

Radio Site Resource Management
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Most public safety two-way radio and microwave sites are government owned facilities and are usually located to provide good radio coverage. Additionally, they are well constructed, secure and have back-up power capability, factors which make these sites very interesting to cellular and data carriers.

Through recent grant funding, a number of local government radio sites have been enhanced with new shelters, new towers or monopoles, and improvements to air conditioning, power distribution or back-up generators. As part of the grant funded design process, several sites were built to accommodate future growth, either in the EComm microwave system or the planned 700MHz countywide radio system. Even so, radio site space – both in equipment rooms and on towers – is severely limited, requiring careful planning to achieve local and interoperable communications goals.

Now, with the availability of 700MHz radio spectrum, new data offerings and the continued growth of smart phones, cellular and data carriers are expanding their infrastructures and eyeing local government sites along with building rooftops and commercial sites. Site rental income can be very attractive, especially in today's budget environment.

However, it would be short sighted to fill up limited radio sites with commercial carrier equipment only to find in future years that the radio and data systems we have jointly planned to implement have been squeezed out. And, in some cases, commercial use of sites would be inconsistent with the purposes for which grant funding was spent.

Certainly, the best approach would be to preserve public safety radio sites for local government use. In addition to reserving floor and tower space for future government radio systems, such a policy limits access to sensitive communications facilities and avoids potential radio interference issues.

However, prudent use of government facilities to accommodate commercial carriers is possible if carefully planned and implemented in a manner that protects the future use of these resources for core governmental purposes. Care should also be exercised in clearly defining who is responsible for future costs that may be incurred as a result of allowing commercial use of sites.

If your jurisdiction is considering entering into an agreement with a cellular or data carrier, we encourage you to contact the Silicon Valley Regional Interoperability Authority. We will work with you to review proposals in order to preserve your radio site resources and protect your future interests.

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