



- Set up as part of the UKAEA by the Atomic Energy Authority Act 1954
- Statutory remit to protect nuclear material on behalf of the Government
- Authorised to deploy armed police officers to protect nuclear material
- With a strength of 500 officers

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When the UK Atomic Energy Authority Constabulary was looking to implement the O₂ Airwave network it had a unique set of problems to solve.

“Because of the type of establishments we work in and the style of our policing, the UKAEA Constabulary has different needs from the majority of police forces, although we work closely with our neighbouring forces,” explained Tony Presland, Airwave Project Manager. “Because of the tough environment we work in - nuclear facilities are often highly shielded buildings with dense concrete structures - we had to be sure that the selected system would cope with the conditions.”

To select the TETRA radios the Constabulary conducted a two-part analysis of Sepura and those of two other suppliers. The first part involved a review of the handportables looking at ease of use, functionality and wearability together with an assessment of how the radio worked in different environments. This was carried out with a group of serving officers and senior staff, supported by a consultancy experienced in TETRA.

That first day Sepura came out very significantly on top in terms of ease of use and general ergonomics of the handportable. “It was difficult to choose between the three handportables in terms of their ability to obtain and retain a signal in the test environment on that day,” commented Presland. “However, the ergonomic factors pushed us strongly towards Sepura as our TETRA terminal of choice at this stage.”

Further technical testing was then undertaken to see how well the three different handportables operated in a variety of difficult environments from a telecommunications perspective. This second round of testing was carried out at the UKAEA's establishment at Harwell in Oxfordshire, close to the Force HQ. At the end of the day Sepura was ahead by a measurable margin.

"Sepura's handportable reception was considerably better than that of the radios of its competitors" continued Presland. "This just confirmed our view that Sepura equipment was the right one for us."

The officers were happy with the decision and the UKAEAC entered into negotiations with the Sepura account staff. "I have to say that we have been absolutely delighted with our account handlers and have written to Sepura to say how pleased we are with their level of support," Presland added. "They are always quick to answer any technical or financial questions we raise and were very helpful in ensuring we got the best value for money."

The UKAEA Constabulary reports through to the DTI, which means it has a slightly different relationship with Airwave partner O₂. O₂ guarantees the level of coverage for individual Home Office forces and the UKAEAC liaises closely with neighbouring forces to ensure that its operational units have coverage. A partnership approach to working between O₂, the Constabulary and Home Office forces ensures that these operational units are well provided for, which is to everyone's benefit in the event of an incident at a UKAEAC policed unit.

The Constabulary works closely with other forces and is part of PITO*, which ensures a good flow of information. The handportables are programmed with all force hailing talk groups channels and selected shared talk groups for interworking. The interoperability of Airwave is a major plus for the UKAEA Constabulary and Mr. Presland looks forward to having the same ease of access to other emergency services in the future.



The UKAEAC uses the SRP2000 sGPS handportables and the SRM2000 in-vehicle units. The Constabulary is now live at three operational units. The site at Capenhurst in Cheshire has excellent coverage and at the other two sites, Harwell and Springfields, coverage is very good and is significantly better than the previous analogue radio systems.

"We like the idea of long-term relationships and Sepura are in it for the long term. We have bought equipment from them and are happy with that," concluded Presland, "so this is just the start of the relationship."



*Police Information Technology Organisation