



# AUGUST 2010

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## NEWS

### ENG Van Makers Shift Into New Gears

By Frank Beacham TVNewsCheck, Jul 29 2010, 10:18 AM ET

Last week, when wireless carrier Sprint announced the completion of a five-year spectrum reclamation project with television broadcasters, it was celebrated as a winner for all involved.

As part of a deal with the FCC, the project recovered 35 MHz of valuable spectrum from the 2 GHz block that should lead to better wireless broadband services. In exchange for clearing the spectrum, Sprint paid about 1,000 TV stations a total of \$750 million to replace their aging microwave equipment with more spectrum-efficient gear. The microwave vendors were winners too. They sold more than 100,000 pieces of equipment in the deal. "The Sprint project was a very large business driver for the broadcast microwave industry," says Keith Blaisdell, VP for product development at Integrated Microwave Technologies (IMT) of Hackettstown, N.J. "It gave broadcasters a chance to choose new gear with comparable features to their older equipment." But now the party is over. With TV stations outfitted with new gear, replacement business will be slow in the months ahead. What's more, tight-fisted stations have slashed budgets for new microwave trucks and are now experimenting with lower cost IP technologies for getting stories from field to studio.

Stations that are in the market for ENG trucks are looking at smaller, less expensive vehicles with minimal equipment packages for basic microwave-only use. Interest in more expensive satellite equipment is waning.

"Broadcasters are not doing anything now," says Jim Kubit, head of sales for the U.S. broadcast market at Broadcast Microwave Services of Poway, Calif. "They all got brand new equipment and seem to have all the microwave technology they are going to need for a long time. The stuff lasts forever."

BMS is still interested in the broadcasting market, but "we are now focusing on other opportunities," namely security and defense, Kubit says.

Frontline Communications, a division of the Oshkosh Corp., was a systems integrator for Sprint, installing much of the equipment for the reclamation project. Based in a 100,000-square-foot facility in Clearwater, Fla., Frontline also builds a variety of trucks for both microwave and satellite newsgathering. The company developed the industry's first seamless aluminum body satellite news vehicle in 1985.

Frontline makes a range of vehicles, from large multi-camera production trucks to the smallest ENG units. There are more than eight ENG designs, ranging up to a complete combo microwave/satellite truck with price tags of as much as \$350,000.

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Most purchasers are now looking for trucks in the mid-price range with microwave-only capability, says Stephen Williamson, Frontline's director of broadcast sales. "Broadcasters are moving away from the complete, full blown, every bell and whistle imaginable ENG vehicle."

To meet the call for low-cost vehicles, Frontline is offering a microwave-only system built on a Ford Escape hybrid that starts at \$95,000. In addition to the fuel-efficient engine, it features a smaller chassis not requiring modifications. It has a shorter 14-foot mast, rather than a standard 42-foot model, and includes integrated secure camera storage. Its equipment bay can be outfitted with a range of technology, including optional IP connectivity. Nucomm and RF Central, now part of the Vitec Group's Integrated Microwave Technologies division, has responded by scaling down their mobile units, combining microwave with IP technology and creating lower operating costs, says IMT's Blaisdell. "We are very bullish on ENG microwave and its future," he says. "It continues to serve a critical role when a station needs access from breaking events where there is no infrastructure. Microwave provides a very high-capacity pipe to reliably get video and audio back to the station."

IMT has developed a new low-cost ENG truck on its own, the Modular Mobile RF Platform (MMRP), while also developing technologies that allow ENG cameras to transmit wirelessly to the truck using the MPEG 4 HD codec and the license-free 5.8 GHz band.

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EL PASO, TX CHAPTER 38 MEETING MINUTE  
DATE **7/13/2010** LOCATION: **GRAND CHINA BUFFET**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: 12:40 PM, BY ANTONIO CASTRO, THERE WERE 13 MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE.**

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY: MINUTES ACCEPTED AS POSTED IN THE NEWSLETTER BY ENRIQUE LOPEZ**

**REPORT OF THE TREASURER: CURRENT BALANCE OF \$ 9,394.30, CHECKS SENT TO SBE FOR ENNES WORKSHOP AND CURREY ADKINS FOR TASTE OF NAB, ACCEPTED BY DON BOHRER**

**REPORT OF THE CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE: DON BOHRER FOR THE CNBT, DAVID HALPERING WILL ACT AS PROCTOR**

**REPORT OF THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE: NO REPORT**

**REPORT OF THE FREQUENCY COORDINATOR COMMITTEE: NONE FROM THE COORDINATOR. MARK STEPHESON FROM KSCE ON REQUESTING TO FCC TO CHANGE LOCATION FOR MICROWAVE.**

**REPORT OF THE SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE: THE TWO APPLICANTS WERE ACCEPTED FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP. CHECK WILL BE PRESENTED AT THE NEXT MEETING.**

**REPORT OF THE WEB SITE COMMITTEE : UPDATED DAY BY DAY BY NORBERT MILES**

**REPORT OF THE EAS CHAIRMAN : 3 MONTHLY TEST WERE RECEIVED AND FORWARDED. IN THE NEW MEXICO ONE, GOVERNMENT SEND A GLITH CAUSED BY FEMA**

