

Mobile radios link services, installations

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Fort A.P. Hill will be one of the first installations in the National Capitol Region to employ the Land Mobile Radio system this month. More than 300 LMRs were issued to Fort A.P. Hill employees and members of the National Scout Jamboree Task Force last week; the greatest number of LMRs issued to any installation so far, said Matt Twiggs, director, Wireless Engineering Division, UAV Communications.

"This LMR is a new digital radio system designed to connect emergency services communication across NCR, expanding cooperation and service mobility." Twiggs said. "Although the radio was designed to improve the cooperation of ambulance, police and fire services, it can be used for any purpose."

LMR engineers from M/A-COM Inc., and UAV Communications developed the system so that, for example, the Fort A.P. Hill Fire Department could connect to the Virginia Emergency Services dispatch radio even if the Virginia EMS uses a different system, Twiggs said.

"With this radio, you have the capacity to communicate on a much broader scope; you are connected to all otehr garrisons and otehr emergency services in the National Capital Region," he added. "This radio system, because it is IP-based, operates and looks likea computer network."

This network-centric system makes radio programming easier as well, Twiggs said. Each radio is programmed by a laptop connection and each radio can have its own unique program.

"The needs of a (Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security) employee is not the same as the needs of the commander," Twiggs said. "Some radios have more advanced features, like the ability to dial directly to a specific radio compared to using a talk group. With some radios, you can even make an announcement to all other radios on the garrison. We focus on trying to tailor the radios as to be intuitive as possible."

LMRs are programmed into "talk group" -- groups that share a common mission, he said. Emergency Services radios have the capacity to communicate with all other state and region emergency services in the area.

In addition to needs-specific programming and interoperability, unique features of the radio include:

- Mobility -- A user can travel to as far as Fort Meade, Md., and maintain communication with users at Fort A.P. Hill.
- Security -- LMR is an encrypted radio, which makes it less susceptible to scanners.
- Safety -- Each radio is equipped with an emergency button that, once depressed, alerts the network that this individual needs assistance.

The National Scout Jamboree (July 25-Aug. 3) here will be teh first time the new LMR will be used for a major mission, Twiggs said.

"I am looking forward to seeing how this radio fits the military's needs," he said. "I believe this will greatly enhance their ability to communicate with more partners and increase radio communications reliability."