



## Statewide Law Enforcement Radio System Nears Full Statewide Implementation; Additional State Funds Will Be Necessary

### *at a glance*

The Statewide Law Enforcement Radio System (SLERS) provides state law enforcement agencies with a communications system that uses a single series of frequencies, thereby allowing inter-agency communication. In 2000, the state negotiated a contract with M/A-Com to exchange its radio tower assets for \$25.5 million in radio equipment credits. When the Joint Task Force began to allocate credits to agencies, it distributed credits to both sworn and non-sworn officers; however, five agencies were short 185 radios for sworn officers. Since 2002, the Joint Task Force has allocated credits to better meet the needs of most sworn officers but is still short 335 radios due to an increased need by the Department of Corrections. While the initial set of radios has been purchased using radio credits and agency funds, the state will need to spend \$5.6 million over the next six years to fund maintenance costs.

The Joint Dispatch System is composed of regional dispatch centers handling incoming calls for most agencies using the SLERS system. Prior to 2002, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission operated its own network of dispatch centers at an annual cost of \$3.4 million. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has consolidated three dispatch centers with the Joint Dispatch centers attaining significant cost savings of over \$600,000.

### Scope

In accordance with state law, this progress report informs the legislature of actions taken since the publication of our 2002 report, *An Altered Credit Allocation and a Combined Dispatch System Would Better Support the State Law Enforcement System*.<sup>1,2</sup>

### Background

State law enforcement agencies are engaged in a cooperative effort to implement the 800 MHz Statewide Law Enforcement Radio System and the Joint Dispatch System. Both projects are being completed simultaneously to improve the routine and emergency communications of multiple state agencies.

#### *Statewide Law Enforcement Radio System*

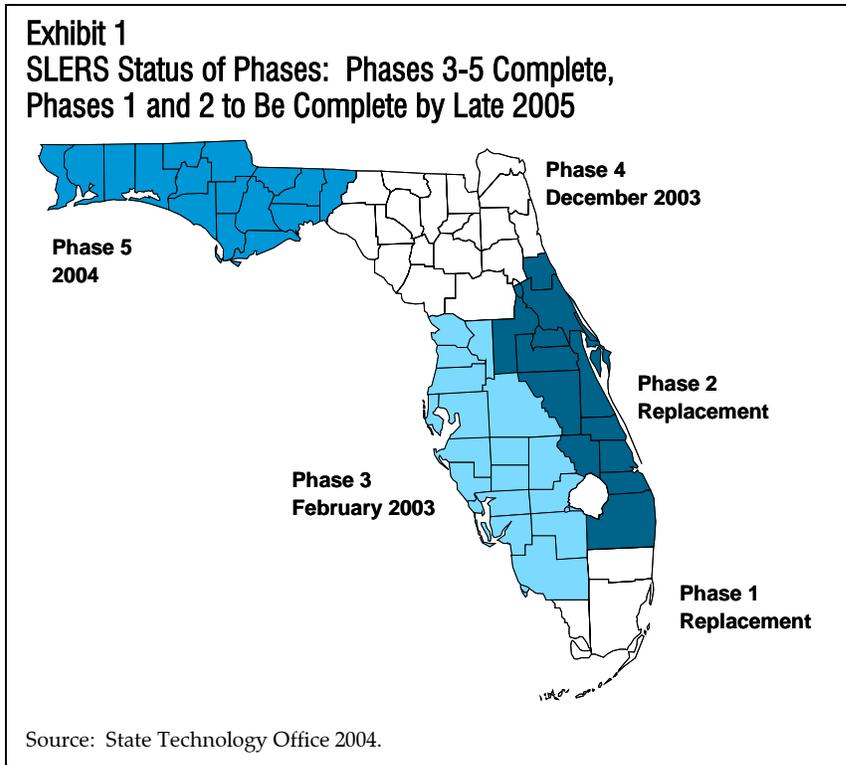
The Statewide Law Enforcement Radio System (SLERS) provides state law enforcement agencies with a communications system that uses a single series of frequencies. The system aims to improve interagency communication and coordination for a wide variety of public

<sup>1</sup> Section 11.51(6), *F.S.*

<sup>2</sup> OPPAGA [Report No. 02-71](#), December 2002.

safety activities, including natural disaster response and multi-jurisdictional law enforcement investigations. When completed, this digital, computerized system will serve over 6,500 users with over 14,000 radios in patrol cars, boats, motorcycles, and aircraft.

