KENWOOD

NEXEDGE®
KENWOOD DIGITAL SYSTEMS

Case Study

Western Kentucky University Chooses NEXEDGE Digital Radios

Located in what the locals call the "hills and hollers" of south central Kentucky and recognized as the fastest growing university in Kentucky for 15 years straight, Western Kentucky University (WKU) has a reputation for their international reach, applied research and nationally-recognized programs in journalism, broadcasting, education, engineering and business.

While in a beautiful setting with a view of the Barren River Valley, the loveliness of the setting creates issues for effective two-way radio coverage. The 400 acre campus has more than 100 buildings and one of the most recognizable academic buildings, Cherry Hall, is located at the highest point in the city limits. Some buildings are built into the side of a hill, so those classrooms and mechanical spaces are 20 feet below ground. Also, coverage must stretch to the University farm, approximately 4 miles south of the main campus, the WKU South Campus two miles from the main campus, as well as the Center for Research and Development, an additional quarter mile beyond. A high rise dorm, Pearce-Ford Tower, dominating the southern end of campus, is 27 stories of reinforced concrete construction, presenting additional coverage challenges.

Herb Hess, Area Supervisor, Facilities Management at WKU, could see by 2009 that their single channel VHF system was no longer providing adequate coverage, and with the 2013 narrowbanding deadline rapidly approaching, decided it was time to explore other options. *"Radio traffic was horrendous,"* he recalled. *"At the university farm riding and cattle show arenas, you simply couldn't get into the repeater. You'd have to drive around and find a nice hill to park on before you could talk. There were areas on campus that absolutely did not have coverage, which was a huge problem for security and wasted employee time."*

Photo courtesy of Western Kentucky University.

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"If anyone wants to tour our NEXEDGE system, I tell them to come on down. I would wholeheartedly recommend it and I am absolutely thrilled with the system."

After a two week Kenwood NEXEDGE® demo, Hess said that he could "immediately see" the benefits of the digital technology, saying, *"I have always liked Kenwood technology and have a lot of faith in Kenwood. I got pretty excited about the new technology."*

When WKU released their RFP, they considered close to 20 bidders, all the major vendors, including AT&T. Narrowing it down to two final proposals, the contract was awarded to Bill Kidd of Kidd Communications of Horse Cave, KY. *"They simply had the most complete proposal. They covered all of our bases*

Photo courtesy of Bill Kidd, Kidd Communications.

and understood our needs, with an excellent infrastructure package and a layout of all of the options to customize the system to fit the needs of our university," Hess recalled. *"He assisted us with licensing issues and answered all of our questions along the way."*

"We have complete coverage across Warren County. I am absolutely thrilled with the system."

Hess said that many other bidding vendors were not going to provide the programming software so they could program their own radios. *"That may not seem like an emergency to a vendor, but if we lose a radio or need to give immediate access to someone, we need to do it right now. I like that Kenwood was willing to do that with us. We may be a quirky bunch, we get an idea about what we want and we want to be self sufficient. We're all educated and qualified and like to deal with programming ourselves."*

Bill Kidd, Kidd Communications, observed, *"Yes, the bid process was a challenge and the bid needed to meet the requirements of the IT professional who wrote it, but as far as selecting NEXEDGE, there wasn't a question in my mind that it was the right fit. There were some extras that I put in that proposal, including an essential interface to the campus police that other bidders didn't notice as a requirement. Also, once I took delivery on their system from the factory, I took it to my shop for additional programming and testing prior to installation at the university. In addition, I purchased additional portables and I'm keeping them on my shelf. If they ever need a replacement, I will simply swap out radios."*

The NEXEDGE system is a single site UHF four channel digital system being used by six departments. Coverage now with the new system, is, according to Hess, *"tremendous, amazing."* He pointed out that *"we have complete coverage across Warren County. I am absolutely thrilled with the system."*

Besides Facilities Management, the 225 Kenwood NEXEDGE NX-320 portables, with additional NX-800 mobiles for vehicles, are being used by Shipping and Receiving, the Student Life Foundation, which controls campus residence halls, the Department of Athletics, Department of Intramural Sports, which manages the fitness and soccer facilities and is currently being tested by the Department of Parking and Transportation. The Campus Police Department has a memorandum of understanding with the nearby city of Bowling Green and operates on their system, but has a Kenwood mobile tied into their dispatch console.

The only place without coverage, Hess said, is the fire pump room. *"Basically, out of several million square feet, both on and off campus, we have one 10X10 room without coverage and that's because it is lined with tin and has 6' thick steel reinforced concrete walls."*

Hess said that the ergonomic design of the radio makes it easier for personnel to use and he applauds the durability of

Photo courtesy of Western Kentucky University.

the NEXEDGE portables, which he called *"as tough as any radio can be"*, necessary for long work shifts and varying environmental conditions. Although they are currently only employing voice, he looks forward to using the built in digital GPS software and messaging capabilities to deploy a text based early warning system on campus. He also likes the security of knowing that even if a radio goes missing or is stolen, it can be removed from the system and is basically inoperable. Hess said that he also knows that when very narrowband operation is mandated by the FCC in the future, choosing NEXEDGE now means that they will be ready for the future.

"If anyone wants to tour our NEXEDGE system, I tell them to come on down. I would wholeheartedly recommend it and I am absolutely thrilled with the system," said Hess.