# Public-Safety Participation Needed

The Project 25 (P25) committees will meet the week before this month's APCO trade show and exhibition in Kansas City, Mo. Several issues are high on committee agendas, but user participation is the key to moving the standard forward.

Bob Pletcher, chairman of the P25 user needs subcommittee, welcomes public-safety communications officials' participation. Pletcher is also the chairman of the Texas statewide interoperability executive committee (SIEC) and says finding practitioners for the subcommittee is always a challenge. The subcommittee, which provides user input and direction to the rest of the committees, consists of about 25 public-safety users, and Pletcher says that P25 is one of only a few user-driven technology standards in the world.

Pletcher says the subcommittee's size varies each meeting because of budget and time constraints by practitioners. Some federal money helps pay for local agency representatives to serve on the subcommittee. But of the about 10 local agency officials whose travel expenses are funded by the federal government to participate in the user needs subcommittee, only about half have been active since they came onboard, Pletcher says. More firefighters have recently become involved because of the digital vocoder issues, which were identified by firefighters. The vocoder issue is high on the subcommittee's agenda, along with over the air programming (OTAP), Inter RF Subsystem Interface (ISSI) and the standard's Phase 2.

The P25 process is complicated, and it can take a new user several months to get up to speed. Public-safety officials are busy, and finding time and money to participate on a volunteer subcommittee is difficult. Additionally, there are a lot of complaints about P25 in our industry. Many complaints stem from a lack of understanding of what features and capabilities are identified in the P25 standard, Pletcher says. Perhaps with more user participation, those complaints could be addressed. If you are interested in serving on the subcommittee or for more information, contact Pletcher at robert.pletcher@txdps.state.tx.us.

**We value your opinions! Please e-mail your feedback to me at swendelken@RRMediaGroup.com.**

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) is also looking for public-safety practitioners to help its staff with public-safety communications technology research. NIST and Institute for Telecommunication Sciences (ITS) engineers recently helped develop a bridging systems interface (BSI) specification to link various communications gateways, and public-safety officials provided input into what users need. Users also helped the group during its digital vocoder testing. For more information on working with NIST's Office of Law Enforcement Standards (OLES) and ITS, contact Jeff Bratcher at jbratcher@its.bldrdoc.gov.

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