

Marin Emergency Radio Authority (MERA)

FACTS on SERVICES

MISSION: MERA is a collection of public agencies formed in partnership to provide and operate a public safety radio system. As such, MERA provides a crucial communications delivery system that is interoperable between public agencies in order to efficiently and effectively facilitate critical (emergency) communications.

ABOUT: MERA is a partnership of Marin's Cities, Towns, the County, Water, Transit, Public Utility and Fire Protection Districts and various other special districts and organizations that was established in 1998 to build a multi-agency replacement for obsolete, individual emergency radio systems.

BUDGET: Annual operating budget of \$1,496,105 in FY 2010/11 (funded entirely by all 42 users of the service)

PROBLEM: The system was designed in 1998 to accommodate 1,580 mobile and portable radios. Today it serves 2,875 radios, which is far above the projected total that was originally anticipated over the 20-year life of the system.

SOLUTION: MERA is considering five major near and longer-term focuses for system modifications, upgrades and technology replacement including:

- Solving current capacity problems and improving capacity. MERA is currently setting goals for the necessary number of radios and amount of traffic expected in the future.
- Solving current coverage problems and improving coverage. In this case, it will be important to determine the ultimate definitive coverage needed to meet MERA member goals.
- Providing a system that is as interoperable given MERA member needs and cost/benefits analysis. For example, the greater the interoperability needed (across frequency ranges, across county borders, across the Bay area, nationwide, etc.), the greater the cost.
- Incorporating the most advanced technology available.
- As much as possible, avoiding built-in obsolescence.

FUTURE COST: Approximately \$50 million

For more information, please visit MERA's extensive public website at www.meraonline.org.