April 27, 2011

Good morning; I am Stephen Libhart, Director of Dauphin County's Emergency Management Agency.

I am in attendance this morning to discuss the interoperability of Dauphin County's radio system with the statewide radio project, which has proven during many recent and regional exercises, its ability to handle the traffic and to provide interoperable communications when needed within its coverage area. In short, the system is working. As you may or may not be aware of already, Dauphin County is not a user of the 800 mHz state-wide Open Sky system; we utilize a 400 mHz Motorola system, but do have connectivity with other agencies on the state-wide radio through talk groups programmed into radios on either system.

Older systems still in use throughout the Commonwealth will be impacted by the FCC mandate to transition all public safety systems to narrow band channels by January 1, 2013. The state wide radio project currently meets this requirement and, unlike many systems still operating, will not require a potentially expensive complete replacement of all hardware and software to continue operating.

The technology used for the statewide radio project is newest available in the public safety communications market. Interoperability or the ability for state users to communicate amongst one another, and with other Commonwealth agencies, is at a level never before known in Pennsylvania. Further, the technology implemented yields a variety of options for interoperability and interconnectivity with various other systems in a myriad of methods.

The system's abilities allow for the flexibility to connect with other counties and municipalities regardless of the system they are operating currently or will migrate to in the future. For example, here in Dauphin County we have direct circuit level ties into the state system, the most valuable of which is a dedicated talk group with the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP). It took only 60 days from planning to implementation to achieve this connectivity. PSP cars now hear all general announcements made by Dauphin County live, and PSP vehicles can call the county simply by selecting a different talk group on their radios. The County can then patch this link to *any* Dauphin County talk group (police, fire or EMS), on demand. This link allows a direct user to user communication between PSP and all law enforcement agencies operating within Dauphin County.

As with any new technology's introduction and implementation, challenges occasionally arise. No system will ever meet the needs and wants of 100% of the users, whether that unmet resource happens to be a preference for a specific radio shape, appearance or controls or something of a broader scope such as coverage inhibitions caused by topography or specific site restrictions.

In summary, the statewide radio project as it currently exists is working; by our estimation it is cost effective, and there are not any issues needing addressed. I hope that this response will prove helpful to you and your joint committee's efforts.

I would be happy to entertain any question you may have.