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GE mobile radio— taking the larger view

Strategic planning gave it new status as a growth business; here's a look at how that promise is being realized

"We think of our business in terms of saving people's lives," says Don Bates. "We see it as improving productivity, adding to security for the elderly, conserving scarce resources and strengthening the fight against crime. In general, we view our work as a tremendous aid in improving the quality of life."

Donald S. Bates is general manager of GE's Mobile Radio Products Department. His view of the ultimate social benefits from the department's product line contrasts strongly with the often-held view of mobile radio as squawk boxes in taxicabs.

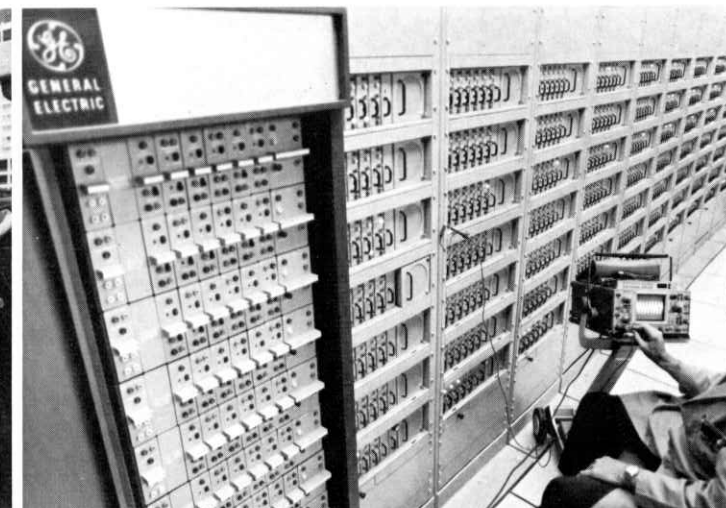
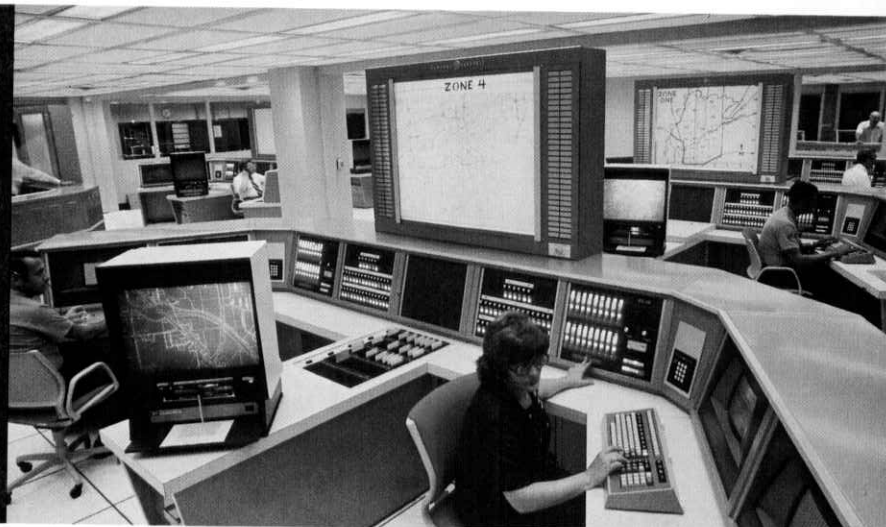
But a talk with Bates at his Lynchburg, Va., headquarters, and a close-up look at MRPD

people and their activities, incline the visitor much more toward the larger than the smaller perspective.

Take the claim of saving lives. A rapidly growing new use of mobile radio is that of emergency medical systems, in which ambulance technicians use two-way radio to talk with hospital emergency rooms while en route to the hospital. It used to be that hospitals had no information on a patient until the ambulance rolled up to the door. Now, with mobile radio and telemetry, they are alerted as to what to expect, can have the proper medicine and blood supplies ready, and can advise the ambulance crew on treating the patient before arrival at the hospital. In some locations, emergency communications systems have tied in air ambulance helicopters and other life support services. It's a use of mobile radio that can make the vital difference to a patient.

How is productivity improved? Bates points to the rule-of-thumb among truck-fleet operators that three trucks with mobile radio to coordinate
(continued next page)

New mobile radio system developed by GE for Indianapolis is today's ultimate in sophisticated community-wide communications networks. It ties together both fire-fighting and police operations. Series of consoles such as those at right provide a flexible centralized control point for police communications. Cops on the beat rely on hands-free personal radios, whose signals are relayed and coordinated by complex GE panels.



their movements can do the work of four without it. "That's just one example of how mobile radio increases efficiency, tightens business operations and reduces costs."

So it goes with other examples cited by MRPD:

- Adding to security for the elderly, some senior citizen communities and apartment complexes are now protecting residents with two-way radio so they can summon instant help.
- As for conserving scarce resources, GE mobile radio contributes in many ways. As a very direct example, the U.S. Forest Service uses GE radio to link its firewatch and firefighting activities. Another customer is the U.S. Park Service. And of course the increased efficiencies of radio-equipped truck fleets greatly reduce their gasoline consumption.
- In Ohio, Cleveland Metro Water personnel checking rain gauges call in by portable radio from roof-tops and other locations, so headquarters can control and balance water levels in sewers to avoid overflow and flooding.
- The fight against crime is a sector of special interest to GE's mobile radio experts today, because it presents opportunities for highly sophisticated installations aimed at improving police force efficiency and speeding policemen's responses to fast-breaking crime situations.

