

HENNEPIN COUNTY SHERIFF

- Controlled Communication – This will allow us and our dependent agencies to better manage communication internally so staff can be notified in a timely manner and they are prepared with information vs. being asked about a situation that they know nothing about yet.

National Examples based on actual incidents:

- Ft. Hood Active Shooter – The tragic shooting at Ft. Hood, Texas on April 4, 2014 further illustrates the need to encrypt sensitive law enforcement communications. At 5:57pm the discussion began on the popular website reddit.com¹². The first item to be posted was the link to the live feed of the local public safety agency¹³. Within a few minutes an update was posted that announced the first shooter was down and the police were looking for a second suspect driving a late model Toyota Camry armed with a .45 caliber handgun. Minutes later someone posted that the second suspect is “at large” wearing an army combat uniform. The first ten minutes of the scanner audio was even posted to YouTube¹⁴. This was from one social media site. There were others that exploited this information, potentially hindering emergency response. In this age of instant access to information it is essential to the successful outcome of any situation that requires public safety response to control the means of mission critical communications and to ensure tactical information is not disseminated for everyone to hear.
- Phoenix, Arizona – In January 2013¹⁵, the Phoenix Police broadcast the location of a shooting suspect’s home, alerting the media and causing the suspect to flee prior to police apprehension. Other incidents in Phoenix have complicated investigations and allowed public access to criminal information of minors, as well as tactical information regarding stakeouts and criminal investigations including incidents involving juveniles, fugitives from justice, and compromise of tactical positions and response. These incidents caused the Police Department to encrypt a portion of their radio traffic to enhance officer safety and protect sensitive law enforcement and personal information
- Fairfax County, Virginia – In 2011, Fairfax County Police were dealing with home invasions and robberies targeting one ethnic group. After numerous incidents and calls from eyewitnesses, the police determined the perpetrators were deploying radio scanners to monitor and avoid responding police units. Proactive County communications officers were able to thwart these criminals quickly. They deployed encrypted radios within the Police and Sheriff Departments and distributed a communications plan to the police task force detailed to combat these activities. Within several days, the reaction teams intercepted the subjects in commission of a burglary involving breaking and entering.
- Garden City, Kansas - As reported in 2010, the Garden City Kansas Police Department decided to encrypt department radios for officer safety and criminal investigation purposes. Department officials stated that “The primary factor is the safety of the officers. Basically, it boils down to officers can now respond and coordinate efforts for certain incidents, and everybody doesn’t hear it. Scanner traffic is available online now, and there are even applications for smart phones.” Encrypting police traffic prevents criminals from using scanners to monitor police activity while committing crimes.



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350 South Fifth Street, Room 6, Minneapolis, MN 55415