

# USER STORY

## McCalla Fire District cuts communications cost in half!

November 5, 2015

In an effort to provide better interoperability with law enforcement, the McCalla Alabama Fire District switched from a regional fire communications system operating in the VHF frequency range to a County wide 800 MHz trunked radio system in 2003.

In general, there have been no major regrets in making that decision other than the high cost of equipment and maintenance costs. The original system is now at the end of its life cycle which will necessitate the purchase of new equipment in the very near future. With an average cost exceeding \$2,000 per person and vehicle, that could be a problem.

Chief David Jayne began looking at ways to retain interoperability without the high cost of individual firefighter radios. As it turned out, a local company, Falcon Wireless of Birmingham, had developed a technology that allows the use of low cost firefighter radios that have the ability to communicate on conventional VHF or UHF radio systems as well as 700 or 800 MHz P25 government standard interoperability networks.

The net result is that firefighters can be equipped with personal 2-way radios that are louder, lighter, less likely to require maintenance, and much less expensive than P25 portable radios. The typical cost of a P25 portable is around \$2,000. The cost of the new generation portable is less than \$200! Repair cost is less than half and there are no system usage charges.

The technology that makes this all possible is called a BlueBox. A single BlueBox connected to a single vehicle or base station radio costs less than a thousand dollars. McCalla Fire District purchased three BlueBoxes; one for each of their primary response vehicles at Stations One and Two plus a base station unit at Station One. Eight of the new portables are available for field operations plus two units for use by Station One personnel.

An additional benefit of the BlueBox system is that there are no network fees that are commonly associated with P25 network systems. These fees generally start at less than \$10 per month per radio. Unfortunately, a historical overview of systems in other areas indicates a rapid increase to \$45 per radio over a three to five year period. By using BlueBox technology, Chief Jayne will be able to keep both current and long term costs in line. You can too!

For additional info on the BlueBox System, see <http://info4u.us/BlueBox-FGS.pdf> or call Falcon Wireless at 205.854.2611. For information on other products or services, please visit <http://falcon4firefighters.us>.