With assessments and mapping, L.R. Kimball guides State of Oklahoma toward interoperable emergency communications

**THE CHALLENGES**

In October 2007, Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry issued Executive Order 2007-42, which recognized that a lack of interoperable communications between public safety agencies existed at all levels of government in the state, a persistent problem that has existed for many years. The Order highlights that although more than $32 million in federal funding has been spent to address the problem it still persists. The Order also authorizes the Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security (OKOHS) to conduct a detailed study of the public safety communications situation in the state, as well as directing all state agencies, boards and commissions to fully cooperate with OKOHS to study and then develop a Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP).

**THE SOLUTION**

L.R. Kimball was contracted by the State of Oklahoma in December 2007 to help assess and subsequently improve interoperable radio communications as part of a three-phase project. The first two phases involved a massive inventory of state and local public safety agencies to determine the state’s interoperability capabilities and needs. The third phase, which is still underway, involves the development of an Oklahoma Field Operations Guide (OKFOG).

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**Phase One: A Massive Data Collection Process**

During the first phase of the project, L.R. Kimball worked with a subcontractor to assess the state of communications resources among a number of state agencies in Oklahoma. Most of these agencies were interviewed and their assets were inventoried. After a year-long effort, L.R. Kimball completed the collection of data on 18,706 radios and more than 1,300 user groups (including police, fire and emergency medical services). After the data gathering stage was completed, L.R. Kimball held focus-group meetings with public safety officials to analyze the information and to discuss the governance of their systems.

**Phase Two: A Searchable Database Designed to House Statewide Communications Information**

Phase 2 of the project was initiated late 2008. During this phase, L.R. Kimball executed an assessment of each county’s specific communications needs. Three teams of telecommunications experts from L.R. Kimball traveled to agencies in all 77 Oklahoma counties to carry out the detailed assessment. L.R. Kimball developed a pioneering asset-inventory survey document to gain a

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**Project Overview**

**CLIENT:** State of Oklahoma

**GOAL:** Improve statewide emergency communications interoperability

**L.R. KIMBALL SERVICES:**
- Needs assessment and gap analysis
- Development of a statewide communications strategy
- Asset inventory collection tool
- Field guide development

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**L.R. Kimball**

TARGETED RESULTS. EXPERTLY MANAGED. WE STAKE OUR REPUTATION ON IT.

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better understanding of the needs of the various independent agencies across Oklahoma. The survey form explored details of local radio systems, radio-system sites, system user groups, caches of interoperable radios for use in regional emergencies, mobile command vehicles, EMS dispatch procedures, mutual aid operations, standard operating procedures, interoperable agreements, governance of interoperability programs and interoperability initiatives. The questionnaire was submitted to the Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security which authorized the data fielding. After all of the survey responses were gathered, L.R. Kimball provided the information in a searchable database for use when making decisions about interoperability.

Phase Three: The Oklahoma Field Operations Guide

In phase three of the project, L.R. Kimball launched a twelve-month initiative to develop the OKFOG. Once complete, the OKFOG will be crucial to first responders who need to know how to communicate with neighboring safety officials during an emergency involving multiple jurisdictions. Phase Three is currently in progress, and it is anticipated that the field guide will be released in early 2011.

THE RESULTS

In addition to creating a unique database for the state of Oklahoma, L.R. Kimball entered a full range of data in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Communications Assets Survey and Mapping (CASM) tool. This enabled Oklahoma to become one of the first states to incorporate its data into the CASM mapping system. CASM data will become available to both federal and local officials so that they could see where towers and systems are situated in their regions.

Representatives from DHS told L.R. Kimball that its efforts produced the most data entered into the CASM site by one organization in such a short time span, and likely the most data entered for an entire state. CASM officials stated that the data-collection process completed by the field teams was very impressive and applauded the teams’ work.

Oklahoma is using the data collected during the first two phases of the project to make interoperability planning decisions. These planning efforts, along with the results of the study, have been incorporated into the Oklahoma SCIP. The database will play a key role in the process of identifying state assets that can be leveraged in order to avoid redundancy and minimize costs. The field guide will be crucial to statewide interoperability, as it will give first responders their initial instructions for communications during a public safety event.