

Midwest Network Targets Public-Safety Agencies

Mike Miller is the president of RACOM, which provides mission-critical voice and data services to the public-safety industry in the upper Midwest. RACOM is in its 38th year and has 75 employees.

What is the most important development in communications during the past few years?

Nailing down just one is difficult. I think the following are most significant:

- **Narrowbanding.** While lots of public-safety agencies are working toward making their systems narrowband compliant, I am continually amazed at the large numbers that aren't doing anything yet.

- **Project 25 (P25).** As our public-safety trunked standard "gets real," more of our business is P25 related. Narrowbanding, in part, is driving people to P25.

- **Manufacturer End of Life.** The major manufacturers of public-safety trunking platforms (Harris and Motorola) have begun the end-of-life process for their proprietary trunked formats, which has led to an even faster move to P25 technology.

How does your communications network benefit your customers daily and during a crisis?

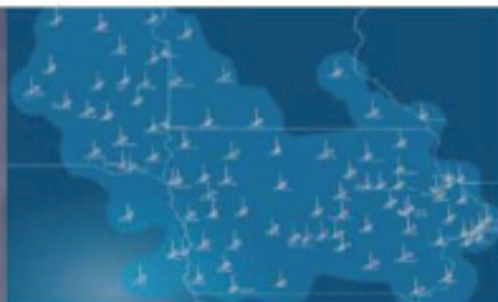
Our company owns and operates the RACOM Network, a 100-site 800 MHz trunking network based on Harris' EDACS technology that serves as the communications platform for nearly 300 municipal, county, state, and federal public-safety and public-service agencies throughout the upper Midwest and handles more than 1 million calls per day. Our customers benefit by having more communications interoperability, coverage and radio capabilities than they could afford on their own, which in a crisis can be critical.

What is the most significant mission-critical communications policy on the horizon?

While there has certainly been lots of hype (and hype alone) to this point, we believe that the end result of the 700 MHz D block proceedings has the potential to shape the voice and data industry for public safety from here forward.

What completed project are you most proud of?

The daily service we provide to the communities we serve



Mike Miller

Company: RACOM

Title: President

Where: Marshalltown, Iowa

Years of Industry Experience: 14

Number of Staff: 75

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makes us proud and is rewarding. At RACOM we engineer, sell and maintain nearly all of the equipment related to the second half of the 9-1-1 response — everything from the time a 9-1-1 dispatcher answers the phone to the time an emergency responder arrives on scene. Making sure that half of the 9-1-1 response is even more reliable than the initial call to 9-1-1 is something that we feel a great responsibility for and derive deep pride in being able to provide consistently and reliably.

Is there a shortage of qualified RF engineers?

In general, I think the slowing of the economy has helped find good people. Having said that, there are still too few people who have great RF skills and great IP networking skills. The people with both skills are hard to come by and quite valuable in our industry.

How did you get your start in the mobile communications industry?

RACOM is a family company that was started by my father, Gregg Miller, in 1972. My first job in the industry was pretty meager; I was the janitor at RACOM.

What would you be doing if you didn't have your current job?

I really enjoy what we do at RACOM and what I get to do here. I can't imagine doing something different. But if I had my choice of anything, I might be a farmer in Napa, Calif., trying to make great red wine. ■