



Case Study...

Velcourt Farming

Farming more than 5000 acres of land in Kent and with various locations across the UK, Velcourt are one of the biggest agricultural operations in Europe. One of the toughest challenges facing Velcourt is achieving reliable communication between teams that are often separated by fields and working remotely.

The Challenge

Health & Safety is extremely important to Velcourt. The UK Health & Safety Executive stated that farmers have the most dangerous job in the UK, so when employees are operating complex heavy machinery, and are working in remote areas across the farm, they need the ability to communicate easily and quickly.

Velcourt understand that good communication is key to the safety of remote farm workers. Communication ensures staff are kept informed of potential hazards and are easily able to raise the alarm if an emergency occurs.

As well as responding to emergency situations, communication is essential to efficient day-to-day running of a farm. With up to 12 remote farm workers spread across Velcourt's vast farm in Kent at a time, effective group coordination can save literally dozens of working hours each day. This is vital to ensuring Velcourt's customers (which include household names like **Warburtons**) only receive the best, top quality crops.

Staff at Velcourt Kent had been making use of mobile phones which were difficult to use while operating machinery and only allowed for one-to-one conversations. Network coverage was also poor in various areas.

It was clear that Velcourt needed a group communication solution that was user-friendly, reliable and capable of covering their huge site.

The Solution

After listening to Velcourt's requirements, **Chris Brown (Account Manager for Smye-Rumsby)** recommended 17 Hytera MD655 VHF digital mobile radios to be fitted in Velcourt's various agricultural vehicles. These included combine harvesters, tractors and trucks. An MD655 desktop mobile was also fitted in the farm's office.



Hytera MD655

Senior staff and staff with particularly hazardous roles at Velcourt were offered Hytera SM27W1-A1 bluetooth remote speaker microphones which connect to a vehicle's MD655 mobile radio wirelessly. The SM27W1 wireless speaker mics would give the users the flexibility to be up to 10 metres from their vehicle's MD655 radio and still make radio calls.

To overcome the challenge of radio coverage on Velcourt's huge Kent farm site, a Hytera compact, powerful RD625 repeater was recommended. This would be connected to an antenna located high above the roof of one of the main farm units. Whilst this repeater would cover a vast amount of Velcourt's Kent farm, there were always likely to be certain blackspots with poorer coverage due to the hilly rural landscape. To counteract this, Velcourt could make use of a back-to-back radio channel which allows them to communicate to those in closer proximity when they are out of the repeater's coverage area.



The Result

Velcourt Kent now have a reliable and advanced digital radio solution which is perfect for group communication. The Hytera MD655 radios themselves are very easy to use, meaning farm staff can keep their full attention on operating their vehicles.

Exceptional coverage has also been achieved thanks to Hytera's robust and cost-effective RD625 VHF repeater with communication being achieved "well over 10 miles" from repeater site at the main farm.

As a result, Velcourt's farm staff in Kent have a robust communication system which saves them time, providing a return-on-investment and giving users peace-of-mind from a health and safety standpoint.



The Testimonial

The range and clarity of the radios are excellent, which is crucial: if people don't think the message will reach the intended recipient then they won't be used. The fact that all staff are using the radios on a regular basis demonstrates the effectiveness of the system. So far, we have found the radios to be more reliable than mobile phones in many instances.

The ability to switch from the main network to a radio-to-radio channel adds a reliable back-up option for teams to stay in contact with each other, even if they are in a signal 'black spot.'

Smye-Rumsby have provided an excellent service throughout the process, in particular, allowing us to demo the radios over a couple of weeks to test their effectiveness and range across the whole farm.

Jonathan Darby
Assistant Farm Manager



Jonathan Darby (Jono)