the fire department didn't get a grant, they could have set it up on a governmental extended purchase plan which would have allowed them to pay only \$200 per month INCLUDING all maintenance for five years which is less than HALF the cost the Sheriff is paying for his "service agreement".

So we now have a slightly different twist to the term *Interoperability*. We think the operative term for most municipalities would be CONTINUITY OF SERVICE which is of greater benefit than interoperability. You may recall that in our very first conversation with a Mayor of an Alabama city that he had a real concern for continuance of service in the event of a power disruption. The RDPR can run for extended periods of time from low cost automotive storage batteries and/or solar power as desired. No municipality should be without a RDPR! Additional information is available at [info4u.us/RDPR.pdf](http://info4u.us/RDPR.pdf).

Maybe that thirty thousand dollar top of the line base repeater station that you are now using, or considering purchasing, might not be your best solution! If you would like to see the RDPR in operation, in your city, set up and working with your existing or proposed new radio communications system, just give us a call at 800.489.2611. We'll be there when you are ready!

