



# Memphis/ Shelby County UASI

## *A case study on how an UASI region improves emergency communication to schools, businesses and citizens with ALERT FM.*

The Memphis/ Shelby County UASI region is located in the heart of the Mid-South, right on the banks of the Mississippi River in the New Madrid Seismic Zone (NMSZ). This six (6) county region-consisting of Shelby County, Tenn., Fayette County, Tenn., Tipton County, Tenn., Lauderdale County, Tenn., Crittenden County, Ark., and DeSoto County, Miss.– is the center of transportation and shipping for the United States.

### **PROBLEMS**

The Memphis/ Shelby County UASI region needed a fast, easy, and effective way to communicate with schools, businesses, and citizens before, during, and after catastrophic events. This region had two problems that prompted it to search for a point-to-multipoint communication system.

- The threat of dangerous earthquakes along the NMSZ increases each year. A 6.0 or greater earthquake in this UASI region could result in extensive damage to cities and towns causing thousands of lives and millions of dollars in property to be lost. An earthquake of this magnitude could hinder the transportation and shipping of goods throughout the United States. In an effort to prepare for an earthquake of this size, emergency managers in this region realized they needed a means of communicating with schools, businesses, and citizens after the quake. They needed a way to notify these individuals of the location of food, water, shelter, and medical treatment.
- Recent tornadoes throughout this UASI region helped emergency managers realize that they needed a better means of warning rural area citizens of impending danger. More than 30 citizens were killed and others injured after deadly tornados ripped across the Mississippi Valley in early 2008. Many of these citizens in this area did not receive advance notice of the tornadoes because they were unable to hear the county warning sirens at their homes.

### **SOLUTION**

After researching several communication systems that used various technologies, the UASI region purchased ALERT FM, an FM radio-based personal alert and messaging system. It allows emergency managers to geographically or organizationally target specific messages to specific audiences such as schools, businesses, or citizens. And the receivers are an affordable purchase for anyone.

ALERT FM's redundancy and reliability provided by GSSNet, its digital network of existing FM radio transmitters around the UASI region, ensures that there is always a signal that can be received when other communication systems are disrupted.

As a region, the UASI voted to install ALERT FM. This regional implementation will allow for alerts and messages to be sent to citizens, businesses, and schools in all six (6) counties. Additionally, several counties purchased ALERT FM for their own local alert and messaging needs. These counties are also purchasing receivers to place in schools, hospitals, nursing homes, day cares, and government offices.

**“ALERT FM provides a capability of communicating with the first response community and the citizenry in real time, whether responding to a natural disaster or a man-made critical incident. This equates to saving lives and property when public safety is the priority.”**

**- Director Bob Nations, Jr.**  
Shelby County Office of Preparedness