



# Aiding interoperability

**Philippe Meleard** Vice President, EADS DS Key Accounts for the UK Civil Government and Homeland Security markets, discusses the current issues and challenges for public safety organisations in emergency management



**ONE OF THE KEY CHALLENGES FOR** public safety organisations in the UK is the need for a co-ordinated response to critical incidents and disasters.

While these agencies recognise the benefits of interoperability, they also recognise the challenges and issues associated with moves towards a truly joined-up approach.

There are a number of factors that currently impede interoperability between the police, fire and ambulance services, many of them associated with the existing structures, cultures and funding of these organisations.

One of the main drivers for interoperability is the new challenges public safety organisations face when responding to large scale incidents and disasters. Events such as the fuel crisis, foot and mouth and the 7/7 attacks had a fundamental impact on the UK's approach to

civil contingencies. These events reinforced the need for public safety organisations to respond more effectively to large scale incidents.

## PROGRESS

Progress is being made and all three emergency services are now signed up to the same Professional Mobile Radio network roll-out by Macquarie in the UK. As in France, Germany and Spain, it gives these agencies the opportunity for the first time to communicate and co-ordinate their response via a common radio network.

EADS DS has a long-established track record for its work in the public safety sectors and the company has been working with organisations both in the UK and throughout the world on a number of projects that it hopes will enhance their civil contingency capabilities.

At the forefront of the company's thinking to

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recognising the current issues and challenges and to build up an appreciation of customer need and expectation in order to provide resilient solutions and first class services. The emphasis of this work has been on situation awareness and on providing wider emergency management solutions, rather than individual technologies.

This is best illustrated in work EADS has carried out with the FiReControl project to provide the English Fire and Rescue Service with a national meshed command and control system.

The contract awarded by Communities and Local Government (CLG) in 2007, is aimed at increasing the resilience of the Fire and Rescue Services and their capacity to handle major emergencies by providing a state-of-the-art call handling and incident management system.

The system is based on nine regional control centres that will relay information

to firefighting crews and deploy the nearest appropriate equipment, such as high volume pumping equipment. They will also be able to back up one another automatically during major incidents or in the event that one centre fails.

The innovative technology will include: Caller location, so that the location of a member of the public calling by telephone for help (whether mobile or landline) will be identified automatically, saving time.

Satellite positioning will inform control operators which fire appliances, with the correct equipment on board, have the shortest travel time to an incident.

Computer aided systems will enable staff to locate and directly mobilise the nearest available appropriate resources automatically, using data transmission, not voice messages.

There will also be cab displays so firefighters going to an incident will have constantly updated information, such as a route map, details of known risks and hazards in the locality, floor plans and access details, and the location of the nearest hydrants and water supplies.

## JOINED-UP APPROACH

EADS DS will be responsible for building and running the systems that will relay data around the fire service.

A joined-up approach to communication in the fire service will have a positive effect on the way it communicates with the other emergency services and second tier responders. It is hoped that this will improve interoperability as a result - especially in terms of the way frontline police, ambulance and fire personnel co-ordinate their activities in the event of a large scale incident.

Another significant public safety project that is ongoing has seen our company Eurocopter working with UK police forces. The Metropolitan Police took delivery of an EC145s aircraft last year - a move which it said represented a major step forward in capability for the force. Assistant Commissioner Tarique Ghaffur, head of central operations, said at the time that the benefit of air support cannot be underestimated and had become an essential part of policing the capital. The aircraft includes some of the latest reconnaissance and communication equipment.

Our work providing public safety organisations with the TETRA radio network has established us as a leading emergency management provider on the international stage. We were recently awarded India's first public security TETRA radio network contract by the police of the state of Andhra Pradesh, India.

The new network will cover the region of Cyberabad, the high tech hub that surrounds the city of Hyderabad and whose

multilingual culture, both geographically and culturally, is a very strong root for the current Indian economic growth.

EADS Secure Networks, an integrated line of business of EADS Defence & Security (DS), has teamed up with its local partner Sanchar Telesystems to provide the Cyberabad Police

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with a complete end-to-end, GPS based, digital communication solution, providing voice and data communication applications.

This solution will enable security forces to cover and protect the sixth largest metropolitan area of India. This area is a modern hub for IT, information technology-enabled services and biotechnology.

It is a real breakthrough for EADS Secure Networks on the Indian market as the country is going through major investment, in infrastructure in general, to address and complement its spectacular economic growth.

Modernisation of its public security forces to secure the modern, high-tech growth regions and financial and commercial centres is thus a top priority both at the federal and local levels.

EADS Secure Networks has also been awarded the contract to provide the TETRA infrastructure and support to the operation

start-up and will ensure the maintenance of the Network of Digital Mobile Communications for Emergency and Security in the Autonomous Community of Valencia in Spain.

The contract was awarded by the Department of Justice and Public Administration of the Valencia Autonomous Community Government to a consortium lead by Abertis Telecom, together with two financial partners, Aguas de Valencia and Banco de Valencia.

It represents a major technological leap from various small, independent analogue-based networks towards a very modern, 'horizontal', digital communication system. This change will accelerate modernisation of the emergency and security communication which will ultimately improve safety for all in the Autonomous Community of Valencia.

Back in the UK - a consortium of EADS companies including Astrium, Paradigm and EADS DS, has provided the British Government with the Skynet 5A satellite to help it deliver secure, high bandwidth communication for UK and allied forces. This will significantly enhance the way the military and civil contingency organisations communicate in the event of a national emergency.

Looking to the future, it is clear that the issues of interoperability and wider emergency management will continue to be at the fore of thinking for government, military and public safety organisations.

EADS is committed to ensuring it continues to work in partnership with these agencies to understand their needs and deliver the most cutting-edge solutions and services to enhance their capabilities and enable them to meet the challenges of the coming years.

## AUTHOR

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