



HALEY BARBOUR
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
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GOVERNOR BARBOUR DEPLOYS INTEROPERABLE RADIO SYSTEM TO AID OIL SPILL CLEANUP EFFORT

Governor Haley Barbour announced today the distribution of more than 200 radios capable of operating through the Mississippi Wireless Integrated Network to help in the oil spill cleanup along Mississippi's shoreline and barrier islands.

The MSWIN system, which provides interoperable communication for emergency responders, was created under the direction of Governor Barbour after Hurricane Katrina exposed a critical need.

"Immediately after the storm, we were unable to exchange critical information between various law enforcement agencies and other emergency personnel," Governor Barbour said. "The ability to communicate can make a huge difference in our ability to fight the oil from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill now, and in the future, it could mean the difference in our ability to save lives in an emergency."

The MSWIN system allows users to speak through a secure digital radio system operating under the Mississippi Wireless Communications Commission. The Mississippi National Guard, United States Coast Guard and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency will use the hand-held radios to guide cleanup vessels to oil in the water sighted by aircraft.

"This will help streamline response time to any reports of oil from Mississippi National Guard air operations," said MEMA Director and WCC Vice Chairman Mike Womack. "The vessels assigned to a particular area will now have the capability to communicate directly with the resources in the air."

"Interoperability is about breaking down communication barriers," said WCC Chairman Chris Epps. "This is what the system is designed for, and we are proud that we can assist with and improve the response efforts in the oil disaster."

The MSWIN system was established with \$157 million in federal funds and \$57 million in state bond funds. The MSWIN system is currently fully operational in the southern third of the state and is scheduled to be complete throughout the entire state of Mississippi by December of 2011.



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Governor Barbour has asked for nearly \$84 million more in federal funding to expand the MSWIN system's broadband capacity beyond voice-only communications. The upgraded system could include photo and ambulance-to-hospital data transmission abilities.

Col. Lee Smithson, who oversees the Mississippi National Guard's response to the oil spill as commander of Task Force Vigilant Horizon, said the radios will enable National Guard personnel to guide crews to the oil and allow ground crews to document the sightings.

"The radios enable us to fully leverage the capabilities of all supporting agencies. We tie in air, marine and shore activities using one system. It is a game changer in our favor."