



## Media Release

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### **NTL gives a lift to Fire Service radio communications**

- **NTL upgrades existing communications network for 43 fire brigades**
- **Major national programme of work nears completion**
- **‘Operational Continuity’ project to sustain systems until 2008**

NTL’s Public Safety group has today announced its £3m contract to upgrade fire service radio communications systems across the UK until a national digital system is commissioned. The Operational Continuity project (OpCon) is a large-scale national project to enhance the sustainability, reliability and maintainability of the radio communications systems in 43 of the UK’s fire brigades.

The contract was awarded last year by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister following the Government’s decision to invest in measures to safeguard the performance of existing emergency communications systems. ntl is in the process of upgrading each of the county-based systems currently deployed by individual Fire Brigades. This will ensure continued performance to exacting levels of availability, serving both local and national operational requirements until the planned migration to the new national Firelink digital system by 2008.

Based on many years’ radio communications experience with UK fire brigades, ntl undertook detailed risk assessments prior to the contract, addressing particular local demands and, importantly, the availability of all relevant manufacturers’ equipment. There is a varied scope to the programme across the brigades - from microwave links to mobile radio equipment - with many of the brigades requiring specially developed hardware solutions. A case-by-case assessment of implementation needs for all the brigades was also necessary. In common with all emergency services, the Fire Service radio communications systems are mission-critical and detailed migration and fallback plans were developed to eliminate downtime.

Dave Robertson, communications manager at Dorset Fire & Rescue Service, explains the work involved locally: “In the past year, as part of the national Op Con programme, ntl has reprogrammed all the brigade’s mobiles to incorporate the Firelink National plan and

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replaced our frequency references that were classed as High Risk equipment with Satsync GPS frequency references at all our hilltop sites.

“During both these operations ntl discussed with us the best way to carry out these essential tasks so that there was minimal, if any, disruption to our radio systems. Detailed plans and schedules were produced to ensure everything went smoothly. In fact the only disruptions to the plans were caused by brigade operations, and ntl’s engineers accommodated our last minute changes with their usual good humour and grace. All in all, a total customer-focused solution delivered by professionals. “

Kathryn Hobson, business strategy manager in ntl’s Public Safety group, added: “We are delighted to be undertaking this important work. It reflects both the length and quality of ntl’s existing relationship with the UK’s fire brigades, and our experience in the installation of radio communications technology into a live operational environment.”

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**More on ntl’s Broadcast division:**

- The Broadcast division of ntl has a 48-year history in transmission and has helped pioneer the technologies of the digital age.
- ntl’s Public Safety group provides a full range of support services to the UK police, fire, ambulance and other emergency services including design and installation of integrated telecommunications systems, radio system maintenance and fully managed services.
- With a portfolio of over 2300 radio sites across the UK, ntl’s Wireless Solutions group specialises in shared mobile and cellular network infrastructure, from conventional masts and towers, urban and in-building solutions to access circuits, managed back-haul and core network provision.
- 22 million UK homes receive ITV, Channel 4 and Five via ntl’s national broadcast transmitter networks. ntl also provides transmission for most UK independent radio stations, both analogue and digital.
- ntl provides end-to-end media solutions to the broadcast industry across terrestrial, cable and satellite platforms. This includes satellite uplinking, satellite newsgathering, outside broadcast facilities, programme presentation, play-out and distribution.
- Further information can be found at [www.ntlbroadcast.com](http://www.ntlbroadcast.com)

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