

MissionCritical Communications, Radio Resource International, and Public Safety Report - wireless voice and data communications for mobile, remote and public safety operations

Public-Safety Broadband Demo Network Devices Roll Out This Month (12/7/10)

By Sandra Wendelken

IPWireless will supply devices to the Public Safety Communications Research (PSCR) 700 MHz public-safety demonstration broadband network this month, making it one of the first suppliers to provide Long Term Evolution (LTE) equipment for the project. Attendees at a meeting in Boulder, Colo., last week saw the live demonstration network, viewing streaming live and canned video using infrastructure from Alcatel-Lucent.

Roger Quayle, chief technology officer (CTO) of IPWireless, said supporting three 700 MHz bands, bands 12, 14 and 17, in one device isn't the most difficult device issue. "The greatest issues are when you go into multimode and need to support multimode and other standards besides LTE, such as W-CDMA and UMTS and their applicable bands," he said. IPWireless executed a cooperative research and development agreement (CRADA) with PSCR for the demonstration network.

Harris Public Safety and Professional Communications (PSPC) will also supply public-safety band 14 devices for the demonstration network, said Paul May, senior product manager with Harris PSPC. Harris will release first-generation subscribers for its initial network deployments in 2011, May said.

May agreed that adding multiband support to 700 MHz public-safety broadband devices along with other features public safety needs, such as rugged enclosures and higher output power, adds cost and complexity. "Unified public-safety requirements help everyone, improving market scale and driving interoperability," May said.

May said the following are the requested form factors for public-safety broadband devices: USB dongles, embedded modules, mobile modems, mobile routers, fixed devices, smart phones and LMR/LTE hybrid devices. The first four form factors will be first-generation LTE data devices.

Quayle said commercial handsets for LTE are becoming available, but with limited range. “It will be a couple of years before public-safety smart phones that support band 14 will become available,” Quayle said. “It’s the device certification and interoperability testing issues that take time.”

Anil Barot, Wavesat vice president of business development and marketing, said Wavesat has a band 14 device up and running, and the firm is working with Rohde & Schwarz. Wavesat will start band 14 testing in coming weeks. Barot said a quad-band LTE smart phone could cost around \$500, but additional functionality such as voice and other technologies quickly increases the cost.

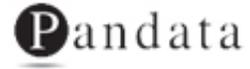
Also at the meeting, Jennifer Manner, deputy chief of the FCC’s Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (PSHSB), said the FCC is expected to release an order soon on the nationwide public-safety broadband network, asking numerous technical and other questions about aspects of the network. Issues that will be addressed include the architectural guiding principles of the nationwide network, along with interconnectivity alternatives, quality of service and priority access, security, testing and several other topics.

Greg Schaffer, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) assistant secretary for cybersecurity and communications, was the opening speaker at the two-day meeting, which had nearly 300 attendees. Schaffer said the Obama administration will likely make an announcement on the D block question during the budget cycle for next year.

He said that although broadband is the way forward, LMR systems will be critical for some time. “We believe significant funding will be available for broadband infrastructure and devices that won’t be developed under the commercial environment,” he said. The DHS Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) has funding for technical assistance for the jurisdictions that received waivers to build 700 MHz broadband networks.

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