



Airwave

O2 Airwave, a wholly owned business of O2 plc, enables secure communications to the police and a range of other licensed public safety users. The service, known simply as 'Airwave', has been developed under a £2.9 billion public finance initiative – the largest PFI contract of its kind.

Airwave provides seamless national radio coverage, even in remote areas or places where other communications systems do not function well or at all. It enables public safety agencies to communicate more efficiently with one another, and across administrative boundaries.

“Airwave provides modern, secure and efficient radio communications for police officers across the country – a national system that is the envy of forces worldwide.”

HOME OFFICE MINISTER

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Key data

Number of police forces covered by the Airwave service

51

Number of employees (excluding contractors)

490

Permanent employees

86%

Temporary employees

14%

Women in senior management

9%

CO₂ emissions

22,150 tonnes

Electricity sourced from renewable sources

19%

Community contributions (cash and in-kind)

£85,000

Main areas of involvement

Education and youth **80%**

Emergency relief **3%**

Community sports **2%**

Other **15%**

Type of contribution

Cash **93%**

Time **4%**

In-kind **3%**



A message from Peter Richardson, Managing Director, O2 Airwave It's been a momentous year for Airwave.

In March we completed the roll-out of our service to the 51 police forces of England, Wales and Scotland, on time and within budget.

A network of some 3,300 masts, all of which have now been built, underpins Airwave. This provides seamless national radio coverage, even in remote areas or places where other communications systems do not function well or at all.

We are proud of this achievement and believe the Airwave service will provide greater public safety, a view that has been endorsed by our customers, the Government and the police.

Other users include the Highways Agency, the Ministry of Defence police and some fire and ambulance services. We are determined to win further business, notably with the ambulance and fire services across England, Wales and Scotland, to offer all the main emergency services complete inter-operability.

Understanding our customers is a key business objective and an important responsibility. We are focused on making sure we give our existing customers a level of service that meets the exacting needs of emergency services organisations.

Recognising and understanding the concerns of communities is essential too.

Airwave has always aimed to take a responsible approach, but we face a number of issues, particularly public concerns about mast location and the terrestrial trunked radio (TETRA) technology we use to ensure secure national coverage.

Current evidence suggests that it is unlikely that the special features of the signal from TETRA terminals and repeaters pose a hazard to health. We work with the TETRA Industry Group to produce and distribute information regarding the health and safety of our technology. We endeavour always to behave sensitively to public opinion to our mast sitings and we are proactive in local communities to address these issues, applying our Gold Star process to find positive outcomes.

For example, in response to health and safety concerns for a proposed site share at the Flotta Oil Terminal on the Orkney Islands, our consultative process resulted in unanimous support for the project. And on the Isle of Eigg, Inner Hebrides, meetings with residents who had feared the deployment of TETRA technology on the island, were successfully concluded. Both these sites are now operational and providing coverage for the Northern Constabulary.

Our community investment programme is an increasingly important part of Airwave and we are extending our commitment. In 2004/05 we supported a number of initiatives, including a Fire Safety line in Lancashire and a number of activities for Milly's Fund. We have launched environmental initiatives in Cheshire and Rugby and have announced plans to create a mentoring programme that will give our employees the opportunity to offer their skills, time and energy to projects in the communities in which we work.

Community



Airwave and its key suppliers sponsor a car for Milly's Fund – boosting child safety.

During 2004/05, we dedicated more resources to our community programme, recognising that this provides an important link with the people we serve and a great way for our employees to build on their skills, commitment and job satisfaction. Last year we contributed a total of £85,000 in both cash and in-kind donations to the causes we support.

We have secured matched funding from O2 plc for a number of important fundraising initiatives by Airwave employees. These included a team challenge which helped raise £15,000 to buy a car for Milly's Fund, the child safety charity. A Christmas auction of gifts received by employees raised £2,168 for tsunami relief charities. This event was also arranged to raise awareness about our gifts and hospitality policy within our Business Principles – our code that sets out the way we behave as a company.

Involving our employees

Environmental projects which allow volunteers in the company to get involved have become a focus for us. Airwave Challenges was launched in April 2005 – where volunteers get one day's paid leave to give their support. The initial pilot projects were over-subscribed almost two-fold. This confirms our belief that there is a real interest among our employees for community involvement.

We will be working with the National Trust on a site at Stanlow, near our site in Preston Brook, to recover a wetland area for the public and in Rugby, near our headquarters, we will be working with the British Trust Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) to develop allotments on old industrial land for low-income families.

