

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

Workshop Attendees Discuss Video Needs for Public Safety (3/1/11)

By Lindsay A. Gross

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) hosted its fourth annual workshop for its Video Quality in Public Safety (VQiPS) initiative in February. The Boulder, Colo., workshop was organized so public safety, industry, academic and research professionals could share progress on the DHS initiative, exchange best practices and lessons learned in the area of video quality in public-safety environments, and provide input into key project components.

“Communications between practitioners and manufacturers is often unclear, making it difficult for public-safety agencies to get the best equipment for their particular requirements, which is why VQiPS is extremely helpful,” said Gina Riggs, attendee and EMS director for Oklahoma-based Kiamichi Technology Centers.

Attendees broke into groups to discuss how video has worked for them and how VQiPS can continue to educate users and potential users. Public-safety attendees said VQiPS is a valuable resource to smaller agencies that may not necessarily have the same resources as larger agencies; it sets common standards for video; provides a networking forum with end users, developers and vendors; and provides an educational forum.

Paul Roberts, training captain for the Boise (Idaho) Fire Department, said that his video needs are different than his counterpart in a New Jersey Fire Department, but they can still learn from each other’s experiences. For example, if you have a poorly placed camera, “it won’t do you any good regardless if you’re in a big city or a small, rural town. It’s a waste of resources,” Roberts said.

“It’s important to know what you want from a camera before you purchase it,” said Ben Chlapek, attendee and deputy chief of the Central Jackson County (Mo.) Fire Protection District. “Make sure the camera meets your needs.”

Public-safety attendees also addressed some of the challenges for video such as

funding, training and education, maintenance, and bandwidth.

As video technology has evolved, the array of options for public safety has grown, and the interoperability challenges have become increasingly complex, Roberts said. VQiPS began in 2005 when researchers at the federal Institute for Telecommunication Sciences (ITS) began conducting subjective tests of individual public-safety applications and convened panels of recorded video experts to study the outcome of those tests. ITS also researched various video quality and interoperability efforts and found that several organizations and agencies were developing their own guidelines aimed at improving the quality and interoperability of video quality in public safety.

Federal partners saw the value in creating a working group of public-safety practitioners and manufacturers to discuss common challenges and lay the groundwork for the development of solutions. The VQiPS working group was then created to research, develop and compile information necessary for people supporting the operations of public safety, physical security and homeland security enterprise in purchasing the appropriate video technology to meet their needs.

The working group plans to continue working on the “Guide to Defining Video Quality Requirements,” a Web tool that is a complement to the PDF version of [“Defining Video Quality Requirements: A Guide for Public Safety,”](#) which can be found online.

The group will meet again at the next annual workshop in 2012.

