

2009 SAFECOM Recommended Guidance for Federal Grant Programs

The following is an excerpt from the 2009 Guidance for Federal Grant Programs (Pages 7 and 8) with highlights added to assist the reader.

Equipment Standards

When procuring equipment for communications systems, whether voice or data, a standards based approach should be used to begin migration to multi-jurisdictional and multidisciplinary interoperability. The applicable standards for land mobile radio (LMR) systems and data-related information sharing systems are described below. Applicants must demonstrate how their procurements will comply with these standards, as applicable, or provide compelling reasons for using non-standards-based solutions.

Land Mobile Radio Systems

All new digital voice systems should be compliant with the Project 25 (P25) suite of standards. This recommendation is intended for government-owned or -leased digital land mobile public safety radio equipment. Its purpose is to ensure that such equipment or systems can interoperate with other digital emergency response land mobile equipment or systems. It is not intended to apply to commercial services that offer other types of interoperability solutions. Further, it does not exclude any application if the application demonstrates that the system or equipment being proposed will lead to enhanced interoperability.

With input from the user community, these standards have been developed to support backward compatibility with existing digital and analog systems and to provide for interoperability in future systems. The FCC adopted the P25 suite of standards for voice and low-speed data interoperability in the new nationwide 700 megahertz (MHz) frequency band for the designated interoperability channels. Most Federal agencies with a public safety mission that operate mission critical Push-To-Talk (PTT) radio systems have chosen the P25 suite of standards for their digital radio solutions. This includes the U.S. Department of Defense, which uses this technology for its non-tactical communications.

This guidance does not preclude funding non-P25 equipment when there are compelling reasons for using other solutions. However, the first priority of Federal funding (subject to the statutory authority of the grantor agency or the objectives of the grant program when the applicant is seeking Federal grant funding) for improving public safety communications is to provide basic, operable communications within a department, with safety as the overriding consideration.

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 the radio selection will improve interoperability or support eventual migration to interoperable systems. Absent these compelling reasons, SAFECOM intends that P25 equipment will be preferred for LMR systems to which the standard applies.

The full text of SAFECOM 2009 is available on line at:

<http://www.safecomprogram.gov/NR/rdonlyres/9DFFF882-1895-47F5-B724-9808BF1F9FE9/0/FY2009SAFECOMRecommendedGuidanceforFederalGrantProgramsFINAL110408.pdf>