

# Meeting The Public Safety Challenge

(NAPSA)—While keeping Americans safe requires action, it also requires talk. Experts say police, fire departments, EMTs and virtually all other safety agencies work more efficiently when they use devices that let them communicate with one another. Yet a lack of technology has kept many safety agencies from doing just that. Some say the result has been the unnecessary risk for America's first responders and the people they protect.

In their day-to-day operations, many public safety agencies can transmit mug shots, fingerprints and videos of crime scenes to their communications centers—but they can't transmit that information to other agencies. That means there could be times when fire departments are not able to communicate with police departments over the radio, or an ambulance driver cannot communicate with a rescue team.

The problem relates to a concept known as "interoperability." The term refers to the ability of two or more organizations to communicate and share information (voice, data, images and video) in real time or near real time. For instance, police and fire departments in the same city may use radios that operate on different frequencies. Because of that, the two agencies may not be able to communicate with one another over the devices—the radios do not provide interoperability.

While factors including outdated technology and a lack of funding for new equipment contribute to a lack of interoperabil-



**Talk To Me—New technology enables fire departments and police departments to communicate.**

ity, John Clark, former Deputy Chief of Public Safety for the Federal Communications Commission, also blames a lack of leadership.

Fortunately, the Department of Homeland Security has pushed to make interoperability the standard among agencies. In October 2004, the DHS launched the Office of Interoperability and Compatibility, which will help state and local public safety practitioners improve communications. One of the ways to achieve immediate interoperable radio communications is to use devices such as the Aegis SafetyNet™ RadioBridge™, a portable patching device made by Aegis Assessments, Inc. (AGSI), a public com-

pany headquartered in Scottsdale, Arizona.

The Aegis SafetyNet RadioBridge allows most two-way radios to be interconnected regardless of their frequency or encryption scheme. Aegis is also developing a wireless life safety device, the Guardian™ System, which allows video transmissions and two-way voice communications from the stairwells inside buildings to incident commanders outside the building. It is believed that this device will be especially helpful to firefighters, who often face dangers in stairwells and need to call for backup from their position.

For more information, visit [www.aegiscorporate.com](http://www.aegiscorporate.com).