

# **Falcon Direct**

## **Customer Information Memo**



## **Service FAQ's**

The deal breaker (or maker) in the selection of a communications vendor is often based on long term relationships with local service providers, the support (or lack thereof) by a manufacturer, and the reputation of the service provider.

Strangely, cost is almost never a major consideration. The ability to quickly take care of a problem is, and should be, a major consideration closely followed by cost when selecting a communications equipment vendor.

As a prospective vendor, we have prepared the following FAQ's to provide a brief introduction to Falcon Direct. Obviously, if you have additional questions, we are as near as your phone (800.489.2611) or your PC ([ServinU@falcondirect.com](mailto:ServinU@falcondirect.com)).

We publish a monthly eNewsletter which you can view on-line at any time by going to [www.falcondirect.com/newsletter/current](http://www.falcondirect.com/newsletter/current), or you can sign up to receive new issues automatically by email at [www.falcondirect.com/SignUp](http://www.falcondirect.com/SignUp). If you prefer, you can get your news quicker on our Blog at <http://falconinfo.blogspot.com> and if you wish to receive instant Blogs go to: <http://feedburner.google.com/fb/a/mailverify?uri=TheFalconForum> and sign up as a member of our growing international list of Blog readers.



Service doesn't have to be a one way street! We live in a rapidly changing world! The things that worked in the 80's may not be so efficient in the 21st century. An example of a new way to use and maintain repeater stations was recently posted on our Blog. We think you may find it interesting. Check the posting out at: <http://falconinfo.blogspot.com/2011/07/alternative-to-tommy-toolbelt.html>.

Our point is that new technology can drastically reduce the need for on-site service. For example, Falcon Direct is the supplier of choice for repeaters used by the US Embassy throughout Mexico. Do we have to be there to take care of service when needed? Absolutely not! They used to have Motorola Quantar stations. So why did they change, and in particular, why did they choose Falcon Direct? The answer may surprise you!

It all started with the selection of the P25 repeater station best suited for their needs. That turned out to be the ICOM *Eclipse II* (See [www.info4u.us/Eclipse2.pdf](http://www.info4u.us/Eclipse2.pdf) for additional information). The reasons for selecting the *Eclipse II* were numerous, but the three main reasons were: 1) Network connectivity via fiber, microwave, or the Internet. 2) Remote diagnostics and programming via PC and, 3) Modular construction that allows non-technical personnel to correct malfunctions by simple module substitution.

We went a step further to develop first level field repair training via Webinar. We have never even seen either the customer, or the facilities where the stations were installed. Rather, we contracted with a third party organization to provide on-site installation of the first station in Mexico City coupled with Webinar training for the other locations. Not a single Falcon Direct technician was required or used. The customer has both spare modules and complete exchange repeaters if required. THAT is service in today's world!

We maintain the largest VHF P25 system in the State of Alabama even though the user is over 100 miles away. It's all about cooperation (an absolute necessity), planning, response when needed, spares and training. THAT is what makes us different! On the following page, we will answer some of the questions that may be important to you.

**Question:** I can call my local technician at 3:00 am in the morning and he will come. Can you do the same?

**Answer:** Yes and we generally arrive within three hours after being called. The real question is how quickly can we get you back on the air? The answer to that question is typically 15 minutes or less IF you will work with us in developing the common objective of keeping you up and running and it will cost you a WHOLE lot less!

**Question:** Our local service technician has years of experience in communications. We don't know much about your capabilities. Can you tell us a little bit more about your overall capabilities?

**Answer:** There are three of us on our technical team - Burch Falkner, Phil Rich with a quarter), century of experience operating with a family owned 2-way shop in Miami, FL, and Andrew Sullens, a "Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer" as well as "A+" and Cisco Systems certified, fluent in Biometric security and can code in 6 languages, fluent in Linux & Unix, the core OS of most communications equipment. Phil, by the way, holds an FCC General Class license, plus an Electrical Engineering degree and is an ordained (Master of Divinity) Presbyterian minister. As for me (Burch), I am just an ex-military counter intelligence communications specialist, technical writer (I wrote the manual for the Redstone rocket fueling mechanism) and a former executive with Boeing, General Electric, and Sylvania as well a communications consultant to clients worldwide.