"Anyone who thinks of mobile radio in the limited terms of walkie-talkies and taxicab units," in Bates' view, "should take a look at the system we've developed for the city of Indianapolis. There, portable radio used by policemen on foot or in patrol cars is tied in with computers and CRT (cathode ray tube) visual display equipment to give the city a communications system that their chiefs have called 'the finest in

the world.' Electronic visual displays provide dispatchers a comprehensive picture of where each police unit is stationed at any given moment and the means to determine instantly what policeman or patrol car is closest to a specific situation. Computers handle a wide range of tasks—for example, supplying fast playbacks on license numbers or criminal records—and take over much of the record-keeping and analysis. It adds up to a swift, flexible, powerful ally to the police force." GE's computer-aided concept also helps the Indianapolis Fire Department, whose dispatchers will rely on the computers to speed response time in fire communications. Similar systems employing computer technology are in operation in Toronto, Canada, and Shreveport, La., and are used by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Vancouver, Canada.

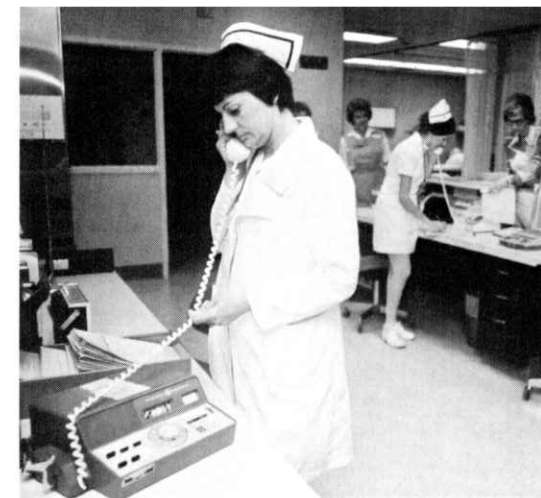
Bates' enthusiasm for mobile radio as a business carries through the organization at Lynchburg and at MRPD's supporting facility in Florence, S.C. It's apparent that today the business is upbeat and that MRPD's 4500 people are fired with a new spirit in their drive to move up on the competition, worldwide.

Evident, too, is an intense dedication to quality. A tour of Lynchburg production facilities explains why one of MRPD's hand-held radios sells in the thousand-dollar range: from the precise cutting of its quartz crystal to the final checkout by elaborate electronic test equipment, an MRPD product is built to perform with sensitivities and endurance far surpassing those in more familiar forms of radio.

What about CB, or citizen's band, radio? Bates points out that it's "a market in which the Housewares and Audio Business Division rather than MRPD is participating. In general, we regard CB as a favorable development, in that it will expose more people and a whole new business generation to the benefits of mobile radio. Its popularity will help swell our future market."

The larger view of the business that is being fostered at Lynchburg includes a broadened market basket of products. Today the GE customer can look to MRPD not only for freshly redesigned mobile, personal and paging portable radios and mobile telephones, but also for the base stations, satellite boosters and command

New look at Lynchburg: GM Don Bates and VP Chris Kastner with mobile radio products.



Mobile radio at work: Alabama's Emergency Medical Services program uses GE units for communications between ambulance en route and hospital's emergency room. Another big user: GE's fleet of appliance repair trucks.



and control centers comprising the building blocks for sophisticated communication systems. Customers are also offered a broad range of performance and complexity, with MRPD's respected MASTR® family of products at the top and its high-quality "Custom MVP" line available to the price-conscious.

Background on the vigor evident at MRPD is supplied by Bates' boss, Christopher T. Kastner, VP and general manager of the Communication Systems Business Division.

"Mobile radio could be offered as a classic case history of the benefits of GE's strategic planning system," Kastner says. "It wasn't until Tom Vanderslice (VP and Group Executive, Special Systems and Products Group) organized an all-out strategic analysis of the business that it was recognized what a solid growth future this industry faces."

On the strength of this analysis, Kastner adds, "we poured in a lot of front-end money—money to strengthen the product line, clean up the factories, improve the productive equipment. In the process we tapped a great reservoir of dor-

mant enthusiasm—this business is full of talented people who really love it and were eager for the chance to show that they could make it grow and prosper."

Communication Systems is taking a larger view of mobile radio in another way: it is going after international markets more vigorously by joining forces with Storno, a respected European producer. Says Kastner: "We've entered into a phased program to purchase 50% of Storno now and 25% more in two years, believing that Storno and GE operations will be able to trade on each other's experience and become much more of a force in mobile radio markets worldwide than we could have separately."

The result of these moves is that GE's mobile radio business is on the march: expanding its sales, investing in intensive product development and improvement of facilities while maintaining a good earnings rate, going after markets more aggressively both in the U.S. and throughout the world and, in short, earning its new recognition as an outstanding growth business for General Electric.

