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# Hewitt: Police Dept. goes live with \$750k digital radio system



(Photo by Matthew Ablon) (KWTX)  
 By Rissa Shaw  
 Published: Jun. 1, 2018 at 3:49 AM CDT



Out with the old, in with the new.


Ditching an outdated setup, the City of Hewitt went live with a new radio system Thursday which officials said will improve communication internally and with other agencies.

The new, digital system allows first responders in Hewitt to communicate directly with most other agencies in the region; in the past they only had radio-to-radio communication with a few other agencies in neighboring cities.

"It was always a process of going through your dispatcher to contact another dispatcher who then would tell those units, because you didn't have the radio frequencies and/or transmission capability...up until today," said Hewitt police Chief Jim Devlin.

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Sheriff's Office, among others.

"Any police, fire, or EMS entity that may come into McLennan County, we now have access to communicate with them at our fingertips," said Devlin. "It's simply a turn of the knob to go to whatever channel we want it to go to or finding the zone."

Previously on a VHF radio system, Devlin said their "antiquated" radios and dispatch equipment was a decade past its service life and couldn't work on the local 800 system, which he's been pushing to join since 2014.

"Information is power, if we have that information beforehand, then we know what we're dealing with, and now I'm not going to have my officers walk into a critical incident or confront an armed individual when that information is out there."

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He said from working major incidents to Baylor football games, the new radio system with built-in channels for incidents puts everyone on the same page, allowing his officers to connect directly to other agencies during any type of event, cutting down on the lag time to communicate information.

"There's a lot of stuff that can happen in those 30 to 45 seconds," said Devlin.

"Twin Peaks is an example, we either had to get it from agency to agency to officer, or face-to-face, or through a cell phone, because we couldn't contact anybody," said Devlin. "That was chaos."

"(The West Explosion) is a whole other example, and these major incidents are the reason why it's so important for law enforcement, not only law enforcement but all of public safety, to be able to have channels and communicate with one another, that was the number one thing that came out of the 9/11 terrorist attacks - nobody could talk to one another."

There wasn't only a communication barrier between other agencies, Devlin said.

Before now, Hewitt officers and firefighters couldn't reach their comrades by radio inside of buildings, but Devlin said this new system is more powerful and reliable.

"They couldn't talk to anybody," said Devlin.

The system appeared to already be making a difference on day one; an officer said he could finally talk to other officers by radio inside of a Hewitt elementary school Thursday evening.

"We need to be able to communicate with each other, and with whoever else may be coming to assist them," said Devlin.

"You're going to see a huge migration in this county to this system from all the agencies, if they're not on it now, which a lot of them are, many of them will be going to it within the next year or two."

Safety comes with a cost; the hardware, software, installation, and training for the new radio system had a \$750,000 price tag, but will last for decades, Devlin said.

"It's our lifeline," said Devlin.

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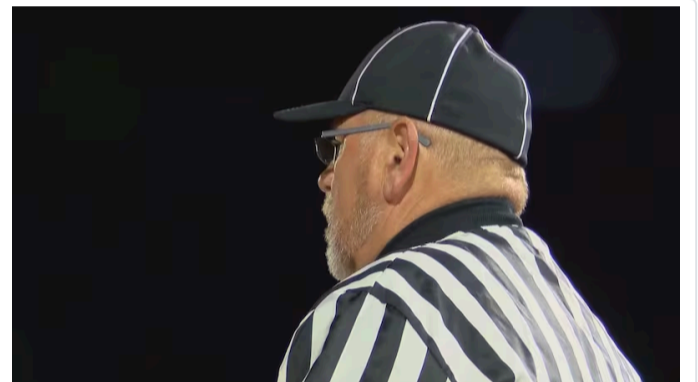
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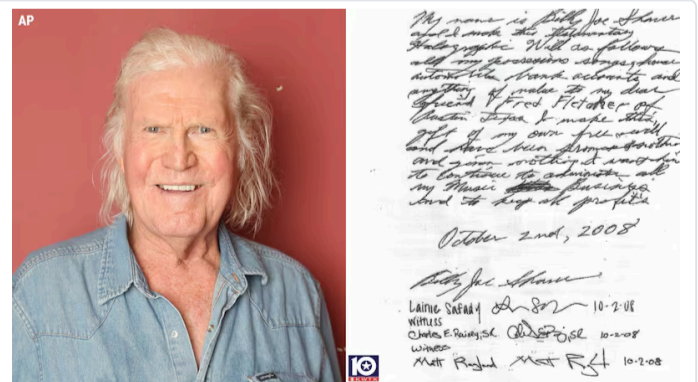


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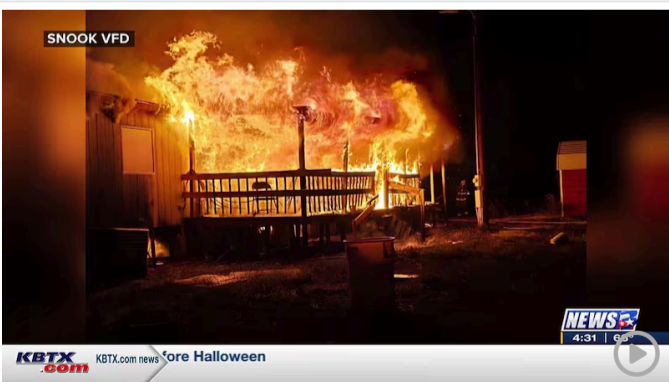
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