

POWER TO THE EDGE

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We will talk today about POWER, perhaps an unlikely word with which to start a talk inside the Beltway which is the seat of Power.

But that “power” is not the way that this presentation will use the word. Not the power of politics or the power of money, but the power of communications – and its reverse side, the loss of communications.

These days there is a great deal of talk about “interoperability” and “integrated” communications in the wake of Katrina. The focus has been on the lack of the ability for local and state emergency responders to talk with each other.

That is positive talk and that is the good news. The bad news is that the heated talk about these topics have merely riled the waters but not found a solution for civilian first respondents. Since this same topic was first voiced in 1995 at a military Joint Warrior Information Demonstration and exercise, the same rhetoric has flowed. Interestingly enough, that same exercise led to the military information transformation effort first started in the U.S. Navy with the slogan “Power to the Edge”.

Time moves so rapidly in the IT world that the origin of this slogan is forgotten. Perhaps it was VADM Jerry O. Tuttle who coined the phrase. If not he than that icon, Admiral Art Cebrowski was the man with the vision that has become a reality for all the armed forces of America.

But not for our civilian Public Safety, our home folks who are responsible for our protection in times of dire emergency and catastrophic events.

To quote Adm. Cebrowski, “The power of communication lies in Access and Speed, NOT in control and management.”

Today our military has the ability to connect the guy with the urgent need of information to the guy who has it. That seems like a simple enough problem that can be solved with today’s technology. So, why haven’t we, you and our wonderful IT industry partners, provided that ability so as to save more lives as they stand in harm’s way?

People have been giving phony answers to this question for the last five years. I will show you the slide of those three young “hot shot” fire fighter, each in their late teens, trudging home in the dusk from a day of exhausting work, carrying heavy chain saws on their shoulders from the San Diego fires in October 2003. Those boys were dead by nightfall of the following day --. burned to death in the San Diego County firestorm. They were dead within 24 hours of that picture.



I take responsibility for their deaths, because it is my job and that of the National Institute for Urban Search & Rescue to find ways to fill the gaps in the lifesaving systems of today. And you, the IT industry are not permitting us to do our job.

Those boys died because today’s communication system couldn’t reach them. The warning that the fire had turned back on itself was never heard. They were trapped and they died with five more.

You, in the IT industry have the technical capability to bring lifesaving communications and the best in command and control systems to the front lines of emergency response today and you are not providing the equipment to do that.

You are good people and smart people so why are you not making the equipment we need and putting it on the market? The answer is that you do not understand the needs or the users. The Public Safety and additional first responders are not able to tell you their needs.

You are two tribes speaking different languages. You are not communicating.

Today I am going to do you a big favor. I am going to open an entire new market of “users” for the IT providers. Listen to me and you will make a lot of money. There is an entire un-served market out there. It is the “USER” of your technology and you have been serving the BUYER of your technology.

Those are Interoperable systems that you have been selling to those with the DHS dollars, to support the DHS communications requirements.

But that equipment does NOT bring “Power to the Edge” where first responders work and die.

“User” in this connotation is the guy, that actual person who is saving your life, or his Incident or Unified Commander, in whatever event threatening you, your family, your industry or your nation.

What the front line civilian Public Safety and other "First Responders" need is a voice activated Dick Tracy type of wireless voice-activated wristwatch with satellite capability that can transmit the questions from the people who need the answers to the people who have the information, *immediately* and receive back the answers, *immediately*. The Front Line wants only two things-- Communications that make their hazardous tasks safer and/or easier and let's them do a better job saving your life while remaining alive themselves.

The so called emergency "interoperability network" as configured today provides only reports up the line of projected dollars needed, the degree that infrastructure is damaged and how long will it be before you think you have the operation under control? All this is numbers and dollars. Not lifesaving information, but sound bites for the media so the folks a thousand miles from the action can look as though they know what is happening in the mud and the blood. It is RECOVERY information. Not RESPONSE.

If you IT folks cannot give me that two-way wrist watch. than I need a third arm delivered with each radio sold, to be attached to the first responder to hold and operate any new communications device while he is holding on to the victim with one arm and something solid with the other.

During emergency response you cannot be digging a communications device out of a belt or pouch, or pocket; pushing buttons or typing addresses. And where is your third hand for your tactical radio, let alone for one with "interoperability"? Today's phantom “interoperability” permits you to talk to someone or some place that only wants dollar figures to be expended and infrastructure information that is useless to you as you dangle by a thread. They are compiling statistics –NOT providing information DOWN the chain to save

lives or private property. And remember that 85% of U.S. industry is private property. And they are not saving lives or evacuating people or protecting private property.

Also let's face it, your First Responder tactical radio is probably with the rest of your gear somewhere above you? But it cannot reach anyone with the answers you need because it is capable of reaching only other tactical radios on your same frequency who are trying to find out the same information that you need. .

