

PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE TESTIMONY

P25 RADIO SYSTEM

SENATE COMMUNICATIONS & TECHNOLOGY, LAW & JUSTICE, AND

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

COMMITTEES

MARCH 26, 2018



PRESENTED BY

MAJOR DIANE STACKHOUSE

DIRECTOR,

BUREAU OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SERVICES

PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE

Good morning, Chairmen Aument, Haywood, McIlhinney, Brewster, Vulakovich, Costa, and members of the Communications & Technology, Law & Justice and the Veterans' Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committees. I am Major Diane Stackhouse, Director of the Bureau of Communications and Information Services, Pennsylvania State Police (PSP). With me is Robert Barnham, Director, Statewide Radio Network Division as well as Ken Stuck who serves in STARNet's Site Development and Maintenance Section. On behalf of the State Police, I would like to thank you for inviting us to participate in a discussion regarding the Statewide Radio Network's (PA-STARNet) new P25 radio system.

Project 25 (P25) versus OpenSky

Project 25 (P25) is a set of standards created through joint efforts with the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO), the National Association of State Telecommunications Directors, and the National Communications System, and blessed by the Telecommunications Industry Association. The majority of P25 networks are based in North America; however, P25 is being used in other countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, and Brazil. These standards were developed to provide voice and data communications for public safety and first responders but more importantly to ensure interoperability.

One key concern for any first responder (police, fire, EMS) is interoperability. Lack of interoperability occurs when public safety personnel respond to the same emergency but cannot communicate with each other because they operate on incompatible radio systems. This is the situation we have with OpenSky. The only way we can achieve reliability and interoperability is to move to a P25 open standard radio technology. Since OpenSky is a proprietary system, it prevents us from being interoperable with local, state, and federal agencies and therefore, the transition to P25 is of utmost priority.

Pennsylvania's P25 Radio System

On October 3, 2016, Motorola Solutions was awarded the P25, Land Mobile Radio contract. Pilot 1, in Warren County, became operational in April 2017, and was successfully completed in June 2017. On July 1, 2017, Pilot 2 commenced and on October 30, Troopers were using the P25 radio system in Venango, Crawford, and Erie counties. On March 19, 2018, statewide rollout commenced in Mercer, Lawrence, Butler, Armstrong, and Beaver counties. By June 30, 2018, an additional eight counties in western Pennsylvania will be P25 operational. Statewide deployment will continue eastward during Fiscal Year 2018 - 2019, consistent with funding allocations. Projected completion is June 30, 2021.

I'd like to highlight several of our innovative and cost-saving initiatives in our deployment of the P25 system. Motorola Solutions and Capital Area Communications secured a first-of-its-kind warehouse facility in Harrisburg to stage and test radio equipment prior to its deployment in the field. The warehouse concept provides many benefits, such as, close project oversight, constant quality control checks, and quick deployment. Additionally, the taxpayers are saving money because without the warehouse, my staff would constantly have to fly to Illinois where Motorola normally stages its radio equipment. This project is also unique because Motorola and PSP have assigned the highest-qualified experts in radio technology, frequency ownership, project management, and infrastructure deployment, without spending extra funds on consultants. All full-time staff are Pennsylvania residents, who are committed to the success of this project.

The OpenSky system relies on more than 1,110 radio sites compared to the P25 design of approximately 116 sites. Once OpenSky is decommissioned in June 2021, the commonwealth will realize approximately 6 million dollars in yearly savings due to fewer tower sites and leases, less maintenance, and lower utility costs. Within eight years, the commonwealth will recoup its investment in the P25 infrastructure. Throughout this project, we will continue to leverage our previous investments - high-profile steel towers and public safety licensed microwave system. For the first time in the history

of the radio system, we are prepared to assist counties with opportunities in shared services. The Commonwealth's P25 radio system allows counties to voluntarily assess options to reduce costs or create communications interoperability with STARNet. Senate Resolution 237 was the impetus to start those conversations, and we look forward to those partnering opportunities.

In conclusion, migrating to a P25 open standard radio technology is the only option to provide reliable communications and interoperability at the local, state, and federal level. A P25-compliant system is also a fiscally responsible decision and our P25 system provides the state and counties with the reliable and interoperable communications necessary to save lives.