Non-P25 Digital Technologies Will Negatively Impact on Hard-Won Advances in Public Safety Interoperability

National Public Safety Telecommunications Council (NPSTC) Interoperable Technology Position Paper

NPSTC is a federation of organizations whose mission is to improve public safety communications and interoperability through collaborative leadership.

Communications difficulties have been an identified problem in after action reports from virtually every major disaster ever handled in the United States. The advent of digital radio exacerbated the problem as initial systems were deployed with proprietary technology. The public safety community has acknowledged issues with interoperability for over 40 years, and has worked hard to educate regulatory and legislative bodies to the problem. The public safety and vendor communities have worked in partnership for nearly 25 years to develop a standard for digital radios that will remove the technical barriers that have historically hampered interoperability efforts. The resulting suite of standards known as Project 25 (P25) has been adopted and widely implemented by public safety agencies throughout the U.S., Canada, and across the globe.

P25 is not the only digital land mobile radio technology available. Digital LMR technologies such as DMR, MPT1327, and TETRA are widely used outside the U.S. and hold the dominant market position in other parts of the world. Recently, some public safety and critical infrastructure agencies here in the U.S. have been opting for these and other disparate technologies that are not compatible with P25. Not only does this pose a virtually insurmountable technical hurdle for successful interoperability, it potentially negates billions of dollars' worth of investment in P25 LMR systems.

The use of incompatible equipment will create a barrier to achieving interoperability and therefore increase the risk to our first responders and the public they serve and protect.

NPSTC strongly urges public safety and critical infrastructure agencies contemplating the purchase or use of LMR equipment to opt for **P25 Phase 1[1] (12.5 kHz conventional FDMA) and/or analog modes for interoperability.** Project 25 Phase 1 radios automatically receive both analog and P25. No other technological solution ensures direct compatibility. While there are many other elements to consider in your quest to achieve a high level of interoperability, there can be no argument that compatible technology is paramount.

NPSTC supports technologies that strive to improve interoperability for our nation's first responders and will not support federal grant funding being eligible to purchase incompatible technologies.

[1] This does not preclude system infrastructure which is Phase 2 compatible.