

Case Study

Algoma Power Improves Operational Efficiency & Employee Safety by Keeping Staff Connected

Solution Overview

Industry

- Utilities

Radios & Equipment

- 32 MOTOTRBO XPR6550
- 59 MOTOTRBO XPR4550
- 5 MOTOTRBO XPR8400
- Mitel 3300 IP PBX

Solution

- MOTOTRBO IP Site Connect
- Telephone Interconnect (RBX)

Motorola Solutions Partners

- Teldio
- Spectrum Telecom Group

Delivering power to over 11,000 residents and businesses in Northern Ontario, Algoma Power Inc. operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The company oversees the distribution of electricity for the rural areas around Sault Ste. Marie and manage and monitor over 1,800 kilometers of electrical lines covering 14,000 square kilometers.

Looking to improve communication and operational efficiency, Algoma wanted an independent radio network with reliable coverage throughout its entire service area for effective communication in day-to-day operations and emergency situations.

The Challenge

Ensure Staff Are Always Connected Throughout the Entire Service Territory

Supplying power around the clock to remote rural areas brings a number of unique challenges for Algoma Power. Covering an expansive physical territory and faced with the complex balancing act of being responsive to customers, while ensuring employee safety, they needed a reliable solution to communicate with their crew members from head office.

“Because of our rural nature and the topography of our service territory, there are areas where cell phones and satellite phones don’t work. We are reliant on the radio as a means of communication to exchange information and assist with work activity,” said Dave LaRochelle, Operations Technician at Algoma Power.

Requiring a radio system capable of supporting day-to-day operations while also being able to handle emergency situations and connect users directly to 911, Algoma Power needed to update the aging analog radio system. An independent radio network able to unite their employees at the main office and two satellite locations was needed.

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Dave LaRochelle, Operations Technician

The Solution

MOTOTRBO IP Site Connect Network coupled with Teldio's Telephone Interconnect

Specializing in communication challenges inherent to Northern Ontario, Spectrum Telecom Group, a Motorola Solutions Radio Channel Partner was tasked with providing Algoma Power with an all-inclusive communication solution.

In the fall of 2012, a MOTOTRBO IP Site Connect system linking Algoma Power's three offices in Sault Ste. Marie, Desbarats, and Wawa and their two satellite locations was installed. Five repeaters were distributed throughout the region to provide complete coverage from Wawa to Thessalon. Crew members including supervisors, technicians, the forestry division and meter readers were equipped with either MOTOTRBO XPR6550 radios or XPR4550 mobiles in the trucks, enabling them to quickly and efficiently communicate within the large service territory.

Teldio's advanced telephone interconnect, Radio Branch Exchange (RBX) was added to the radio network and interfaces with Algoma Power's Mitel PBX telephone system to connect radios to the world of telephony. Radio users can now make and receive phone calls directly on their MOTOTRBO two-way radios, no matter their location. "The ability for crew members to use their radio as a phone becomes critical for the ability to communicate regularly and in the event of an emergency," says LaRoche.

With this combined solution, not only does Algoma Power have a reliable stand-alone radio network, but it has enabled phone and radio users to communicate seamlessly throughout the entire service territory. Enhanced worker safety, increased productivity, and dependable every day and emergency communications along with reduced outage times are many of the benefits Algoma Power has seen from the new technology.



"The use of radios to get a quick exchange of information is important to us and contributes to productivity and lowering costs."

Dave LaRoche, Operations Technician



The Result

Reliable Communications, Anytime, Anywhere

Often working alone in isolated areas, employees can now be reached at all times. No matter what channel the radio users are on, they receive phone call notifications from the head office ensuring their safety.

911 Access for Emergencies

When an emergency arises – from an injured worker to a fire – radios connect staff instantly. RBX provides radio users with the ability to request help by calling any number including 911.

Excellent Coverage Enhances Productivity & Outage Times

The updated IP Site Connect network eliminated coverage gaps between the dispersed offices and mobile workers. If there is a line down or a fallen tree, workers can be quickly notified via phone or radio and be reassigned resulting in a reduction in outage times.

Minimize Operational Costs

Maintaining a continuous flow of information between field technicians and the home office has proved to be highly cost-effective for repair and restoration times. Mobile workers have become increasingly productive as they no longer need to return to the home office or drive to an area with coverage to exchange information.

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Dave LaRoche

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