

Post Falls Police Department Arms Officers with Wireless Network

The Post Falls Police Department (PFPD) serves the 20,000 citizens of Post Falls, Idaho with over 30 officers. In the past, access to the network was only available while the officer was behind his/her desk at the police station or when dialing in via a cumbersome radio frequency modem. The radio frequency modem system was extremely slow and was abandoned in 1991 after approximately two years, leaving the PFPD without any sort of remote network access.



When the US Department of Justice awarded the PFPD a \$160,000 grant in October 2002, the PFPD used the money, plus an additional \$40,000 from the city of Post Falls, to design and implement a wireless network that allowed officers to access the network from their patrol cars.

To do this, the PFPD worked with the Network Group, Inc. and Proxim to design and implement a wireless metropolitan area network (MAN) using Proxim's

802.11b access points, antennas and amplifiers.

ORINOCO 802.11-based outdoor routers, now re-branded under the Tsunami MP.11 name, link each of the access points together and provided backhaul to the PFPD. Mobile data computers were then purchased for officers to access the wireless network from their patrol cars.



Tsunami MP.11 is part of Proxim's Tsunami line of outdoor Ethernet bridges that can link individual locations up to 40 miles away with speeds of up to 960 Mbps total capacity. Tsunami is available in both point-to-point and multipoint models capable of wirelessly connecting over 6,000 subscribers across 70 square miles. Tsunami's security, power and performance has led to its increasing adoption by government agencies seeking fast, reliable wireless connectivity for surveillance, data backhaul, and campus connectivity."

"One of the project's challenges was establishing enough radio tower locations for antennas to mitigate the interference of mountains and trees and provide seamless coverage," said Mel Nottage, Network Group Director. "By accessing over 20 tower sites, we were able to create seamless wireless coverage for over 90% of a 60-square-mile area."

Seamless coverage allows the officers to quickly and easily access information even as they are moving at high speeds through the Post Falls' hilly terrain. Additionally, officers can run vehicle registration, driver's license and criminal history checks during traffic stops; monitor real-time dispatch information; receive detective's criminal investigation reports, mug shots and streaming video; and access Internet and e-mail while mobile.

"Everything that can be done at an officers' station desktop can now be done in their patrol car. In some cases, information can even be accessed quicker," said Lt. Scott Haug, Patrol Lieutenant, PFPD. "For instance, using their laptops, officers can obtain license plate information from a centralized database at a much faster rate than requesting it over the radio vocally."

In addition to allowing officers to request and receive information while in the field, the new network has increased the officer's productivity as well as their visibility in the community. Officers can catch up on paperwork and file reports from their patrol car, which can be parked in a visible area as a crime deterrent.

"User and community responses to the new network have been excellent. Most officers have found the network easy to use and appreciate the convenience of being able to work from their patrol car," said Lt. Haug. "Additionally, the citizens of Post Falls appreciate the increased number of police officers on the street."

With the initial build-out now completed, Lt. Haug believes the network will continue to be upgraded in the future to grant network access to the fire department, emergency services and city workers.



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