

Not long after September 11, 2001 the Governor of Oregon decided that something had to be done about the state's aging radio system. Oregonians couldn't count on reliable public safety communications during a crisis. So he signed an Executive Order and set up the Statewide Interoperability Executive Council to improve public safety communications statewide.

In 2005 the State Legislature passed HB 2101 to consolidate and upgrade the radio systems used by ODOT, OSP, the Department of Corrections and the Department of Forestry. Lawmakers also called for the creation of an interoperable communications infrastructure that would allow all state, local, federal and tribal public safety agencies to share information instantly. OWIN (Oregon Wireless Interoperability Network) was established and funded to manage the multi-faceted project.

The Oregon legislature put its stamp on the project by demanding cost efficiencies and mandating that partnerships be formed with local, federal and tribal agencies. These partnerships – 35 signed agreements with local agencies and more to come – have resulted in significant cost savings for Oregonians. In January of 2009 full funding for the project's initial phase was approved.

Adding to the urgency of the project is a mandate from the Federal Communications Commission to abandon wideband and switch all public safety radio systems to narrowband by 2012. This will allow greater use of the radio spectrum as analog systems are replaced by digital systems.

The challenge of upgrading the old state-owned systems and providing interoperability on an improved "system of systems" is being met by OWIN in four phases. Phase I began with infrastructure construction west of the Cascades. By the time Phase IV is completed and the network is operational on the first day of 2013, all of Oregon will have a secure and reliable public safety communications network. One that Oregonians and the people who protect our lives and property can count on.

OWIN is one of the state's most significant public works projects in decades. For the first responder, it will mean confidence in mission critical communications. For the Oregon economy, it's projected that \$250 million will be invested right here with local workers and businesses.