The Legislature initiated the SLERS project in 1988 with the creation of the Joint Task Force on Law Enforcement Communication.<sup>3</sup> The Joint Task Force was originally composed of eight state law enforcement agencies that appointed representatives to the Joint Task Force board.<sup>4</sup> Since its inception, 9 other entities have joined the Joint Task Force, bringing the total number of participating entities to 17.<sup>5</sup>



From 1988 to 2000, the Department of Management Services managed the project using Motorola as the radio equipment vendor. However, due to delays and cost overruns, the state decided to contract with a private company to take ownership of the radio system infrastructure, complete its construction, and supervise future maintenance. In 1999, the Governor transferred management of the project to the State Technology Office, which subsequently negotiated a contract with M/A-Com in September 2000.<sup>6</sup>

As shown in Exhibit 1, the SLERS project consists of five phases. Conversion of 800 Mhz radios in Phases I and II was completed under the previous contract with Motorola. Between Fiscal Years 1988-89 and 2000-01, the state spent over \$172 million on this effort.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter 88-144, *Laws of Florida*.

<sup>4</sup> The original members of the Joint Task Force board were Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco; Department of Corrections; Department of Environmental Protection; Department of Insurance, Division of State Fire Marshal; Department of Transportation, Division of Motor Carrier Compliance Office; Florida Department of Law Enforcement (including Florida Capitol Police); Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; and Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles Division of Florida Highway Patrol.

<sup>5</sup> Section 282.1095, *F.S.* The additional agencies are the Department of Insurance, Division of Insurance Fraud; Attorney General, Division of Medicaid Fraud Control Unit; Department of Juvenile Justice; and Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Agricultural Law Enforcement. Agencies joining since 2002 include the Department of Lottery; Department of Juvenile Justice; Department of Military Affairs, Division of Florida National Guard; Florida Senate Sergeant at Arms; and Florida House of Representatives Sergeant at Arms. These nine agencies are under the Governor's Enterprise-wide Sharing of Resources Model. The Department of Management Services was originally included in the sharing plan due to its administration of the Capitol Police. The Legislature transferred responsibility for most of the functions of Capitol Police to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (Ch. 2002-21, *Laws of Florida*).

<sup>6</sup> M/A-Com, a subsidiary of Tyco International, was known as Com-Net Ericsson at the time of the contract.

Phases III and IV were completed in 2003 under the M/A-Com contract. Phase V was completed in early 2004 and is now fully operational. As a result, all state law enforcement agencies are now using 800 MHz radios (Motorola or M/A Com).

Conversion of Phases I and II from Motorola to M/A-Com equipment is scheduled to be completed by late 2005. This is approximately two years behind the original schedule. Factors causing the delay are the gradual conversion of the radio system among agencies and the addition of contingency sites. Not all participating state agencies in the Joint Task Force have converted to the new radio system. Also, as the state began testing the new equipment, there were problems with weak or missed coverage areas. As a result, M/A-Com added contingency sites to provide better coverage. Upon completion, the system's network will provide radio service that provides geographic coverage of 98% or more of the state.

### ***Joint Dispatch System***

The Joint Dispatch System is a separate but related initiative that will be integrated into the SLERS system. The Joint Dispatch System consists of regional dispatch centers that handle incoming calls for participating agencies and supervise the dispatch of officers using SLERS. The purpose of joint dispatch is to improve the consistency of dispatch services and promote efficient use of dispatch resources among law enforcement groups.

The Joint Dispatch System consists of seven regional centers: Miami, Lake Worth, Orlando, Fort Myers, Tampa, Jacksonville, and Tallahassee. The system is managed by the Joint Dispatch Oversight Committee comprised of representatives of the Joint Task Force agencies participating in Joint Dispatch.