At the most our civilian communications system is a catch-as-catch-can relay between urgent need for another small earthquake, which was not a small tragedy for those who lost loved ones. June first starts the 2006 Hurricane season and the communications capability has not improved one iota since Katrina. As we used to say "This is no way to run a railroad".

We, you, I, the general public and industry have not provided that "hands-on" savior, whether fireman, law enforcement, rescuer, waterman, or paramedic with the necessary connection, for Power to the Edge. Today, he cannot talk any further than his tactical line of sight radio can reach. Here is where the two different languages of your tribes split apart.

Industry says, "They (first responders) so not want to talk to anyone else. They want their own frequency and to "own" that frequency and want NO ONE to talk on their frequency but their own tribe."

This is absolutely true for their tactical radios that they use every day to communication among their fellows. Their brothers.

But the larger the site area, the larger the catastrophic emergency, the larger is the need for information Where is that needed information available? It's available from some one else, not one of his tribe. If it were available to his tribe, he would not need any other communication at all.

Let's move from the tactical use of close-in response which is the "bread and butter" of first responders on a daily basis. The United States has an enviable record for quick response by our Public Safety. Now let us look at an earthquake since Katrina has been dissected to the point where it is no longer a tragedy but a mud-slinging contest at the highest levels of disrespect. So let's talk about something that hasn't happened in 5 years in the U.S., remembering that America has little long term memory.

As you read this remember that the question is no longer "Can You Hear Me Now?" but "Are You Listening?"

Here is a case study of where you need "Power to the Edge".

You are an Assistant Fire Chief of the City of Los Angeles and trained as an Incident Commander. You are also the Task Force Leader for the Los Angeles Heavy Rescue Task Force. You are at Fire Headquarters when the building starts to shake at 6:01 on a Saturday morning which is also a holiday weekend, Martin Luther King's birthday. You are due to go home and off shift at 6 o'clock that morning but you are not yet out the door. You are dispatched to the area believed to be the hardest hit by a moderate 4.5 shaker of an earthquake in the northern part of the city. At that same time the order goes out from HQ to hold over all shifts.

As you head north in your red Chief's car with a large radio with a Chief's communications set back to HQ, the visible damage is spotty, but not looking too bad. You reach another Chief on your tactical car-to-car radio and he says that an apartment building in the Northridge area is down and it appears that people are trapped. Our Assistant Chief heads directly for that location. By tactical radio he is informed that one engine company is on scene and another two companies are en route. There appears to be no fire, but people are known to be trapped and injured.

He tunes his radio to other frequencies of neighboring jurisdictions to see what the overall situation may be but succeeds in contacting only the U.S. Forest Service that tells him that 3 separate fires have been started in the mountains above L.A. by the friction of landslides and that the strong winds are blowing the fires toward the city.

At present one of those fires has been reached by Forest Service personnel and that additional fire fighters have been started from the Boise, Idaho Interagency Fire Center (NIFC). Their planes will be arriving from the North and not coming through L.A. X.

Our Chief arrives at the scene. He finds that the Heavy Rescue unit will not be available because it is the L.A. policy that the trained firefighters for this specialty are regularly stationed throughout the city and have been held over to protect their usual area to contain fires and provide protection at their usual locations. However it appears that he will have enough man-power to search and rescue those people known to be missing at the apartment complex. These activities are proceeding well upon his arrival.

Now he attempts to find out what else in the area is damaged. He hears that the Kaiser local hospital and rehabilitation center has been damaged and must be evacuated. As far as is known no patients or staff have been injured, but the nursery has seven babies on life-support systems and must be evacuated immediately to a hospital with larger ICU capability than any other in the area. The fire department has 3 small helicopters but nothing large enough to transport the babies and the medical life support systems to which they are attached. The

only helicopter in the area large enough for this evacuation is the Sheriff's chopper and its support has been requested through Fire Headquarters.

Our Chief cannot satisfy himself as to the actual state of the area around him. He therefore (since he has no communications on his radios for aircraft,) waves down a News helicopter that lands nearby and requests them to give him an overflight of the area. He asks the news crew to relay this information via their air radio to their news room who will relay it to the fire HQ. Our chief has lost contact with Fire HQ from his location at the Northridge apartment scene.

Rescue, recovery, emergency medical treatment, triage and other activities proceed. A very large fire in the basin below their Northern location can be seen in the city. It appears to be a gas fire with a large pillar of fire shooting high into the air. As far as can be determined from his far off location, the fire does not seem to be spreading but seems to be confined to the one area.

Now he is concerned with the situation of the wild fires burning in the forest and foothills behind his area of extreme damage. He has lost any communications with the U.S. Forest Service. He hesitates to leave the site of this largest life threatening collapse since it has become evident that the entire apartment which had appeared to be a two-story dwelling was in reality, a three story building and the entire first floor had disappeared under the remaining two upper floors. More personnel and heavy equipment is needed.

