Pagers, Over 80 Years and Still Reliable

Pagers have been recognized as one of the most effective means of disaster communication available to first responders. While most people probably think of wireless technology as really coming into its own in the 1990s and early 2000's, pagers have been in widespread use since the 1950s. The first paging system, however, was actually invented in 1921. This form of communication has been the standard for first responders for over 80 years and, despite some tremendous and very important advances in communications technology, it remains the most reliable choice.

Today's technology has taken pagers to the next level where flexibility is concerned. For example, one of the strengths of pagers as communications devices is that the design of the system allows an unlimited number of pagers to be sent a signal without the risk of congestion occurring. A radio signal is simply set out from a transmitting tower and all of the pagers within range of that tower received the message. These systems don't have the characteristic weaknesses of cellular telephone networks that end up with those networks becoming overwrought with too many messages.

Today, however, pages can be sent out very selectively. It's common for first responder agencies to divide their members up into groups. This allows, for instance, all of the members of a particular fire station to receive a page when they are needed to respond to a disaster. When the agency needs to page everybody in the region, multiple groups can be paged. Different types of alerts can be sent to different team members depending upon their role in the emergency response. Even though the system that is used to send pages is, relative to many of the technologies in use today, very simple, it's applications can be very clever and very effective in terms of how they are used.

Over the course of more than 80 years, first responder agencies have relied upon pagers. Doctors have relied upon pagers to inform them when their assistance is needed immediately and firefighters have relied upon them to be notified when they are needed but off-duty. Today's pagers have far more advanced features than did the pagers of the past. For example, SMS messaging can be added to pagers to provide more information to the person receiving the alert and various backup services can be employed to increase the efficiency of reporting and other endeavors related to improving emergency response.