## **Statewide Law Enforcement Radio System**

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### ***At the time of our 2002 report, agencies were short an estimated 185 radios for sworn officers***

The state transferred its radio tower assets to M/A-Com in exchange for \$25.5 million in credits to be used to purchase radio equipment and services from M/A-Com. In May 2001, the State Technology Office offered the Joint Task Force multiple options for dividing the tower conveyance credit. The task force voted for allocation based on agencies' projected sworn and non-sworn personnel radio needs.<sup>7</sup>

The tower conveyance credits were not sufficient to meet total agency needs so the credits were allocated among the agencies based on credits agencies requested. As a result, some agencies met their radio needs for both sworn and non-sworn personnel fully, while other agencies needed to seek additional state funding for radios for all of their sworn officers. Based on the initial allocation, sworn officers were short approximately 823 radios. However, in August 2002, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission reduced its estimate of the number of non-sworn personnel needing radios from 1,564 to 292 and returned \$1.9 million in tower conveyance credits to the pool to allocate for sworn law enforcement needs. In addition, the State Technology Office announced in September 2002 that it planned to convey three radio towers new to

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<sup>7</sup> Sworn officers include certified law enforcement and correctional officers, as described in Ch. 943, F.S. Non-sworn staff include other agency employees who need radio communication, but are not certified law enforcement, including arson investigators, crime scene technicians, and biologists.

the contract to M/A-Com for an additional \$900,000 in tower conveyance credits. These two actions enabled the state to provide an estimated additional 622 radios for sworn law enforcement personnel. However, this still left a need for radios for an estimated 185 sworn law enforcement users, at a cost of approximately \$800,000. We recommended that the Joint Task Force prioritize unallocated credits to sworn law enforcement officers.

***The Joint Task Force has allocated credits to meet most sworn officer radio needs***

Since 2002, the State Technology Office (STO) and the Joint Task Force (JTF) have used various methods to provide agencies with needed radios. The Joint Task Force has allocated nearly \$2 million in tower conveyance credits and task force members have allocated nearly \$1.6 million in agency funds for radios and equipment. The five agencies that reported unmet needs for sworn officers in 2002 have all met these needs now, with the exception of the Department of Corrections. As of May 2004, the State Technology Office estimates a shortage of 335 radios for sworn officers at the Department of Corrections. This revised estimate is higher than the shortage of 185 radios reported in our last report and is the result of an increase in the Department of Corrections' estimated need for radios. The department uses the radios for transportation and work crews external to its prisons. The radios are assigned to vehicles or radio pools so that many officers benefit from the use of each radio. While the department is short 335 radios for its sworn officers, it has not determined its need for non-sworn officers.

The State Technology Office does not anticipate a change in projected needs unless agencies increase staffing or new agencies join the Joint Task Force. The Department of the Lottery and House and Senate Sergeants at Arms are new to the Joint Task Force. These agencies are still determining the number of

radios needed and the associated funding required. As of May 2004, the Department of Military Affairs was sharing radios with the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The department could request credits in the near future if it decides to purchase its own equipment. However, the department has a very small office, so credits or costs would be minimal.

***Agencies have used most of their credits; \$73,029 remains unallocated***

Agencies have spent 95.6% of their Tower Conveyance Credits. This is an increase from the 85% of tower credits spent in 2002. The remaining unspent credits will be used as agencies continue to convert to the system in the southern part of the state. The STO and JTF have yet to allocate \$73,029 in Tower Conveyance Credits. The State Technology Office does not anticipate receiving any more tower conveyance credits at this time.

***State funds will be needed to purchase and maintain future radios***

While the initial inventory of radios and equipment were paid for using vendor credits and agency funds, the Legislature will have to appropriate state funding for future radio purchases and system maintenance. Currently, the warranty on all of the radios is one year.<sup>8</sup>

Once the warranty period has expired, agencies will be responsible for maintenance costs. If agencies do not contract for maintenance or provide their own, their radios will have to be taken out of service if problems arise.

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<sup>8</sup> This one year does not begin until after conditional acceptance. Conditional acceptance is the time period when radios are implemented in the phase. When all radios are operational and the phase is complete, conditional acceptance ends. The warranty period began April 30, 2004, for mobile radios in phases 3, 4, and 5. The warranty will begin on January 2006 for all remaining units.

