

## **Hytera UK: Article for Facilities Manager UK Magazine (Sept 2020)**

### **Push-to-talk radios keep FM teams efficient, connected, and safe**

Facilities management covers a wide range of disciplines and services designed to ensure the efficient operation, comfort and safety of buildings, grounds, infrastructure, and property management. FM delivers and maintains the services, supplies and equipment that organisations depend on for the smooth running of their operations.

Good communications are absolutely essential for FM managers and staff to enable them to carry out their jobs efficiently and safely. Supervisors need to coordinate teams of workers who may be carrying out tasks in different locations and be in contact with staff working alone in remote areas. It is vital that FM staff can contact managers and colleagues instantly at anytime, anywhere.

If FM tasks are essential to the organisation's operations then a business critical communications system such as a two-way radio network should be considered. A private Hytera Digital Mobile Radio (DMR) system allows signal coverage, capacity and the required level of network availability and resilience to be tailored to the exact needs of the organisation and its facilities.

Two-way radio delivers instant, push-to-talk (PTT) services with crystal clear audio. DMR's group calling capability means managers can communicate with large numbers of staff simultaneously, which is much faster and more efficient than trying to contact them all individually via mobile phones.

If the communication system is not business critical then a Hytera Push-to-Talk over Cellular (PoC) solution provides a cost-effective alternative. PoC provides the same PTT individual, group, broadcast and emergency calling as DMR, but over public 4G mobile phone networks. Unlike DMR there is no infrastructure investment, but coverage and network availability are in the hands of the mobile operator.

PoC has the advantage of providing a wide area network with national coverage and, unlike DMR, it can support a full range of broadband applications including video and data services. It is also possible to integrate DMR and PoC services, so DMR radio users and PoC users can communicate by voice and messaging.

Currently, FM workers have to operate under COVID-19 guidelines including the requirement to maintain social distancing, while reduced staffing levels means more lone workers. PTT devices are the perfect social distancing tool, as they enable FM teams to be coordinated in an efficient and safe manner.

PTT radios support a range of worker safety features including priority access emergency calling, Man Down and Lone Worker alarms and GPS location-based services. GPS allows supervisors to track and monitor staff remotely using geo-fencing and geo-location technology, enabling them to quickly pinpoint their location should they need assistance.

PoC and DMR support status messaging, job ticketing and workflow management systems, which are widely used in FM. This helps to improve worker efficiency and productivity and enables FM departments to provide a better, more timely service to their customers.

Both technologies can also be integrated with alarms, Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems and Internet of Things (IoT) sensors. It is quite common for fire alarms to be linked directly to radios, for example. As more buildings and facilities incorporate smart IoT systems, many more applications and pieces of equipment can be connected to radios as well.

This enables remote automation and control of assets such as switching machines or lights on and off. FM managers can be sent automatic temperature or humidity readings from machine or cold storage rooms or receive an alert on the radio if an air conditioning unit is malfunctioning, for example.

Bodycams can also aid security, efficiency, and productivity. If 4G or Wi-Fi is available, FM personnel can stream live video back to supervisors using the Hytera VM780 bodycam, for example. Experts located elsewhere can advise maintenance staff on the ground on fault diagnostics and suggest solutions.

611 words