



Interoperable Reality

Alcatel helps public safety integrate and confront modern challenges.

It's been more than four years since the dreadful day when the towers fell. Public safety's response to that act of terrorism is widely and rightly heralded as nothing less than heroic. And while 9/11 showcased the strength and will of America's first responders, it also served to highlight the desperate need for public safety agencies to become truly interoperable.

In the post-9/11 world, public safety agencies ramped up their embrace of interoperable communications, and governments at the local, state and federal levels were pursuing solutions. As months and years wore on, however, budget constraints and other factors slowed the move to interoperability. Recent events such as the London subway bombings and Hurricane Katrina have again forced interoperable communications to the forefront of public safety — this time for good.

Fortunately for agencies entrusted to protect the public, Alcatel is leading the charge toward a new era of communication possibilities. Alcatel is a proven leader in creating seamlessly interoperable, mission-critical communications networks that are highly reliable, scalable and protected by cutting-edge security.

The Primary Problem

While 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina put interoperability challenges on a global stage, it is the less sensational, daily operations of public safety that are endlessly burdened by communications systems that don't really communicate. By far the biggest barrier to interoperable communications networks is the fact that public safety agencies at all levels use different radios with different frequencies — all

working on back-end systems that use a wild array of different technologies.

One sheriff's department, for example, might be using an IP network while the fire department uses an asynchronous transfer mode, or ATM, network and the paramedics use a time division multiplexing (TDM) network. Furthermore, the radio devices each agency uses to communicate on their network can come from a variety of vendors. This all combines to ensure these mission-critical agencies simply cannot communicate effectively.

"In years past, everybody was doing their own thing," said Walt Paskowski, Alcatel's vice president of Government Solutions and Business Development. "It really took a compelling event like 9/11 or the tragedy on the gulf coast to drive the point home that we need to have a more unified message and unified communications for just those situations."

Imagine a police officer from one city has pursued a suspect into another jurisdiction. If the officer cannot effectively communicate with local public safety agencies,

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an arrest may be in jeopardy and the safety of citizens at risk. It is a simplistic yet extremely common situation like this that exposes the fundamental need for public safety officials to easily and securely communicate using data, voice and video. By partnering with Alcatel, public safety agencies across the nation are implementing end-to-end solutions that use Alcatel's leading-edge interoperable communications technology solutions.

The Alcatel Answer

For two decades, Alcatel has been building industry-leading communications infrastructures. As the backbone for public safety networks in Florida and Vermont, Alcatel is building network environments that bring to bear the power of technologies like multiprotocol label switching (MPLS) and label switch pathways (LSPs). This highly reliable packeted infrastructure technology allows public safety agencies to leverage existing hardware and combine data, voice and video while dramatically enhancing their bandwidth — all as part of a low-cost solution that includes Alcatel's unrivaled support.

"It's under that umbrella of convergence," said Paskowski. "You're talking about voice, video and data all collaborating, all interoperable and able to share across municipal entities and that's where we see the benefit. We also tie that all together with a very high-quality network management system. The breadth of the Alcatel portfolio, the strength of the technologies we have is what differentiates us. We can approach a public safety environment and provide a full turnkey solution whereas other vendors may have to present a multiple vendor-type solution. We can come in with a more end-to-end solution."

In addition to expertise in almost any communications protocol, Alcatel is doing more than providing technology. Like police officers in different departments working together to solve a crime, Alcatel has partnered with leading

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mobile radio device providers to offer public safety a truly complete solution.

The job of public safety agencies is to serve and protect. With Alcatel, not only will public safety personnel be able to communicate effectively across agencies and jurisdictions, they can focus their energies on the task at hand without having to worry about network stability. The Alcatel multiservice platform is designed with 99.999 percent reliability. In addition, public safety agencies that move to Alcatel can be confident with the security that comes from an end-to-end private network with point-to-point connectivity — which includes security features that immediately isolate and quarantine those unauthorized for network access.

At every level of government, public safety agencies share similar pains and challenges. Modern demands dictate that these obstacles must be overcome. It can be a difficult and daunting task. At Alcatel, the goal is to help public safety create truly interoperable communications networks by building the best and most intelligently designed networks available — so the next catastrophe is not another wake-up call but a chance for truly connected, interoperable public safety agencies to do their very best.



For more information on Alcatel solutions for state and local governments and public safety agencies, visit: www.usa.alcatel.com/industries/stateandlocal.