**Question:** My current service company is a part of a larger organization that allows our local technician to draw upon the resources of other branches when required. We think that having backup is a necessary element for a competent service organization. What do you have for support?

**Answer:** We agree that we all need someone to cover our back. We have a long history of partnering with others. In Birmingham, we work with Birmingham Two Way, a company with which I was once associated. Each of us has different skill levels that can be coordinated to the benefit of those we serve. We have an on-going relationship with Hurricane Electronics, in Mobile, who assisted us with system integration and training for the US State Department as well as strategically located dealers around the State of Alabama including DCCI in Millport (Montgomery), Huntsville Radio in north Alabama, and Ward-Bell Communications in Dothan, Alabama.

**Question:** We have always relied on the use of a service contract to assure prompt service when required while simultaneously putting a cap on the cost of service. Do you offer service contracts?

**Answer:** In a word, Yes. However, we think a word of explanation may be in order. Spending \$600 a year for a "contract" on a repeater in most cases has little to do with the real requirement. It's more like paying an insurance premium that guarantees the service company will respond during normal business hours. Parts are generally not included nor is the cost of after hour service. More often that not, there is a "trip charge" which is not included. On the other hand, a contract that covered ALL contingencies would simply be unaffordable or impractical at the very least. For a review of available service options from Falcon Direct, please see: [www.falcondirect.com/Service](http://www.falcondirect.com/Service).

**Question:** Our dealer does a good job keeping us advised of FCC regulatory issues, grants, trends, competitive evaluations, ways to cut costs and generally taking good care of us. How do you keep your customers informed?

**Answer:** Without boasting, we will simply say that NOBODY does a better job of keeping their customers (and even those who are not our customers) informed than Falcon Direct. Just read through some of the recent postings at <http://falconinfo.blogspot.com> for proof. Helping you is what we do. The "Plan" on the following page is an example.

# A Plan For Now And The Future!

As a prospective equipment vendor and service provider, the selection process of determining a suitable relationship is a two-way street. To be sure, the ultimate decision lies with the user as to the selection of a suitable equipment and service provider. However, we have our own criteria for measuring whether the relationship will be suitable for all concerned parties. I'll give you an example.

Let's say that you are buying a specific brand of radios and/or related equipment and you are pleased with the level of service received and the related costs. The obvious conclusion is that you don't need us. The only thing we might possibly do is offer faster response and lower cost (not an easy thing to do, in particular when we don't even know exactly what you have). However, if you are seriously interested in better, more efficient, less expensive SERVICE (not maintenance - there IS a difference); we have the basis for beginning a discussion.

If we are simply bidding on a contract for service, that is one thing. If there is a problem and we are being invited to provide a solution, that is an entirely different situation. In the later scenario, we inspect all equipment associated with your system, study the connections, review potentially troublesome issues such as capability for expansion, FCC licensing, equipment compatibility with changing regulations, general equipment condition, grounding & lightning protection, operational routines, repeater site inspection, and tower compliance and safety standards.

Our rate for providing the aforementioned inspection and the generation of a written report with recommendations to reduce maintenance response time while cutting costs is \$500 per day excluding travel. Normally, we can accomplish our task in a single work day scheduled at a time and date suitable to both parties. Our report typically includes the use of spares and minimal user training to perform emergency service restoration without the need for calling technicians.

Webinar training on high tier products such as the ICOM *Eclipse II* repeater will be provided at no cost when included with the purchase of the product or minimal cost on special items as requested.

We normally do not recommend service contracts since we prefer to put this money into spares. However, if you prefer a contract to provide guaranteed response within a reasonable time during normal business hours, we will be happy to provide a quotation with or without parts and a surcharge for after hours, weekend, and holiday on-site or telephone support services as desired.

FCC Licensing requirements, narrow band and digital migration, as well as Interoperability plans will be included in our report at no additional charge.

In closing, we would like to mention that the majority of our customers are over 100 miles away with P25 radio installations in Butler, Cullman, Franklin, Jefferson, Lowndes and Sumter counties in Alabama as well as outside the USA. We have DMR (aka MotoTRBO) installations in Blount, Calhoun, Cherokee, Clarke, and Jefferson counties with the list growing daily and we are a pioneer provider of NXDN (IDAS) systems throughout the State of Alabama, nationally and internationally with one of the largest systems ever installed in Oman, Jordan. One day soon, we hope our list will include YOU!

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