



# Washington State Auditor's Office Performance Audit Description

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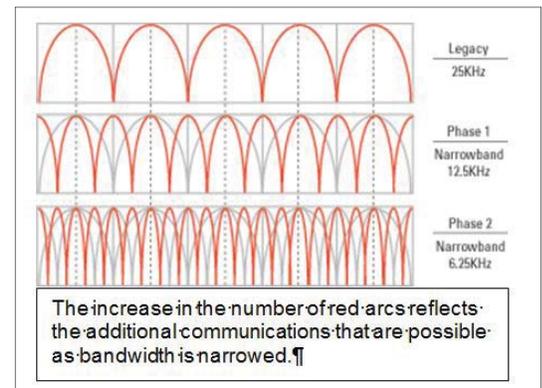
## Washington State Patrol Narrowbanding Project

### Program background

Federal, state and local safety providers, such as police, fire departments and emergency responders, rely on their radios to receive and send messages clearly. Their radio systems, called land mobile radio (LMR) systems, use blocks of radio spectrum called channels.

Historically, LMR systems have used 25 kHz-wide channels, but the number of slots available for these channels is fixed. As the number of safety providers grows, there is more and more competition for this fixed spectrum. However, if users operate on a narrower block of radio waves, there is room for more users – a process called narrowbanding.

To improve agencies' response to public emergencies, the Federal Communications Commission mandated in December 2004 that all LMR users move to narrower and more efficient 12.5 KHz channel bandwidths by 2013. The FCC's intention is to eventually move LMR users to a still-narrower bandwidth in the future (see illustration).



In the summer of 2011, the Washington State Patrol had planned to meet the FCC mandate by soliciting vendor proposals and pricing for a compliant radio and equipment solution. That fall, however, the Patrol entered into an agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice to use DOJ's Integrated Wireless Network. The Patrol expected that this decision would save it \$12 million. To acquire equipment compatible with DOJ's system, the Patrol negotiated a sole-source contract with Motorola; the Legislature allocated \$40.1 million for this project in 2011. The initial contract with Motorola totaled \$26 million plus taxes.

### Scope and objectives

This performance audit will evaluate the State Patrol's contracting processes against leading practices. It will seek to answer the following audit objectives:

- Was the Washington State Patrol effective in its planning to determine the type and amount of equipment and infrastructure needed to cost-effectively meet the FCC mandate, and in its procurement and contracting of that equipment and infrastructure?
- Has the Washington State Patrol been transparent about the outcomes attributable to its planning and contracting for equipment and infrastructure to meet the mandate

**Timing:** We estimate audit results will be released in the fall of 2015.