

M/A-COM: NEW YORK STATE MAY 1, 2008

Public safety communications vendor M/A-COM has certified that the New York Statewide Wireless Network is ready for operational testing in the initial project area. Testing that will decide the fate of the \$2 billion contract was scheduled to begin last month.

The New York State Office for Technology (OFT) announced that M/A-COM declared the network ready for operational testing in Erie and Chautauqua counties, citing minimum on-road coverage of 98.38% in both areas, OFT spokesman Karl Felsen said.

Under the terms of the state's contract with M/A-COM, the network must provide 97% on-road coverage and 95% coverage over the entire state.

The biggest hurdle still looms: a full-foliage test scheduled for June. If the network does not pass, the state has the right to end the contract without paying any money, even though M/A-COM already has invested tens of millions of dollars in the build out and has a \$100 million performance bond.

STATE WEIGHS SCRAPPING RADIO DEAL AUGUST 2008

New York State took the first step on Friday toward possibly revoking a \$2 billion contract to build a radio network that would allow first responders across the state to communicate with each other during emergencies.

The State Office for Technology said the company hired to do the work, M/A-COM, a subsidiary of Tyco Electronics, had defaulted on the contract because the first installation of the system, near Buffalo, had failed three tests since last September.

Under terms of the contract, the state notified the company on Friday that it had 45 days to correct the deficiencies or face cancellation of the contract without receiving any compensation.

Tyco Electronics disputed the state's assessment of its work. The company issued a statement saying that it had "met or exceeded" the requirements under the contract. Charles Dougherty, president of M/A-COM, said the company had been working with the state to resolve the "few remaining" problems.

"We are very disappointed that the Office for Technology has issued a letter of default," Mr. Dougherty said. "We have assured the Office for Technology that we want to resolve this dispute quickly."

Using the state's current patchwork system, police, fire and medical workers in rural areas cannot communicate with one another. State troopers have complained that their radios are worthless in many areas, leaving them dangerously isolated with no means to call for backup or medical help.

Creating a universally accessible network for emergency personnel has been discussed in Albany since the 1990s. The plan gained momentum after the Sept. 11 attacks, when many first responders were unable to hear vital commands.

Gov. David A. Paterson said during a recent conference that the project was “not dead, but it’s in critical condition.”

The following day the state comptroller, Thomas P. DiNapoli, released an audit critical of M/A-COM’s progress and suggested that the state explore canceling the contract.

In explaining its determination that M/A-COM had failed to meet the terms of the contract, the Office for Technology cited deficiencies found by its own testing, by the comptroller’s auditors and by an outside firm, Federal Engineering of Fairfax, Va.

Dr. Mayberry-Stewart said the company had twice certified that the first-phase installation in Erie and Chautauqua Counties was ready for testing, yet it failed three times.

Problems found included poor audio quality, portable radios that locked up, and connections that were dropped during conversations. The emergency alert system sent “phantom” alerts when no emergency had been declared, or sent a second emergency alert when a user tried to clear a prior alert from a radio.

During testing in July, 78 percent of hand-held radios and 31 percent of car radios delivered by the company had a failure.

M/A-COM had spent more than \$51 million on the project, known as the Statewide Wireless Network, as of the end of June. In addition, \$50 million from M/A-COM has been held essentially in an escrow account, to cover the state’s costs, and that money could be forfeited to the state should the contract be canceled, according to a spokeswoman for the Office for Technology.

References:

Urgent Communications/MRT: Mobil Radio Technology May 1, 2008

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