

08/11/2009



Editor's Corner

with PoliceOne Senior Editor Doug Wyllie

August 2009 MHz Update: Mobility is "in the stars"

The PoliceOne MHz Update provides a quick look into what's current in mobile communications and computing for law enforcement. This month we look at rolling hotspots, mobile data on Blackberry PDAs, WiMAX in the news, as well as a mobile data deployment during the recent World Swimming Championships in Rome last month that, unlike the latest in swimwear, DIDN'T cause a controversy. What do you think are the most important problems (or solutions) for mobile data and voice communications for Law Enforcement? Add your comments below or send us an [e-mail](#).

Mobility is "in the stars"

In Motion Technology, a mobile networking technology company based in Vancouver, Canada, recently announced that the St. Louis Area Regional Response System (STARRS) will use the company's "onBoard Mobile Gateway" in its emergency response vehicles. This technology turns each emergency vehicle into a mobile hotspot that utilizes commercial cellular, 700 MHz, 3G, 4G and a variety of other wireless networks.

Nick Gragnani, Executive Director of STARRS said in a written statement, "We selected In Motion Technology because they were the one mobile solution that could provide reliable, secure wireless communications and the management tools that we needed to coordinate large-scale disaster responses across the region."

With these "gateway-equipped vehicles," countless emergency responders in the St. Louis Area will have access to real-time information — law enforcement officers for example will have access to a variety of criminal databases, and operations commanders will have a "bird's-eye view of an incident scene and access to powerful new disaster response tools," according to In Motion.

Formed in 2003 as a result of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) grant to coordinate funding, STARRS is responsible for planning and response for eight counties in the St. Louis region. The STARRS network includes nearly 200 fire departments, 55 hospitals, 90 police departments and other agencies that serve 2.4 million people in a response region covering 4,600 square miles.



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PoliceOne will be speaking with STARRS' Nick Gragnani in coming days, so stay tuned for an update.

Alaska department adds PocketCop for BlackBerry

In Soldotna, Alaska — like in most places — an officer needing background information on a vehicle or person typically used to have to make a radio call and wait for a query to be run and the results returned. If an officer needed a DMV photograph, they had to drive back to the station for a faxed copy — a suboptimal solution to say the least.

That's about to change. The Department has added a solution called PocketCop from BIO-key International so that its patrol officers and command staff can use their BlackBerry smartphones to query the Alaska Public Safety Information Network (APSIN), National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) and the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC).

"I'm as concerned with getting the most out of our limited resources as any other executive," said Soldotna Police Chief John Lucking. "Our business is to be a visible presence on the streets, not waiting on the radio or chasing down paperwork. PocketCop has made our entire department more efficient."

According to Chief Lucking, the deciding factor was the added flexibility that PocketCop on BlackBerry smartphones offers. "With our extensive riverfront park and campgrounds system, our officers are often outside of their vehicles. With PocketCop they can conduct a field interview or run a plate from anywhere. They're also automatically alerted when another officer gets a stolen car or wanted person hit, so they're always available for backup when needed."

The IACP recently selected the Soldotna PD and its PocketCop on BlackBerry implementation as a winner of its *2009 Innovation in Information Technology Award*.

When in Rome, try out WiMAX

While Bob Bowman (Michael Phelps' swimming coach) bemoaned the fact that his guy was saddled with inferior swimwear technology in his loss to Paul Biedermann in the 200m freestyle, a different kind of high-tech electricity was in the air.

A Tel Aviv, Israel -based provider of WiMAX and wireless broadband solutions named Alvarion partnered with Italian telecommunications concern Linkem to provide wireless broadband coverage for the 13th annual World Swimming Championship in Rome. Alvarion was recently selected by U.S. broadband wireless operator Open Range Communications Inc., for the nation's largest Rural Utilities Service (RUS) funded deployment spanning 17 states and 546 rural communities.

In the City of Geneva, NY, Alvarion is the sole equipment provider for the City's extensive wireless broadband network, including the Mobile data network for police force. The network can support concurrent or individual use of 900 MHz, 2.4 GHz, 4.9 GHz, and 5 GHz bands. In Lenexa, Kansas, the company provides broadband for public safety services and municipal buildings.

More WiMAX in more places

Alvarion's simultaneous foray into WiMAX in Europe and public safety deployments here in the United States is interesting, in part, because for the most part, WiMAX remains an unknown here (although Sprint and Clearwire are making considerably more noise lately about the technology).

Sprint plans to deploy WiMAX services in Atlanta, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas, Fort Worth, Honolulu, Las Vegas, Philadelphia, Portland and Seattle before the end of the year. The company also hopes to launch WiMAX services in Boston, Houston, New York, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. At present, Baltimore is the only city in which Sprint's WiMAX services are commercially available.

Clearwire also made an interesting announcement recently in which the company said it has completed its 4G network infrastructure supplier selections, following the signing of an agreement that adds Huawei to a vendor mix that includes Motorola, Samsung, Cisco, Ciena, and DragonWave. Clearwire said in its press release that it

has named "several other strategic suppliers for the network rollout, which include: Motorola and Samsung for RAN equipment; Cisco for the core Internet Protocol (IP) Next-Generation Network infrastructure; Ciena for base station switching; and DragonWave for the network's microwave backhaul transport; Motorola also provides additional microwave backhaul equipment."

"Our new network is specifically designed to deliver an unmatched combination of 4G speeds, capacity, and mobility to meet the growing demand for wireless broadband services," said Dr. John Saw, Chief Technology Officer for Clearwire. "As such, we have designed an all-IP network that is efficient, low-cost and scalable using standards-based technology from industry-leading providers. Our existing agreements with Motorola, Samsung, Cisco, and DragonWave, plus today's addition of Huawei, provide us with the capabilities and support necessary to deliver super fast mobile Internet in more ways for both our customers and strategic wholesalers."

APCO and other public safety groups have advocated that a National Broadband Solution be based rival a technology called Long Term Evolution (LTE). PoliceOne columnist [Eddie Reyes wrote in July](#), "Just as some people like Mac and others like Windows, I suspect there will be two very loyal followings. As I understand it, WiMAX tends to operate on a more open standard than LTE, yet, some predict that LTE will be the standard chosen by 80 percent of the carriers in the world. The level of open standards would indicate to me that WiMAX equipment would be more commercially available off the shelf and, in theory, cheaper to buy. Besides, there is already a very small market of WiMAX available; while LTE is still being developed, with estimates that it will be ready for general availability by 2012."

As always, stay tuned!

A veteran of more than ten years in online and print journalism, Doug Wyllie was writing about digital music before Napster, streaming video before YouTube, and wireless technology since the original Palm Pilot debuted. As senior editor of PoliceOne, Doug is responsible for the editorial direction of the PoliceOne website. In addition to his editorial and managerial responsibilities, Doug writes on a broad range of topics and trends that affect the law enforcement community.

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