He, as scene commander and the most experienced Heavy Rescue person on scene feels that he cannot leave his post. Therefore he "commandeers" a willing neighbor's vehicle and orders one of his lieutenants to accompany the owner-driver as far south as necessary to obtain additional heavy equipment and further trained personnel. By now his people have worked a double shift, and are becoming exhausted from the heavy work. They are removing entire sections of the building to free the entrapped people still remaining in the upper two floors of the collapse. A search of the hidden first floor must then be made in hopes that there are pockets where survivors may be found.

Shortly he hears back from the tactical radio being carried by his lieutenant that he has been stopped at the Kaiser Hospital by doctors who tell him the babies are still in the hospital with hospital personnel but that no electricity other than the one small generator is providing power to the babies life support systems and it is running low on gasoline. No gas stations can pump gas since they all are tied to electric pumps and there is no electricity in that part of the city. (It was later determined that electric power was out between Santa Barbara and San Diego as far inland as Bakersfield.)

It is not understood why the Sheriff's helicopter has never arrived. The lieutenant will attempt to contact Fire HQ which has a limited interoperable

communications capability with the sheriff's HQ and check on the time of expected arrival of the chopper and underscore the urgency of the situation.

The lieutenant finds that the roads between him and fire HQ have become impassable since the first earthquake. The main East-West Interstate 10 has had three bridges collapse during the aftershocks from the original quake and has completely cut off travel between the north and south portions of the city. His tactical radios are no longer successful in reaching Fire HQ for needed support as the repeaters have been thrown off line by the same series of aftershocks.

However, he does reach both the Ventura County Fire units and those of the northern area of Los Angeles County Fire. They have responded on the basis of Mutual Aid Agreements to assist as needed without being requested. Under the Mutual Aid agreements a limited capability to cross channel with the L.A. primary Fire Dept. frequency is carried.

These Counties have big rigs with Heavy Rescue capability. The Lieutenant immediately requests the LA. County rig to deploy to the Northridge apartment location and the Ventura rig proceeds via the coastal routes of Highways 101 and 405 South to attempt to reach L.A. Fire. HQ to assist as needed.

These units from the north have no information on the wildfires in the forests but have seen heavy smoke from the East on their way down. They also will contact their Sheriff to see what the delay is with the helicopter for the babies' evacuation. The delay is unusual enough to cause concern that the chopper may be involved in an accident or some other urgent, unknown need.

As night falls, a tactical mobile relay has been rigged between fire HQ and Northern Fire Operations. Word comes that reinforcements have arrived into the Forest and one fire has been contained and the other two are expected to be contained by daylight (if the winds do not kick up during the night.)

The missing Sheriff's helicopter is found. It never received the original message that assistance for the babies was needed and had been ferrying law enforcement to places where additional personnel were thought to be needed if civil unrest arose. They now had the babies and were flying them to a larger hospital in Orange County who could provide the sophisticated support needed to handle the fragile health of these babies.

Now back at the collapsed apartment, voices had been heard during the search of the crushed debris of the first floor. Generators and emergency lights and additional heavy equipment had been obtained. The double shift asked to remain and continue with the new reinforcements to reach the voices. No one could be sure at that time whether the voices came from injured persons or

simply entrapped or entombed souls. By morning those possible had been saved. In daylight the body recovery would begin.

Now do you really mean to tell me that the first responders didn't want to talk to anybody but their own frequency?? This is a true story of only ONE rescue scene in a moderate 4.5 earthquake with a large, highly trained complement of firefighters, paramedics, law enforcement, mutual aid, and air resources. The tactical radios worked. All other communications were erratic. The phone system went out at the main area switching station in San Bernardino County blacking out phone service from the huge area of Santa Barbara to San Diego and inland through San Bernardino County.

The surviving "interoperable" radios and the cross patching from law to fire plus the Pony Express of the commandeered civilian car worked. But too slowly-- In rescue and emergencies, Time is the killer. No babies were lost. But what a Katz and Jammers patch-work system for the largest city in the state of California to pretend to have "interoperability."

Yes the "interoperable radio system" bought with DHS dollars and permitted to talk from the County emergency Operations Center located in the L.A. County Sheriff's Headquarters to DHS HQ in Washington, DC "worked". It gave DHS their required statistics of the number of buildings and extent of damage. It gave DHS estimated dollar loss that should be planned to allocate through the Stafford Act. –

All that is "recovery" communications. Neither "Response" nor "Rescue" That is so obviously not "Power to the Edge" that we have to either laugh or cry.

I beg you, beseech you to help us do our job and keep these Public Safety and all other First and "Second" Responders safe as they go into harm's way to rescue and recover us, the people of the United States of America.