This Autumn we will begin a mentoring programme, in association with Weston Spirit and the Merseyside High Sheriff's Trust, so that Airwave employees can lend their support to young people.

Employee engagement is highly regarded by the Airwave board. Every Airwave employee is invited to join the annual Airwave 'All Hands Meeting'. This annual conference gives management the opportunity to thank employees for their efforts and to inform them about future strategy and to network with them. Employee feedback from the event has improved year-on-year. In addition, all employees are invited to dial into a monthly company call where the MD and Airwave Board provide business updates and invite questions.



Public safety

Public safety is an important focus of our community investment and it links closely to our day-to-day work as a business. We continue to support a number of important initiatives, including the LookAlive road safety campaign launched in Cornwall, and have now sponsored a second police dog – Police Dog Pearce – who is working with the South Yorkshire Constabulary. We sponsor the Lancashire Fire Helpline – as well as giving the general public free access to safety advice aimed at fire prevention, this service targets vulnerable citizens through the social services and provides them with smoke alarms and other safety devices.

We have also sponsored an outreach vehicle used by the Bolton Lads and Girls Club to encourage young people at risk to get involved in sport. We are also looking to repeat our support of a fundraising festival organised by the Kent People's Trust and the Kent Police to help young people at risk from drink and drugs abuse.





Health and the environment

Building a network of 3,300 masts – often in remote and sensitive places – has been a significant challenge and we know it has raised concerns for some people.

There have been some concerns about the location of masts, aspects of the planning regime, the rapid pace of the roll-out and about aspects of the technology.

We take concerns from the public seriously and respond to any queries in detail by working closely with local authorities and communities before, during and after sites are selected and masts are built. We aim to abide by the industry's Ten Commitments on responsible mast siting and we operate a consultation programme called Gold Star that involves briefings for local and regional policymakers and representatives of local communities.

A small number of masts are erected under emergency planning rules, which provide for temporary planning consent. To become permanent parts of the Airwave network they will require proper planning consent. If we cannot obtain this, the site will be removed and an alternative site will be acquired.

Sometimes, we face opposition to our mast structures. During Spring 2005, we were seeking a new site in Zennor, Cornwall, a community in which there was considerable opposition to mast development. To try and turn this around we have been engaging with local planning officers, the parish council, the local district council, and we have organised drop-in sessions and have appeared at a public meeting on the request of the police force. We have also maintained dialogue with a range of members of the public and offered support to potential site providers. We are hopeful of resolving this and extending vital Airwave radio coverage to the area soon.

We are committed to managing our environmental impacts responsibly with objectives and targets on the environment, waste management, recycling and the responsible sourcing of equipment from our suppliers. We were delighted to gain accreditation under the demanding international environmental management standard ISO14001 during the year.

Responding to worries on health

Some people are concerned that TETRA technology poses threats to health. We take care to explain how the technology works and stress that we comply with international exposure guidelines laid down by the independent International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). We operate, typically, hundreds and often thousands of times below these guideline limits.

The scientific consensus continues to be that there are no harmful effects from TETRA where these guidelines are observed. But some people remain concerned and we support the ongoing further detailed research including the Home Office project looking specifically at TETRA, which is part of the UK's Mobile Health Research Programme (MTHR).

More than 100,000 police officers and over 120,000 users in total are using Airwave every day.

See what you can do.

TO FIND OUT MORE ON TETRA

World Health Organisation www.who.int/peh-emf/

ICNIRP www.icnirp.de/documents/emfgdl.pdf

NRPB www.nrbp.org/understand/radiowaves/radiowaves.htm

TETRA Association www.tetramou.com

Mobile Manufacturers Forum (MMF) www.mmfa.org

Mobile Operators Association (MOA) www.mobilemastinfo.com

Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones (Stewart Inquiry)
www.iegmp.org.uk

Home Office www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/tetra.html

ODPM www.odpm.gov.uk (for planning guidelines PPG8 and tripartite Code of Practice on responsible network development)

OFCOM (Incorporates the Radiocommunications Agency)
www.ofcom.org.uk

Mobile Carriers Forum of Australia www.amta.org.au

Swedish Radiation Protection Authority (SSI) First Annual Report from SSI's Independent Expert Group on Electromagnetic Fields 2003
http://www.ssi.se/english/english_news.html

You can also contact the TETRA Industry Group by email at enquiries@tetrahealth.info, or by writing to TETRA Industry Group, PO Box 1005, Berkhamsted, Herts, HP4 3ZW.