

**Don't expect one solution to solve all your needs, says Harris RF official**

Urgent Communications By Jill Nolin

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As public-safety communications evolve, agencies should not expect a single solution to address all of their future needs, according to Paul May, senior product manager for [Harris](#) RF.

The development of a nationwide public-safety broadband network, the use of commercial cellular services and the growing number of public-safety [LTE](#) networks are changing the way first responders communicate. The key to protecting an agency's investment amid all of this change is to focus on the convergence of all technologies, including land mobile radio (LMR), May said during a session at the [Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials](#) (APCO) conference in New Orleans.

"I think part of the conversation we've had previously with LTE, broadband communications and LMR, it felt like there had to be a sort of either/or. We don't really believe that," May said.

"We think there are certainly applications that LMR lends itself very, very well to, and there are things broadband technologies can do that you can't do with LMR ... We should look for ways to provide convergence across all of those different platforms."

While LMR will continue to be relevant in the near future, the reliance on data for routine communications only will increase, May said. The role of platforms like tablets and smartphones will become more prominent, he said.

There will be widespread deployment of a new class of communications—called broadband group communications services—that will further reduce LMR traffic, May said.

Agencies can "future-proof" their investments by considering the abilities and applications of LMR, commercial cellular and public-safety LTE, and the role that each of those networks can

play in building and extending coverage.

“You want to make sure that the networks you’re building out, the devices you’re buying, and the applications that run over those networks, work in a converged world and are able to work on multiple technologies,” May said. “We want to look at how convergence happens in basically three different fields here: on the network side, on the device side and the application side.”

Multiple solutions, capable of operating on multiple networks, will be needed to make this happen, May said. Many of these solutions are already on the market, he said.

“I think we all need to be in a position where we can all have devices, we can have applications, we can have networks that allow you to move across and take advantage of services as they are available and to be able to deliver—as consistently as possible—a suite of features across all of those different technologies to ensure that the first responder in the field, in the best case, doesn’t actually know what network they’re on,” May said.

“That would be, I think, fundamentally a win, if the first responder didn’t have to know, didn’t have to pick, didn’t have to realize what feature set they’re currently enabled for. That would just be a tremendous win for us as a product-development organization and as an industry. I think that should be sort of a collective goal for all of APCO to get to.”

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