**REPORT OF THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE: WILL INVITE FOR THE NEXT MEETING, A LOCAL ELECTRONICS DISTRIBUTOR "SARCO" TO DO A PRESENTATION TO THE GROUP. ENRIQUE LOPEZ WILL CONTACT AND INVITE THEM**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS: PAUL TERRY INFORMED ABOUT COMANCHE PEAK: A FAMILY WITH DOG TRESSPASSED AND DOG WAS BITTEN BY A RATTLE SNEAKE**

**NEW BUSINESS OR ANY ITEMS FOR THE CHAPTER INTEREST: WILL RECEIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR A PLACE TO HOLD ANNUAL PICK-NIC**

**NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION: AUGUST 10 @ CLEARCHANNEL, 7 PM**

**MEETING ADJOURNED: 12:15 PM ACCEPTED BY CARLOS SOSA.**

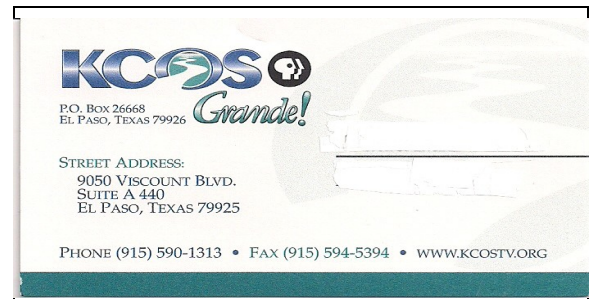
THIS MONTH, AGAIN, YOU WON'T SEE ANY INTERVIEW ON "THE PROFILER" BECAUSE OUR NEWS ARTICLE, WHICH IS VERY INFORMATIVE, TOOK MORE SPACE THAN SPECTED, AND I DIDN'T WANT TO SPLIT IN TWO ISSUES.  
SORRY AND ENJOY IT !!!



# AUGUST PROGRAM

OUR JULY MEETING WENT VERY WELL WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF 13 MEMBERS. IT WAS IN THE PRIVATE ROOM OF THE RESTAURANT "GRAND CHINA BUFFET" AND WE CELEBRATED THE 60 BIRTHDAY OF CARLITOS SOSA, FROM KTSM/KDBC TV.

FOR THE MEETING OF THIS MONTH WE ARE GOING TO HAVE THE PARTICIPATION OF DAVID CORELLA AND/OR ALEX ARZABALA FROM THE LOCAL **ZARCO ELECTRONICS**, WHICH SOME OF THE ENGINEERS ALREADY MET THEM. THEY WILL PROVIDE US WITH LOTS OF INFORMATION. THE MEETING WILL BE AT THE **CLEARCHANNEL** INSTALLATIONS ON TUESDAY THE 10TH. AT 7 PM. ALSO WE ARE GOING TO PRESENT ONE SCHOLARSHIP, AND THE RECIPIENT IS: BENJAMIN ZAMORA.



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Shown first at this year's NAB Show, the MMRP is being sold under both the Nucomm and RF Central brands as an affordable alternative to full-size ENG vans. Blaisdell refused to quote the price, but says that it is below the \$90,000 being charged by Frontline for its low-cost unit.

The MMRP vehicle, based on a Ford Transit truck chassis, has a fuel-efficient four-cylinder engine, shorter wheel-base and a taller cab that holds 27 rack units of gear. The truck has room for two to work inside.

Using Digital COFDM microwave technology, the MMRP vehicle consumes one-third the bandwidth of analog technology and performs better inside buildings, through walls and around corners by using bounced signals. The MMRP has a shorter 16-foot antenna mast and the option of a switchable directional or omnidirectional antenna. The omnidirectional antenna allows the van to take advantage of COFDM's improved ability to grab bounced signals when line-of-sight signals are impossible to establish.

The MMRP can also combine microwave and IP technology with Nucomm's Messenger a device that adapts to the workflow in a news operation that uses both technologies. IP data from the newsgathering vehicle to the studio flows through the existing ENG/SNG infrastructure. The outbound IP traffic enters the Messenger IP Intelligent router and a decision is automatically made on the availability of backhaul interfaces, from full-bandwidth microwave transmission to Wi-Fi, 3G and 4G.

The first MMRP vehicle was sold to KDKA, the CBS affiliate in Pittsburgh. However, Anne Linaberger, the station's news director, says she has not seen the new vehicle yet and it's not yet in use.

The other major builder of ENG vehicles is Wolf Coach. Chris Taylor, its executive in charge of broadcast media, declined to be interviewed for this story.

Consolidation and mergers have occurred across the microwave and truck industries. Not only have Nucomm and RF Central merged into IMT, but Wolf Coach, a longtime builder of mobile vehicles, is now part of L-3 ESSCO, a maker of shipboard and airborne radomes and antennas for military and commercial applications.

"Consolidation is a symptom of the tight economy," says Frontline's Williamson. "At times like these, you'll always see mergers and acquisitions at the top and the bottom of the market."

