

For Immediate Release

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Manitowoc County’s Public Safety Radio and Antenna Project Begins

The first phase of Manitowoc County’s Public Safety Radio and Antenna Project is now underway. Federal Engineering, Inc. (FE) of Fairfax, Virginia has been chosen to complete the consulting and engineering needed to design a system that will address the needs of public safety agencies within the County and the deficiencies of the current radio system. This project is being coordinated by Jeff Beyer, Manitowoc County Public Works Director, who has the task of coordinating open communications between FE and all County agencies, along with the other users of the present radio and antenna system. This coordination is vital to ensure that all related issues are realized. Beyer indicated that although this will be a very complex and challenging project, FE’s strong successful track record with similar projects and input from all of the users of the current system will guarantee a successful project.

In describing the history of this project, Beyer said, “This is really the third generation of public safety radio systems for the County. The first county radio system was a two antenna system built in the late 1950 era. The current radio system was an expansion in the 1980’s to a three antenna system. However, the current system is over twenty years old, some of the towers are deteriorating, equipment is no longer being manufactured, and the system does not allow communications between the County and some local communities. Plus, new frequency rules by the FCC will not allow the County to use the present system beyond 2013”. Beyer added, ‘Planning and starting the project now will provide enough time for all system users to transition to a new radio and antenna system before the current radios become obsolete or have to be shut down due to FCC regulations.’

The new radio and antenna project will offer improvements over the existing system and correct several deficiencies. The new system is planned to provide radio coverage over the entire County. This is a key goal of the new project, addressing the current problem of having public safety personnel at risk in situations where their communication is limited or non-existent. In addition to this safety risk the lack of interoperability needs to be addressed.

In responding to traumatic events, public safety officers from different jurisdictions require sharing information seamlessly, in real time, or officers may be put at risk. The concept of interoperability allows multiple parties to exchange information when and where it is needed, even when separate systems are involved. Lack of interoperability can severely hinder coordinated responses to natural disasters, catastrophic accidents, and

criminal actions. Communities across the country are recognizing the need to make interoperability a standard with their radio systems and are including this task with any radio and antenna upgrades.

Mr. Ronald F. Bosco, President of Federal Engineering, stated: "FE will be responsible for the first three phases of the project. In phase one; we will inventory all public safety radio and antenna equipment. We will also interview all users of the system including the Sheriff's Department, other law enforcement agencies, fire departments, EMS, related medical units, Emergency Management personnel responsible for siren and paging, highway department personnel, public works and safety personnel in cities, villages and towns within the County. In addition we will interview any other agencies that need to communicate with County public safety personnel." He added: "These interviews will result in a complete documentation of operational, functional, and technical information for the design of a new system."

In phase two, FE will develop a plan that addresses the needs, deficiencies, and information sharing issues that exist today and conduct studies to identify potential tower locations and optimize radio coverage for the new system.

FE will conduct radio site assessments in phase three to determine if towers need to be built, or if other existing towers or structures can be used to support the radio equipment. FE will complete the system design, equipment specifications and construction plans detailing what is needed to have a complete system for the County and all system users.

Beyer stated that as this project progresses, he will maintain an open dialog with all users of the system and will provide information on the options being considered, types of equipment being proposed to meet everyone's needs, and the costs for implementing the project.

As a nationwide communication systems planning and design firm, FE develops voice, data, and video networks for a wide range of end users, including organizations in the aerospace, energy, finance, education, publishing, and computer services fields. In addition to its private sector work, FE has completed hundreds of communications projects for 26 state governments, as well as numerous local and federal government clients. FE's certified independence ensures that clients receive objective, unbiased consulting services that are not influenced by any particular technology, product, vendor, or approach.