



County of Berks Department of Emergency Services

DirectLink Technology Center ♦ 2561 Bernville Road ♦ Reading, PA 19605

Open Letter to All Berks County Municipalities:

As a result of a number of issues, both technical and financial, the Commissioners of the County of Berks have reconsidered their position regarding support/assistance to municipalities needing to buy radios for the new countywide public safety radio communications system.

As I am sure that most of you are aware, the prior position of the Board was that radio system improvements are a shared cost wherein the county should assume responsibility for infrastructure (approx. \$42M+), and the municipalities should be responsible for the equipment needed for the emergency response agencies serving their jurisdictions. In support of this concept, the county had made available a low interest (approx. 3.5%) financing package through Motorola that would allow the municipalities to finance their purchase over 5 years.

More recent discussions with the Commissioners have been framed around what level of commitment to assistance the County could make to the end user hardware, while still maintaining a framework that is fiscally responsible from the County's perspective, and acknowledges the responsibility for provision of public safety resting at the local level. The Commissioners understand the financial difficulties being faced at all levels of government including by Berks County. With all of this in mind, the Commissioners have adopted a cost sharing program and internal financing.

The details of this new program are on the attached page. In summary, the County would pay the first 20% of the cost of the end user radio hardware, and finance the remaining costs over seven years at 0% interest. (Please note this is a summary, and the attachment should be looked over carefully).

I would hope that by this point in time each of your emergency services heads has approached your government body and discussed at a high level the scope of their needs. This means you are aware of the significance of the cost, and the complexity of meeting each of their needs. Just the logistics of this task is daunting. Sorting it out will require significant interactions among all parties involved.

Providing the radios to police and emergency management is fairly straight forward as any municipality is generally serviced by one entity and is responsible for that service, or, in the case of a regional police commission, there is a defined cost sharing model.

Fire is somewhat more complex, as a single fire company may serve multiple municipalities. In such a case, it is critical that each municipality served contributes to the need, but that no single municipality commit too much. At the same time, some municipalities are serviced by multiple fire companies. Again, there is a need to ensure

"To Assess, To Assist, To Advise"

that each of these fire company's needs are met, while also ensuring that the municipalities being serviced are contributing a fair share.

EMS becomes even more complex, as we have EMS agencies that service as many as 12-15 municipalities, and we even have agencies outside the county providing primary coverage to municipalities in Berks. Again, it is critical that each of the municipalities being serviced become involved in the needs assessment of these agencies.

All of these scenarios speak to the fact that your local emergency services providers will need to sit with you and the County to address the issues before us. The task is complex both organizationally as well as financially. However, this need for radio improvement is real, and critical to the on-going ability of your emergency services to provide the protection to which you have become accustomed. We will need to work together on this, and I commit that the County will provide the leadership to get the process organized. I am 100% confident that working in partnership we can act in a way that serves the best interests of all parties involved, and most importantly, the best interest of our shared constituency.

I would ask that you evaluate the attached plan and reply by email with an informal assessment as to whether its adoption by the Commissioners has created a scenario that will permit you to support your local emergency services. The easy answer for any local government to give is that anything less than 100% payment by the County will not meet the need. As that scenario is not even open for discussion, I would ask that you assess whether the proposal spreads the liability in a way that can be supported as fair and reasonable.

As always, I am available to meet with you and your emergency services to support your efforts to address this project. Please feel free to reach out as needed.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this matter. Please email your responses or questions to bgottschall@countyofberks.com

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian A. Gottschall", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brian A. Gottschall, CEM
Director

Attachment v2

County Support of End-User Radio Hardware

All radios must be purchased by municipal governments or police commissions.

Eligibility for the program of support applies to radios assigned to the emergency services only (fire, police, EMS, emergency management), other usage will be reviewed by DES management on a case by case basis.

The County will make a cost match contribution of 20% of the cost of each radio purchased. This applies to only the radio body and encryption where needed. It does not apply to installation, programming, accessories, or other options. A maximum of one in band repeater and one base station per agency is eligible for the match.

The remainder of the cost (including all accessories, options, and installation) will be financed by the County at 0% interest for 7 years. Equal annual payments of 1/7 of the total cost minus the County cost share will be due in June of 2013 through 2019. Municipalities will be invoiced for these costs in conjunction with their dispatching invoices.

Municipalities will sign (as an action of their governing board) a "promissory note" to the County for the financed amount.

The radios will be owned by the municipality or the agency that the municipality directs the County to assign ownership to. Under no circumstances will the County be the middleman for service or warranty issues. This relationship is maintained between Motorola (and its agents), and the owner of the hardware.

Because the transaction with Motorola is a cash transaction, all units purchased in this program are eligible for an additional \$200/radio discount.

No further obligation by the County is implied. County reserves the right to review each purchase and make modifications on a case by case basis as needed.

The County will solely decide when this program will be implemented. "Early purchase" radios will not be eligible as the logistics require a consolidated purchase.

No cross band repeaters will be permitted to be interfaced to the radio system.

Representative Cost Share Calculation

D2 Portable Radio	\$2,134.66
Encryption	<u>\$877.30</u>
	\$3,011.96
County Match (20%)	<u>\$602.39</u>
	\$2,409.57
Cash Discount	<u>-\$200.00</u>
	\$2,209.57
Speaker Microphone	\$66.34
Programming	\$62.50
Case	\$54.36
3 yrs. Extended Warranty	\$186.00
Spare Battery	<u>\$86.80</u>
Total Municipal Share	\$2,665.57

Due to County x 7 Payments	\$380.80
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