Press Release

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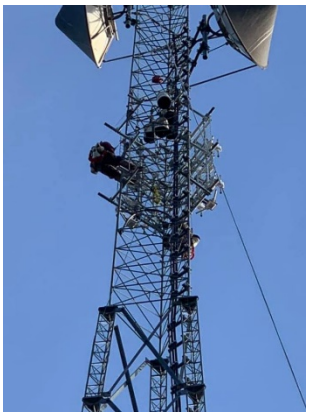
Arkansas PBS and RFS announce collaboration that enhanced state-wide coverage and supported delivery of education resources throughout the pandemic

The project has futureproofed infrastructure in line with ATSC3.0 standards, and assisted the transmission of at-home learning materials as part of the network's Covid response



Meriden (Connecticut), June 10, 2021 – Radio Frequency Systems (RFS), a global designer and manufacturer of total-package solutions for wireless and broadcast infrastructure and Arkansas PBS today announce their collaboration on a $5.18m project which has seen the extension of the network's transmission reach with futureproofed infrastructure, and supported Arkansas PBS's Alternative Method of Education initiative throughout the pandemic.

The project initially aimed to extend Arkansas PBS's coverage from the 76% of the population identified in a 2019 study, to reach the entire state. The plan was to add in-fill sites which were ATSC3.0 ready, enabling the network to deliver the latest in over-the-air transmission, and ensure that everyone, including those in rural areas, was served.

However, following the first case of Covid in Arkansas in March 2020, the urgency of the project accelerated. Arkansas PBS identified that it had a key role to play in the delivery of education as schools closed in April for the remainder of the academic year. It launched an Alternative Method of Education (AMI) initiative which created a state-wide broadcast school environment for students K-12. This was seen as a vital service by the Arkansas Department of Education and needed to reach every student in the state.

Arkansas PBS planned to add five additional sites to fill the coverage gaps, a proposal which was granted Covid Emergency Funding over summer, with the aim to deliver educational resources to the entire state by the end of summer. The proposal was put to tender and RFS was selected to deliver VHF broadcast antennas as well as the transmission lines and RF systems for the project as a result of its excellent technical performance and future-ready solutions.

The lightweight, low wind load design of the RFS VHF panel antennas allowed installation time to be minimized as they were able to be deployed on existing state-owned towers. The antennas also had a custom design to enable easy installation and ensure the smoothest and most efficient roll out possible. Beyond the physical challenges of the installation, RFS also worked with Arkansas PBS to deliver equipment that would serve the broadcaster into the future. This included designing equipment that would allow Arkansas PBS to move to an alternate ATSC3.0 channel in the future or allow for ATSC1.0 / 3.0 simulcast, with the antennas designed with the capacity to accommodate multiple channels. The deployment is presently underway with the first site at Lee Mountain launched in April and the remaining four under construction. The five new sites will have future ready infrastructure and extend Arkansas PBS network coverage to reach 99.5% of the state population.

Andrew Bicknell, CTO at Arkansas PBS commented, “Although for many Covid delayed projects, in this instance the pandemic accelerated our plans to expand coverage. This made it all the more important to ensure we selected a solution that would not only work for the specific problem we were facing with the AMI initiative, but would be flexible enough to serve our future needs. Working with RFS, we definitely feel they helped to deliver the best of both worlds; a speedy roll out with versatile, futureproof infrastructure that will serve us for years to come.”

Nick Wymant, Global Product Line Manager at RFS added, “Arkansas PBS presented us with a challenge that is universal for broadcasters, balancing investment to address immediate needs, while also ensuring it is capable of supporting future plans. The VHF broadband antennas and re-configurable RF systems that we used on this project strike that balance perfectly and it was great to be able to assist in delivering a rapid response that we know will serve the next wave of changes that the broadcast industry is facing.”

About RFS

Radio Frequency Systems (RFS) is a global designer and manufacturer of cable, antenna and tower systems, plus active and passive RF conditioning modules, providing total-package solutions for wireless infrastructure.

RFS serves OEMs, distributors, system integrators, operators and installers in the broadcast, wireless communications, land-mobile and microwave market sectors. As an ISO compliant organization with manufacturing and customer service facilities that span the globe, RFS offers cutting-edge engineering capabilities, superior field support and innovative product design. RFS is a leader in wireless infrastructure.

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