DHS Science and Technology Directorate
Project 25 Compliance Assessment Program

Formal Compliance Testing for Land Mobile Radios

To successfully respond to both day-to-day and large-scale incidents, first responders must be able to communicate with each other regardless of equipment make or model. Today, this can be challenging because communications equipment manufacturers often use different approaches to implement systems that leave their products incompatible. Land mobile radio networks are still the network of choice for first responders' mission critical voice needs. Project 25 (P25) is a suite of standards that enables interoperability among digital two-way land mobile radio communications products created for use by public safety professionals. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) partnered with the Department of Commerce Public Safety Communications Research program to establish the P25 Compliance Assessment Program (P25 CAP).

P25 CAP is a formal, independent process for ensuring communications equipment declared by the supplier actually is P25 compliant and tested against the standards with publicly published results. Through this open standards testing process, P25 CAP provides responders confidence the communications equipment they use will be interoperable, regardless of manufacturer. Specifically, this voluntary program provides public safety agencies with evidence that the communications equipment they purchase is tested against and complies with the P25 standards for performance, conformance and interoperability. Compliance testing concludes with official summary test reports and suppliers' declaration of compliance, which are available to first responders at http://www.firstresponder.gov/P25CAP. This website also provides a repository of all information on P25 CAP.

Helping to Ensure Interoperability by Informing Procurement Decisions

By arming first responders with the necessary information they need to make informed procurement decisions, P25 CAP helps advance interoperability in the public safety environment. In addition, by encouraging the purchase of P25 CAP-compliant communications equipment in grant guidance, P25 CAP helps to ensure federal grant funds are used to purchase interoperable solutions for local, tribal and state first responders. Ultimately, this promotes interoperability and reduces waste and poor investments in untested equipment.

Program Framework and Path Forward

S&T selected three internationally recognized laboratory accreditation bodies to review and accredit participating P25 CAP laboratories. Once accredited, the laboratory can test land mobile radio equipment for compliance. There are currently eight labs recognized to conduct P25 CAP testing. Recently, S&T developed a series of program logos to better communicate these facets of P25 CAP among its stakeholders. P25 CAP laboratories will be able to display a seal to distinguish themselves as a competent test facility. In addition, partnering accreditation bodies will be able to use a logo to show stakeholders they are a participating accreditation body.

A series of P25 CAP logos for use by DHS and participating stakeholders

S&T has partnered with the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials to support its efforts with the program and help re-establish the program's governance structure. To this end, S&T created the P25 CAP Advisory Panel (AP), which provides the views of active local, state, tribal, territorial and federal government users of portable, handheld, mobile vehicle-mounted radios and infrastructure, including repeaters, consoles and gateways. The P25 CAP AP provides recommendations to S&T for strategic direction of the P25 CAP, addresses user input to improve the P25 CAP compliance process and provides feedback to P25 standards committees. S&T's program policies will be laid out through the issuance of its Compliance Assessment Bulletins.

To learn more about P25 CAP, contact SandTFRG@hq.dhs.gov.

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