



AURORA Sentinel ONLINE

THE VOICE OF
AURORA, COLORADO

Thursday, October 27, 2005

Police switch off troubled digital radio system

By J.C. O'Connell

the Aurora Daily Sun & Sentinel

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Aurora | Police switched from a \$12 million digital radio system back to an old analog system yesterday because radio calls have been dropped and garbled.

"I can't believe we're here. It's been 18 months. This is a \$12 million system," Mayor Ed Tauer said at a meeting Monday when officials discussed the radios.

Police began using the digital system in February 2004.

Mark Pray, director of information technology for the city, said system provider M/A-COM has 60 days to fix the system.

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Monday, March 20, 2006

Police radio system showing improvement

By J.C. O'Connell

The Aurora Daily Sun & Sentinel

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Aurora | After almost a year of studies, repairs and tests, the city's \$12 million radio system is finally showing signs of improvement.

Police may be able to switch back as early as May 15 to the digital radio system they abandoned last fall because of garbled and dropped calls.

Four antennas were replaced in February, making signals seven to 100 times stronger and radio interference from Colorado Springs 32 times weaker, according to officials.

"They were designed to eliminate the interference we were getting from Colorado Springs. The good news is that they have done that," said Mark Pray, director of information technology for the city.

The digital system will undergo drive-by testing throughout the city until the end of the month, before select police officers test the system for an additional 30 days.

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TheDenverChannel.com

Officers Claim Aurora Radio System Not Working

Police Complain Of Garbled, Digitized, Dropped Transmissions

POSTED: 2:41 pm MDT May 4, 2005

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DENVER -- Police officers in Aurora say they have lost confidence in a critical piece of equipment -- their radios.

Since launching the investigation last March, 7NEWS has communicated with dozens of police officers and emergency dispatchers -- all painting a picture of frustration and fear.

In a recent radio communication between an Aurora police officer and an emergency dispatcher, the two talk about a radio breakdown.

The officer asks, "Do they have someone out working on the radios or we just going have to live with it?"

The police dispatcher responds, "It's been like that for two days ... I guess for the meantime we have to live with it. As we probably have to live with it as long as we have this stupid system."

That so-called "stupid" system cost taxpayers \$12.3 million.

"This is a safety issue at least!" the officer says to the dispatcher.

"Oh, I completely agree with you," the dispatcher says.

Aurora Police Sgt. Randy Moody said the level of frustration among the officers is extremely high. Moody has experienced the problems in the field and in his role as union vice president.



Sgt. Randy Moody says Aurora officers are frustrated with the city's new police radio system.

"We all knew there would be a time where bugs would be worked out ... I don't think any officer expected it to be this long and I don't think they expected the problems to be this great," Moody said.

7NEWS Investigators have reviewed hundreds of written complaints turned in during the past 14 months by Aurora police officers. We found dozens of complaints citing garbled, digitized and dropped transmissions.

Officers wrote about radios that didn't work, communications that never got through, and false emergency signals.

In a February 2005 report an officer wrote, "Radios endangered several lives tonight -- officers and citizens."

"If the catastrophic failures continue, then I think pressure has to be applied somewhere to get the thing fixed," Moody said.

Mark Pray, the man in charge of the city's emergency radios, said, "I think Aurora's new radio system is the best radio system in the state, perhaps in the country."

Pray discounts the issues raised by officers in their reports.

Tony Kovaleski/7NEWS: "Officers will tell you those problems have put their lives at greater risk."

Mark Pray/Director of Information and Technology: "I have not seen that. I hear their frustration. We take all their complaints very..."

Tony Kovaleski/7NEWS: "You haven't seen that?"

Mark Pray/Director of Information and Technology: "No, I have not."

Video



Police Call New Radio System 'Stupid'

Tony Kovalski/7NEWS: "You haven't read all the reports?"

Mark Pray/Director of Information and Technology: "I haven't seen a safety issue yet."

Pray said the new system has a greater coverage area and works successfully 99.6 percent of the time.

Tony Kovalski/7NEWS: "There are officers that are saying, 'When is enough enough? How long is it going to take?' What's the answer?"

Mark Pray/Director of Information and Technology: "Typically, (as I said before...) 12 to 18 months. We're very close. We've made significant improvement."

"I can certainly understand where some officers would be outraged. Do I completely agree with it? No, I don't. But then again, I'm not in the situations that they are on a daily basis," said Aurora acting police chief Terry Jones.

Jones stresses the radios have made significant improvements in recent weeks but concedes problems still remain.

"What I've been told from it is that they will not accept the system until we are satisfied. ... Obviously, I have officers that are not satisfied," Jones said.

A memo obtained by 7NEWS crystallizes that lack of satisfaction. In the memo, a sergeant writes, "Somebody make me king please. I would have M/A Com either put a tech on site 24-7 and be on the road 40 hours a week or tell them to back their truck up and take this crap away."

If officers were to vote on continuing forward or unplugging the system, Moody said he thinks officers would vote to unplug the system.

Tony Kovalski/7NEWS: "Is there anybody to blame here?"

Mark Pray/Director of Information and Technology: "No, there is nobody to blame."

Tony Kovalski/7NEWS: "This has gone as planned?"

Mark Pray/Director of Information and Technology: "Yes. "

7NEWS also contacted the manufacturer of the radio system.

In a statement, M/A Com said in part, "On site technical teams from M/A Com and the city are now tuning the radio system and diligently addressing all issues that may impede user experience. "

Another high ranking member of Aurora's police department told 7NEWS, "It's pure luck there has not been a major incident where a cop, a firefighter or a citizen has been injured or killed because of the breakdown in communications."

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