



OPERATION TEXAS TALKS



The Problem: More than 5,800 fire, police, and emergency medical service agencies respond daily to emergency and life-threatening incidents throughout Texas. **Since 2009, federal funding for public safety communications has decreased by more than 70%.** Many public safety agencies have depended on this funding for more than 10 years to sustain their emergency communications systems. Much of this lost funding was dedicated to emergency communications between command centers and firefighters, law enforcement, and EMS. Without on-going funding, existing communications may be negatively impacted by a lack of:

- Radio coverage in some areas, which means responders are not able to communicate with anyone when they are in these areas,
- Basic communication (operability) between agency command staff and emergency responders,
- Communication between multiple agencies (interoperability) responding to major fires, highway incidents, hurricanes, and other disasters, and
- Training on how to use radio equipment during day-to-day incidents and during larger incidents that require communication with multiple agencies.

“Why Can’t We Talk When Lives Are At Stake?”

“The inability of our public safety officials to readily communicate with one another threatens the public’s safety and often results in unnecessary loss of lives and property”¹

"Operability" means sufficient wireless communications to meet an agency's everyday internal and emergency communication needs.

"Interoperability" is the ability of first responders to communicate across disciplines, to exchange voice and/or data with one another on demand, in real time, as authorized.

Because of this lost funding, public safety agencies in every jurisdiction will suffer significantly, and in many locations, communications will become handicapped and unreliable. Some existing systems may become completely non-operational.

Texas House Bill 442 Legislation Enacted, Effective 9-1-11

House Bill 442 amends the Government Code to establish the emergency radio infrastructure account in the general revenue fund, consisting of criminal conviction fees and all interest attributable to money in the account.

Operation Texas Talks Request: Appropriate \$30,700,000 annually to the 2011 Texas Enacted House Bill 442, to be allocated to public safety emergency communications.

Primary Objective: To provide consistent funding for the sustainment (during daily operations and emergencies) of emergency responder radio communication capabilities.

Secondary Objective: To provide consistent funding for ongoing development, maintenance, and capital replacement of interoperable communications systems for emergency first responders statewide, allowing them to talk within and across disciplines and jurisdictions on demand, in real time, and when authorized.

Strategy: Assess current emergency communications capabilities and cost estimates for sustainment of basic emergency communications capabilities. Develop a database of mobile communications locations and assets that can be quickly deployed to major incidents. Continue to develop partnerships among public safety agencies throughout Texas to build and maintain a cost-effective interoperable communications network using shared resources. (For more information go to <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/LawEnforcementSupport/communications/interop/>)

Consequences of Doing Nothing:

- Citizens’ lives and property are at risk because emergency responders cannot communicate to coordinate the most efficient and effective delivery of emergency services.
- Emergency responders’ lives are at risk.
- Loss of remaining federal funding due to inability to meet the cash-match requirements.

¹ “When They Can’t Talk Lives Are Lost”, National Institute of Justice, National Law Enforcement & corrections Technology Center, <http://www.dps.texas.gov/HomelandSecurity/documents/InteropAppendixD2011.pdf#page=2>