

# MILWAUKEE POLICE DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

Date: July 9, 2010

TO: All Members of the Department

FR: Edward A. Flynn  
Chief of Police

RE: Status of the OpenSky Radio System



The operation of the Milwaukee Police Department must be both transparent and responsive to the safety of all officers and to the citizens of the City of Milwaukee. There has been much attention paid recently to the OpenSky radio system, and I wanted to keep the entire department informed regarding the resolution of known problems and our efforts to improve the overall performance of the system.

First, I want to thank all officers that have filed Radio Trouble Reports. We take these reports seriously – we review and act on every one. Use these reports as your voice to share problems or concerns about your radios. As a direct result of the reports that have been submitted, we have taken the following actions:

- New transmitter sites will be deployed at District 2 by early August and District 7 shortly afterwards. These will provide improved signal strength around those Districts, especially in the low-lying areas.
- A bi-directional amplifier (signal booster) will be installed by mid-July at District 5 to improve in-building coverage there.
- Due to the tracking of equipment failures, the shoulder microphones of all patrol officers will be replaced District by District beginning mid-July.
- By mapping the locations of coverage complaints and conducting field tests, our radio shop personnel was able to identify four areas of possible interference by other wireless providers. A consultant with expertise in identifying and mitigating this type of interference has been hired to help resolve these issues.
- Intense testing has been conducted at locations where poor internal coverage was reported such as Bradley Tech and Pulaski High Schools. We have received quotes to install bi-directional amplifiers at these locations, and we will be working with Milwaukee Public Schools to get them installed. We are also looking at alternative means of communications in these buildings.

In addition to these broader system issues, numerous individual equipment problems have been identified and repaired or replaced. Still, we need the continued help of every officer to make the system and the radios better and more reliable. If you have a radio issue, please complete a Radio Trouble Report and include as much accurate information as possible. If directed, bring the equipment in for evaluation. Returning problematic equipment to stock just passes a potential

problem to another officer. To complete a Radio Trouble Report, follow the link on the home page of the Department's internal web site. (<http://mpdcentral/IntranetHome/default.aspx>) We are unable to address problems that are unreported, so please use the reports to keep us informed.

The department has been and will continue to be diligent in ensuring that the necessary steps are taken to complete the successful installation of this radio system. We have hired independent, external experts to augment our staff in addressing interference, radio frequency planning, radio system verification, and project management. A few of the upcoming projects they are assisting us with are:

- **New Dispatch Consoles:** To resolve problems with the radio consoles used by dispatchers, we will be replacing all existing consoles (and the console switching equipment that supports them) with new models. The new consoles will be deployed in September at our Alternate Dispatch Site at the Police Radio Shop, followed by the consoles at the Communication Data Center. The result will be new dispatch consoles that are more reliable, easier to maintain, and that improve the efficiency of our dispatch center.
- **New System Software:** As part of the implementation of the new dispatch consoles, the radio system will be upgraded with new software that our radio vendor assures us will improve the overall audio quality of radio transmissions. This will happen in the September.
- **Vehicular Tactical Repeaters (VTACs):** The department has purchased thirty-five VTACs. They are used to improve the local radio signal strength as part of the tactical response to an incident or a special event. These units will initially be installed in supervisor's vehicles belonging to the Neighborhood Policing Bureau. One unit was temporarily installed at Summerfest to augment coverage, and we received very positive feedback from the officers involved. In fact, it was reported that officers had coverage in areas that had never been covered by the old system.
- **Fleetmap:** The new fleetmap (talkgroup plan) has been pushed out to nearly every portable on the system, giving officers additional talkgroups, and eventually, features such as scanning and VTAC usage. Although department wide training has not yet occurred because of summer staffing issues, officers involved with special events have been shown how to access these additional talkgroups and have again given favorable reviews. Full department training on the fleetmap will be conducted during the fall to ensure that our officers know how to utilize the radio fleetmap.
- **New Portable Radios:** In September, new smaller portable radios will be deployed as replacements for the majority of our current portables, allowing us to achieve the goal of assigning one radio to each officer.

Finally, financial transparency is vital. The costs for consultants and all of these improvements have been borne either by Harris Corporation or have been paid for with asset forfeiture funds.

I am committed to dedicating the necessary resources and my personal attention to this project. Thank you for your assistance and patience as we work through this challenge and move the department into a new era of radio communications.

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