

Comprehensive Public Safety Radio System/E911 Study

Broome County has a complex public safety radio communications system that 9 law enforcement agencies, 36 fire departments and 11 ambulance squads utilize for dispatch, response, and operations. These systems are a patchwork of agency, municipal and county owned infrastructure that have evolved over many years and which have a lot of interoperability issues due to limited areas of licensing, multiple radio bands utilized, and aging technology infrastructure. Parts of the system date back to the 1970's while other parts are relatively new.

The Office of Emergency Services applied for a federal homeland security grant to fund a comprehensive study of our public safety radio infrastructure and do a needs assessment to determine its functionality compared to today's standards and expectations. Also, included was an in-depth look at the communications center operations and staffing to recommend improvements or changes in operations to provide the best service possible to agencies and the public that depends on us. Any new communications system has an effect on the work-flow and operations of the communications center in terms of position duties and ultimately staffing needs therefore it was important to consider not only the radio system it self but the operation of the center in this study. Blue Wing was hired to conduct this study, which began in the spring of 2011.

The initial report and recommendations was provided to the public safety community as well as county officials in August, 2012. The county then hired the consultant, Blue Wing, to move into a second phase of the study to look at less expensive alternatives that could still solve issues and meet the minimum performance requirements found in the needs assessment. This is being done to give the county options as we plan, make decisions and move forward to a new generation of a system.

One of the requirements in the study was that the user agencies, communications staff, and emergency officials be included in the needs assessment and allowed to provide feedback so that the recommendations can be built from the users up rather than from the top down. Public safety is a critical service that government provides it citizens. Communications is a critical link to that service and it is our goal to provide the best system design that the county can afford for it's first responders.

Attached are the study documents provided at the completion of Phase 1 of the study. The second phase is expected to be completed by the end of February, 2013.