



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW EMERGENCY RADIO COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM IMPROVES PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATION TO THE BENEFIT OF EMERGENCY RESPONDERS, RESIDENTS AND VISITORS IN AMHERST COUNTY, BEDFORD COUNTY AND THE CITY OF LYNCHBURG

Press Event: August 28, 2017 – 2 pm
Lynchburg Department of Emergency Services

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August 28, 2017 – Amherst County, Bedford County and the City of Lynchburg have launched a new public safety communications system, offering extended coverage and the ability to communicate with other localities during emergency or other public safety incidents. The Harris P25 800 MHz Mission Critical Public Safety communications system combines the Project 25 standard with the advanced functionality of the IP-based VIDA Network, creating a single, cost-effective IP-based network that is highly reliable, scalable and secure while providing interoperability with neighboring localities. The digital system went live July 16, 2017, providing coverage in areas where it had been limited or non-existent with the previous system.

Harris' P25IP VIDA Network system exceeds the P25 industry standard to deliver highly reliable voice communications among users and specifically allows users to access the system even though they may be using a variety of radios brands. No longer is the radio system proprietary and thus it can incorporate multimode radios and the system can accommodate interoperability with agencies operating with disparate radio systems, technologies or radio devices.

Since 1997 these jurisdictions have enjoyed and benefited from a regional partnership in a shared radio communications system developed and maintained by the Harris Corporation. As the previous analog radio system neared the end of its life expectancy and component parts required to maintain and service the equipment were being phased out and increasingly difficult to locate, the Region 2000 Radio Communications Board elected to replace the aging system. The Region 2000 Radio Communications Board is comprised of a representative responsible for emergency communications from each of the participating localities and are charged with the management of the overall project.

The regional partnership between these localities was further strengthened by joining with Region 2000 Local Government Council at the onset of this project to assist the localities with project management which included, but was not limited to, developing request for proposals, securing technical consultants and coordinating financial management of the project.

The bonds necessary to this project were secured through the Region 2000 Local Government Council, and through the public procurement process, bids were received, reviewed and an award announced. Harris Corporation was selected as the vendor to upgrade the existing equipment to the new P25 digital communications system.

The new system is being used by all the local police, fire and EMS agencies in these localities along with public services and utility departments. We have added Blue Ridge Regional Jail, Greater Lynchburg Transit Company, Central Virginia Community College, Region 2000 Services Authority and Liberty University as users onto the system which enhances our interoperability capabilities with these organizations.

The radio communication system offers better interoperability, clarity, decreased likelihood of interference and increased security, due to the P25 digital coded channels. The system provides critical radio communication between the Region's 911 dispatch centers and emergency responders in the field. Additionally, the new digital system provides greatly improved communication coverage in the region as well as interoperability, which is the ability of the radio system to communicate with other jurisdictions as well as state and federal agencies in the same frequency range.

Total cost for the project is approximately \$12.3 million, which includes new equipment for first responders, new radio dispatch consoles, new voice recording systems, addition of new tower sites in all three participating localities, a maintenance contract for radio system management, and technical support and remote monitoring of the radio system. The project was funded through cash funds by these localities and in addition to the bond funds secured through the Amherst Town IDA. Amherst County, Bedford County, and the City of Lynchburg, the three-member jurisdictions, agreed to share expenses to repay the \$12.3 million bond over a 15 - year period.

Annual operating costs for the system are shared by the members and are calculated on the ratio of each members total radio count to the total combined number of user radios operating on the system. Non-members also fund operating costs. Their annual costs are based on the number of radios they have using the system.

The new radio system is expected to last 15 years or longer. The last update these localities implemented to the public radio systems was in 1998. More than 3000 emergency communication devices are supported on the newly implemented, 16 radio tower site system that covers nearly 1300 square miles of Amherst County, Bedford County, The City of Lynchburg along with the Towns of Amherst and Bedford and serves over 185,000 citizens. This new system highlights the local governments in these jurisdictions on-going commitment to public safety.

Harris Corporation is a leading technology innovator, solving customers' toughest mission-critical challenges by providing solutions that connect, inform and protect. Harris supports government and commercial customers in more than 100 countries and has approximately \$6 billion in annual revenue.

The company is organized into three business segments: Communication Systems, Electronic Systems and Space and Intelligence Systems. Learn more at harris.com.

More information:

The members of Virginia's Region 2000 Radio Communication Board members are available to hear from you regarding your comments or concerns about our region's new system. They can be contacted as follows:

Amherst County/Town

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Staff support to the Radio Communications Board is provided by Matt Perkins, Special Projects Manager, Virginia's Region 2000 Local Government Council. He can be reached at (434) 845-5678 ext. 210 or mperkins@region2000.org.

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