

## 2010 Radio Purchase Guidelines

As you know, there has been a bit of passing the hot potato relating to a written policy concerning the necessity to purchase only P25 equipment with FEMA grant money. After reading a lot, and talking a lot, studying a lot, and reviewing the 2010 SAFECOM Guidance, I think it would be safe to conclude the following:

If you applied for a FEMA communications grant in 2009, your safest course of action would be to purchase P25 compliant equipment unless you specifically included a variance (i.e. compelling reason) for purchasing anything other than P25. It should be noted that SAFECOM ([www.safecom.com](http://www.safecom.com)) modified their Statement of Requirements (SoR) for 2010 which are reflected in the FEMA grant guidance.

So what does this mean from a common sense point of view? Specifically, if your 2009 grant application says that you intended to purchase P25 equipment with your grant money, that is exactly what you are expected to purchase. The governance and administration of FEMA Assistance to Fire Fighter grants is administered by FEMA at the Regional level - not the Department of Homeland Security at the State level. The function of the State DHS is simply to review all grants for compliance and conformity with the applicable Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP).

Most of the language spoken in government documents is written in *double speak*, but you can make some sense of it. The selection of appropriate guidance is addressed on Page 11 of the 2010 SAFECOM Guidance for Federal Grant Programs. This includes ALL federal grant programs including not only fire, but law enforcement as well. You are invited to review this information for yourself in the applicable section at:

[www.safecomprogram.gov/NR/ronlyres/31A870C0-0C9D-4C29-86F8-147D61AF25CF/0/FY\\_2010\\_SAFECOM\\_Recommended\\_Guidance\\_111809\\_Final.pdf](http://www.safecomprogram.gov/NR/ronlyres/31A870C0-0C9D-4C29-86F8-147D61AF25CF/0/FY_2010_SAFECOM_Recommended_Guidance_111809_Final.pdf).

The following statements from page 11 of the aforementioned document should provide clarification.

### **Land Mobile Radio Systems**

*All new digital voice systems must be compliant with the Project 25 (P25) suite of standards. This requirement is intended for government-owned or -leased digital land mobile public safety radio equipment. This requirement does not apply to commercial voice services that offer other types of voice interoperability solutions.*

*To ensure encrypted interoperability, the P25 suite of standards references the use of Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) in the Project 25 Block Encryption Protocol, ANSI/TIA-102.AAD. Entities pursuing encrypted communications capabilities must be compliant with the P25 Block Encryption Protocol.*

*This guidance does not preclude funding for non-P25 equipment when there are compelling reasons for using other solutions. Funding requests by agencies to replace or add radio equipment to an existing non-P25 system (such as procuring new portables for an existing analog system) will be considered if there is an explanation for how such equipment will improve interoperability or support eventual migration to interoperable systems. Absent these compelling reasons, P25 equipment will be required for LMR systems to which the standards apply.*

Earlier in this document, you may have noted that there were exceptions that allowed funding of non-P25 equipment for purposes of narrow banding and expanding operations on analog narrow band systems. However, the statement above is all-inclusive on the governance of funding for DIGITAL LAND MOBILE RADIO SYSTEMS. In plain language, if you want to stay analog and apply for a grant, you are free to do so as long as you provide sufficient justification for your request. Justification is NOT required for P25 WHICH IS THE ONLY STANDARD for Land Mobile Radio Systems utilizing a digital operating system. This means that Hytera, MotoTRBO, IDAS, and NEXEDGE are NOT approved digital operating systems - ONLY P25! The final statement in the aforementioned excerpt from the SAFECOM 2010 guidance sums it all up - "**P25 equipment will be required for LMR systems to which the standards apply**" unless there is a COMPELLING reason to do otherwise (and as you may recall, the only examples stated were for ANALOG equipment - NOT other types of digital operating systems. We hope this clears up some of the confusion!