



Officials get 911 restart

A Tyco Electronics Wireless Systems spokesman said the new 30-day testing period for the 911 radio system is going well.

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It came within four days of passing.

Earlier this month -- on the 26th day of a 30-day test period -- York County's new radio system failed, and police officers lost contact with each other and with 911.

Now, officials are almost halfway through a second testing period for the system, which was installed and is maintained by Tyco Electronics Wireless Systems.

"They (York County 911 officials) were wanting to find out the facts from Tyco, and it was our opinion that, regardless of what the facts were, it was a failure -- it shut the system down -- so we wanted the clock reset," said Richard Shank, Manchester Township fire chief and a member of the York County Fire Radio Committee.

Shank said the system failure was a little disappointing, "but if it's going to fail . . . that's the reason we have that 30-day period."

"Hopefully, this is it, we're going to be able to

get through this 30 days and move on," he said. "It's imperative that we get the new system working (because) daily, there's problems with the old system, and they don't have the parts to fix it."

'Intermittent loss'

The county's Office of Emergency Services began the first 30-day testing period in mid-April.

"We were humming along," Frackleton said.

But on that 26th day, a circuit board housed inside one of the emergency services' transmission sites throughout the county malfunctioned, Frackleton said.

"There was an intermittent loss of communication; it would be there and then drop off," Frackleton said.

Only police departments were affected because only they have cut over to the new system, Shank said.

Wayne Pearson, Wrightsville Borough Police chief, said he became aware of the failure but wasn't overly concerned because "I knew they were still working on the system."

The radio committee, made up of fire and EMS officials, have a stake in the new radios, too: Their cut-over to the system is planned for mid-to late July.

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On track

The investigation into the May 9 failure continues, Frackleton said.

In an e-mail dated May 16, Eric Bistline, executive director for emergency services, said the failure began at 10 p.m. and the system was brought back online about 1 1/2 hours later.

Bistline added that the circuit board was sent back to Tyco's facilities in Lynchburg, Va., for analysis and that a new one was installed May 14.

Frackleton said Thursday that Tyco's engineers looked at the board and concluded there was nothing wrong with it.

So they need to look at the "connection between that board and other equipment in the rack," he said. "That is where we're focusing our investigation."

Frackleton said Tyco absorbed the cost of removing the old circuit board and installing a new one.

Bistline, in his e-mail, wrote that the response to the system failure "clearly demonstrates that . . . we are all closely monitoring this system as promised and . . . the entire team is committed to make certain that this new system is solid and reliable for our public safety end users."

As for the new stability period, Frackleton said Thursday, "Everything I've seen says we're on

track, we're stable."

More tests

In addition to the new testing period, several fire departments will conduct their own tests, Shank said.

Department members will use both hand-held and vehicle-mounted radios, and they will travel around their jurisdictions, testing their ability to hear each other and 911 dispatchers.

In late 2008, emergency services spokesman Brian Morrin said tests conducted on the new radios in the summer and fall exceeded 95 percent coverage countywide 95 percent of the time.

Shank said the new tests will determine if fire departments still have that coverage.

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