



Powered by Clickability



[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

## I-Team

Story Created: Feb 1, 2009

Story Updated: Feb 1, 2009

# You Paid for It: OpenSky still Offline

**Aaron Diamant**

You paid for it, so where is it?

It all looked great on paper: a high-tech communications system called "OpenSky" that would let Milwaukee police, fire, EMS, all first responders, talk to each other when every second counts. The price tag: about \$15 million.

"I think we've spent enough without a doubt," said Alderman Willie Hines, President of the Milwaukee Common Council. "That product should be operating and performing for us."

But it doesn't, at least not completely. Police officers can hook up laptop computers and hard-wired radios in their squad cars to the system, but the handheld radios first responders rely on tanked in a recent round of live tests.

"It became clear that we were having problems with dead spots and some operator problems that were certainly distressing our police officers and creating an environment where they felt unsafe," explained Milwaukee Police Chief Edward Flynn following those tests in November 2008.

City records show the project's deadline has been pushed back over and over again to November 2005, then for another two months, then to June 2006, again to August 2007, and now even further into 2009.

Turns out, the State of New York was in the same boat with the same vendor, M/A-COM, a subsidiary of Virginia-based Tyco Electronics. Earlier this month, New York canceled a \$2 billion contract for a larger version of "OpenSky."

"We really concluded here that it's not working," said Joan Sullivan, New York's Executive Deputy Comptroller for Operations. "Unless something changes dramatically, we need to pull the plug."

OpenSky tests in New York found 19 deficiencies. Most of those deficiencies never got fixed including: equipment failures, problems with emergency calls, other reliability issues, and project delays.

"Rather than continuing to put the time and the effort trying to make this correct, the State of New York decided to cut their losses," explained Sullivan.

That decision has left elected leaders in Milwaukee wondering whether it's finally time to do the same thing.

"There's no need for us to wait until we spend more dollars only to get to the same place that New York got," said Hines.

Still, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett remains hopeful. Barrett spokesperson Jodie Tabak told Today's TMJ4, "The investment has been made, and we want to make this work."

However, those who ok'd the contract more than five years ago have one final warning for M/A-COM.

"It is our expectation that this company delivers," Hines said. "If they don't, we must look to other vendors to deliver such a vital service to the City of Milwaukee."

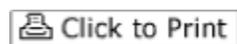
Milwaukee Police Department spokesperson, Anne Schwartz said, "We're not at that point yet, but we're continuing to monitor the tests."

A public relations representative for M/A-COM's parent company said Tyco Electronics has no official statement about the OpenSky projects in Milwaukee or in New York.

MPD assured us that none of the problems with OpenSky threatens public safety. The department is still using its old radio system until OpenSky gets up and running.

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.todaystmj4.com/features/iteam/38786262.html>



[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

©2007 WTMJ-TV. All Rights Reserved.