



East Bay Regional Communications System Authority (EBRCSA)

Radio Encryption Transition: Timeline and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Subject: Transition to AES 256-bit Encryption for Radio Communications

Effective Dates: September 3 & 4, 2025

The East Bay Regional Communications System Authority (EBRCSA) is transitioning primary radio talk groups to AES 256-bit encryption. This change is being made to comply with state and federal mandates regarding the protection of sensitive information and to enhance safety.

Transition Schedule:

- **Alameda County Agencies:** September 3, 2025, from 0330 to 0530 hours.
- **Contra Costa County Agencies:** September 4, 2025, from 0330 to 0530 hours.

A final list of affected agencies is found at the end of this memo

Operational Support During Transition: A radio technician will be available in the communications center during the transition period to assist with the resetting of radio consoles and to address any questions from staff.

Preparation for Personnel: To ensure a smooth transition, all personnel working during these hours are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with the location of the encrypted zones on their radios before September 3 or 4. Simulating the process will help ensure operational readiness.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Community and Media Engagement

The following information is provided to assist Chiefs and other personnel in responding to inquiries from the public and media.

1. Why are law enforcement agencies moving to radio encryption? This transition is a critical step to ensure compliance with legal and security requirements. Specifically, it addresses:

- **State Mandates:** The California Department of Justice (DOJ) requires the protection of Criminal Justice Information (CJI) and Personal Identifying Information (PII) during transmission.
- **Federal Standards:** The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Security Policy mandates encryption for the transmission of sensitive data.

- **Officer Safety:** Encrypting primary radio channels prevents individuals with malicious intent from monitoring police activities, including tactical information and officer locations, thereby reducing the risk to officers during dynamic situations.

2. The CA DOJ memo requiring the protection of PII and CJI was issued in 2020. Why is this transition happening now? Since the 2020 DOJ memo, many agencies have implemented interim solutions to protect PII and CJI, such as using back-up channels or in-car computers for data exchange. Some agencies also began using encrypted secondary channels for primary traffic. EBRCSA has worked to develop and implement a system-wide encryption solution to ensure consistent and comprehensive compliance for member agencies.

3. How common is radio encryption among other law enforcement agencies in California? While a precise count is not available, it is EBRCSA's understanding that most law enforcement agencies in California have already transitioned to or utilize encrypted radio channels for their primary communications, including most Bay Area law enforcement agencies.

4. Are there alternatives to encryption for protecting PII and CJI? While other solutions exist, they do not fully meet the rigorous standards set by the DOJ and FBI, are cost prohibitive to continue long-term or could compromise peace officer safety. The DOJ memo explicitly states that "the transmission of such information must be encrypted."

5. How will the media and public learn about in-progress events? Each department will manage such communications based on their specific needs, potentially through social media updates and encouraging all media to contact department dispatch or public information officers for official information.

6. Will the EBRCSA issue a press release about this change? No. EBRCSA is only providing the technical infrastructure for the transition. Public communication needs vary significantly among member agencies, so the EBRCSA will defer all media inquiries to the individual departments for comment.

7. How have other agencies handled public and media communications regarding encryption? For examples of how other agencies have managed this process, please review the following resources:

- City of Los Altos: <https://www.losaltosca.gov/404/Radio-Encryption>
- City of Santa Clara Police Department: <https://www.santaclaraca.gov/our-city/departments-g-z/police-department/community/news/police-radio-system>

Table 1: Alameda County, September 3

Agency	Technician Assigned	Time Block
ACSO	Jethro	0330
Oakland	Justice	0330
Livermore	Patricia	0330
Piedmont	J.J.	0330
San Leandro	John	0330
Pleasanton	Phil	0400
Alameda	Robert	0400
Albany	Matt	0400
Emeryville	Brandon	0400
UC Berkeley	Randy	0400
Berkeley	J.J.	0445
Fremont	John	0445
Hayward	Justice	0445
Newark	Patricia	0445
Oakland Housing Authority	Jethro	0445

Table 2: Contra Costa County, September 4

Agency	Technician Assigned	Time Block
Contra Costa SO	Robert	0330
Concord	Phil	0330
San Ramon	Matt	0330
Antioch	Jethro	0400
EBRPD	John	0400
Pinole	J.J.	0400
Richmond	Brandon	0400
Brentwood	Phil	0400
Martinez	Justice	0445
Pleasant Hill	Robert	0445
Walnut Creek	Matt	0445