

**Icom Press Release**

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## **Innovative Radio System used at Ashfield Prison**

An innovative radio system, installed by Radio Communication Company, Ansur Communications, is providing major benefits for Ashfield Prison near Bristol. The Prison, home for up to 440 young offenders, is benefiting from a system called RMS-NET (Radio Messaging System), which, as well as providing basic voice radio communication for the Prison's Officers, gives text/status messaging and a full reporting structure for all radio traffic.



Ashfield Prison, which is run by SERCO, holds young offenders and juveniles, and is built on the site of the former remand centre in Pucklechurch village. Ashfield accepts remand and sentenced young people between the ages of 15 and 18. The majority of sentenced young persons at the prison are completing detention or training orders.

Staffing levels at Ashfield vary and at any one time there may be as many as 250 officers working onsite with the majority working on the wings and in the education department. The pressure that the staff face are considerable including physical assaults and verbal abuse.

The radio system assists the team in the management of violent behaviour. The radio system features 170 handheld radios and two repeaters, which are used to ensure radio coverage. The handportables are pre-programmed with text/status messaging so staff can easily keep the

office informed of routine operations. All radio traffic including voice and status messaging is communicated to the UHF IC-F2610 base station, which is then logged and stored on a central database on a PC. This provides important records to show that all health and safety requirements have been met and that staff have undertaken assigned duties. The scheme utilises status messaging that highlights geographical locations, open mic and panic alarm capability.

Steve Blackburn Proprietor of Ansur Communications said, 'We were tasked to provide a tailored cost effective solution which addressed all the requirements of the site and its personnel utilising the flexibility of RMS-NET. We adapted its capabilities allowing us to achieve the requirements placed upon us. Since implementation, the system has proved to be both reliable and capable of handling the high levels of traffic demanded of it.'

Under the terms of a maintenance agreement, Ansur Communications had to guarantee system availability. Two repeaters have been incorporated into the scheme with one configured as 'hot spare'. If one radio fails the other repeater will automatically switch on.

Tim Kear, Systems Administrator at Ashfield said, ' One of the biggest communication problems at a prison is the amount of voice traffic, which in the past was constantly jamming our network. Officers used the radios for simple requests. Because of the set-up of the prison and the amount of movements that are made, there is a constant flow of traffic (and radio traffic) all day long. Every time an officer moves, they have to get clearance, and when they get to their destination, they have to report that they have got there so the radio goes on and on, all day long. So it was imperative that text/status messaging was incorporated as part of the system to cut down on the radio traffic.'

Tim added, 'Now we use status messaging instead of voice, this is much more discrete and cuts down on radio traffic. Messaging allows us to alert staff of a disturbance without the risk of being overheard. With voice communication, you have the chance of inmates hearing what is going on which can exacerbate the situation. A subtle status message letting the staff know the situation and location is incredibly valuable and is just one of the many features that the RMS-NET solution can provide.'

He went on to say, 'Another important reason why we selected the Icom radio was the ease of use of the panic alarm and the position of the buttons. For ease of reference we produced a guide on how to use the radio, which we distributed to staff and displayed at the gatehouse.'

Asked about why RMS-NET was introduced, Tim said, 'RMS-NET was purchased for its reporting structures and the reliability that it provided over a previous system. Ashfield wanted to get a solution that was future proof and in a modern PC format, that was MS Windows based format that can be utilised with other software.'

He added, 'The radios were upgraded because the previous system was seven years old and had poor coverage. Nobody could be heard on the radio and it was putting people's lives at risk. So the decision was made to overhaul the system and upgrade it.'

Tim further added, 'The reporting features of RMS-NET are extremely useful. If someone claims that they have pressed their personal alarm and it was ignored, there is an audit trail to prove the result of their actions. In the past to provide an audit trail would have involved an incredible amount of administration, which was slow and expensive to produce.'

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### *Corporate background*

Icom (UK) Ltd was established in 1974 and is the sole UK and Republic of Ireland importer and distributor for Icom Inc., of Osaka, Japan. Based in Herne Bay, Kent, the company is privately owned with 42 staff.

A comprehensive portfolio of radio transceiver, receiver, navigation and computer products is maintained to suit the consumer, commercial, radio-amateur, marine and aviation markets. Equipment is available in fixed-base, vehicle-mobile and handheld formats to suit a wide range of specifications and applications.

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### *About Ansur Communications*

Ansur Communications has over 20 years experience in radio communications and technology, and hold many contracts with Blue-chip organisations. The company specialises in unique design solutions and shapes its services around the needs of individual customers.

### *For a demonstration of the system and its capabilities, please contact:*

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