**Exhibit 2  
Total Radio Maintenance Costs Could Exceed  
\$5.6 Million Over the Next Six Fiscal Years**

Fiscal Year	Cost of Maintenance Per Unit	Number of Radios Not Covered by Warranty	Total Maintenance Cost
2004-05	\$125.00	4,039	\$ 84,145
2005-06	128.75	4,039	520,021
2006-07	132.61	13,850	1,186,130
2007-08	140.69	13,850	1,891,771
2008-09	144.91	13,850	1,948,556
<b>Total Maintenance Costs Before Next Replacement</b>			<b>\$5,630,625</b>

Note: Estimate assumes no increase in the number of radios, all agencies use on-site maintenance (\$125/unit), and maintenance costs increase 3% per year. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s radios are included in this analysis; however, it plans to fund its own radio maintenance.

Source: State Technology Office.

As shown in Exhibit 2, we estimate the state will need to spend approximately \$5.6 million over the next six fiscal years to cover maintenance costs for the existing radios. During the first two fiscal years, maintenance costs are minimal because most radios are still covered by the warranty. However, maintenance costs for the state will increase during Fiscal Year 2006-07 when the warranty expires for Phases I and II radios.

In addition to maintenance costs, the state will eventually have to replace radios. According to the State Technology Office, portable radios have a life of six years and mobile radios have a life of eight years. As a result, a large number of radios may need to be replaced within the next six years. The estimated cost to replace all portable radios in all five phases is \$25.4 million. In order to give the Legislature adequate time to plan for future expenditures for the SLERS system, we recommend that the State Technology Office submit an annual plan to the Legislature for the maintenance and replacement of 800 Mhz radios statewide, including cost projections and alternative sources of revenue to offset general revenues expenditures for the equipment.

## Joint Dispatch System

### *Combining dispatch services would increase efficiency*

While the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission participated in the SLERS project, the agency originally chose to maintain its own dispatch services independent of the state’s joint dispatch efforts. The commission previously operated six dispatch centers in locations separate from joint dispatch, at an annual cost of approximately \$3.4 million.

We recommended combining the commission’s dispatch centers with the state’s centers. We concluded that consolidation would result in reduced costs, enhanced officer safety, and reduced maintenance and dispatch traffic. Prior to the release of our report, the commission agreed to a pilot project to combine the Tallahassee Regional Communications Center and the commission’s Panama City dispatch center.

### *Fish and Wildlife has consolidated three dispatch centers and attained significant savings*

As we recommended in our previous report, in 2003 the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission consolidated its Panama City dispatch center with the Tallahassee Joint Dispatch Center as a pilot project. Given the pilot’s success, the commission then proceeded during Fiscal Year 2003-04 to consolidate its Lake City center with the Jacksonville Regional Communications Center and its Ocala center with the Orlando Regional Communications Center. For Fiscal Year 2004-05, the commission requested funds to consolidate three additional dispatch centers: Miami to the Miami Regional Communications Center, West Palm Beach to Lake Worth Regional Communications Center, and Lakeland to Tampa Bay Regional Communications Center. The Legislature was unable to grant the request for Fiscal Year 2004-05, but the

commission plans to requests the funds again for Fiscal Year 2005-06.

The remaining commission dispatch center in Marathon Key will not be consolidated with the Joint Dispatch Commission. This site is a critical service point for state and local law enforcement officers and serves as a backup to the Miami center. While the remaining three centers have yet to be consolidated, the commission has connected these centers to the regional dispatch centers' computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system. This has reduced the cost of servers and software for the commission.

The commission estimates it has saved nearly \$111,000 from consolidating centers with the Joint Dispatch system, \$100,000 in software maintenance costs, and approximately \$11,000

in office space costs. In addition, by consolidating dispatch centers, the commission was able to avoid additional costs associated with its Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. The commission is using the Florida Highway Patrol's CAD system, which cost the agency \$860,415. While the commission would not necessarily have to pay \$860,415 for a new system if it had not consolidated dispatch centers, it would have needed to upgrade its current system and would not have access to a system as advanced as the Highway Patrol's CAD program. The commission estimates its cost avoidance associated with the CAD system at somewhere between \$500,000 and \$860,415. This brings its total savings to between \$611,000 and \$971,415 during the first year of consolidation.



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