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- Covering an area of 890 square Kilometres and a population of around 2.6 million
- 8,500 officers and 3000 support staff
- 3,200 incidents including 2,000 emergency calls a day on average
- 21 Operational Command Units and a Force Communications Centre

GPS feature essential for officer safety

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UK's West Midlands Police force (WMP) has chosen Sepura's handportables to replace its analogue personal radios. WMP is the second largest police force in the UK, with an area of 890 square Kilometres and a population of around 2.6 million. It employs almost 8,500 officers and 3000 support staff. In a typical day WMP deals with more than 3,200 incidents including 2,000 emergency calls. Situated in the very heart of the country, its patch includes three major cities, Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton and some of Europe's busiest roads, like the famous "Spaghetti Junction". In addition, WMP has 21 Operational Command Units responsible for local demand and a Force Communications Centre responsible for despatching force wide resources.

Hence, the decision on which handportable would be best suited to the new UK Airwave emergency services radio system was vital.

WEST MIDLANDS POLICE

SRP2000 sGPS

GPS feature essential

Superintendent Rick Abbott, Head of Operational Communications for WMP, narrowed the choice of terminal down to offerings from the three leading mobile handportable manufacturers, and then he conducted a full technical evaluation. Abbott commented, "We looked at everything from receiver sensitivity to battery power, consumption and audio volume". Following this, he conducted a full user trial which involved simulated exercises and factors such as how many talk groups could be used and how many accessories could be accommodated. "Overall, the Sepura SRP2000 handportable came out best across the board!" he commented, "And it also scored best from a five year life cost point of view".

Another dimension to the decision by WMP to standardise on Sepura terminals was based on the fact that WMP would be using the new terminals for at least 5 years and were keen to explore every possible option offered by O₂ Airwave over that period; including its Global Positioning System (GPS) capabilities. GPS determines the location of the officer using the radio to a very high level of accuracy and the Sepura SRP2000 sGPS unit features this as a fully integrated option.

Max Corney, Communications Manager for WMP, sees GPS as a very important feature, particularly from an officer safety point of view, "GPS is available on the Sepura handportable, and as it doesn't incur any additional weight, it makes enormous sense to take advantage of this technology now." One of the features that sets Sepura's GPS function aside from the others is that the receiver does not need to be in direct line of sight with the satellites, which is particularly important in city centres, especially amongst tall buildings.

WMP are implementing applications that use the GPS facility, and they are adamant that the main benefit is officer safety. "When an officer presses the emergency button, their exact location is routed through to our OASIS Command and Control system," Corney explained. "The officer is identified on the mapping screens and we are able to respond to their request very quickly and efficiently."



The GPS facility also plays a part in resource planning by allowing central control to match resources to immediate demand; particularly important when scarcer specialist units are required. In addition, knowledge of exact location is a critical factor in the resolution of incidents and can even be the deciding factor in preventing injury or loss of life.

WMP has placed sufficient orders with Sepura to equip the entire force and roll-out is expected to be complete by the end of 2005.