

TETRA Industry Group

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The Editor
The Ecologist,
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Dear Sir

Jay Griffiths' feature on TETRA seems to have been based on a single source - a report of little scientific validity. Its author, Barrie Trower, is not recognised by the international scientific community as an expert in this field and cites scant credible evidence for his somewhat apocalyptic assertion on the consequences of the deployment of TETRA radios to the UK police.

Had Ms Griffiths researched more widely, she may have come across examples of the significant contribution TETRA - the technology underpinning the Airwave system - is making to improving the operational effectiveness of police forces and other public safety users in the UK; not to mention the safety of police officers themselves, who previously had little confidence in getting a radio signal, and even less confidence that they could not be overheard by eavesdroppers when they did.

More than 80,000 public safety users - police, ambulance, fire and others - are currently using the nationwide Airwave system. Almost all the network has now been built, and many communities - contrary to the views often portrayed in the media - have welcomed it as a positive benefit. Indeed, its role in providing an essential platform for joined-up emergency communications will be even more important should the fire and ambulance services choose to use it nationally.

In the light of this it is a shame that Ms Griffiths simply repeated many 'old chestnuts' - presumably derived from internet sources - about TETRA, such as the alleged views of Sir David Lane, who has publicly made clear that he was not commenting, and did not feel qualified to comment, on the health issues; the position of Lloyds of London who are unaware of any health concern 'insurance exclusions', and the Police Federation's 'commissioning' of the report by Barrie Trower, which was in fact offered to one of the regional Police Federations and accepted by them as one of many views put forward.

Ms Griffiths also neglected to mention that guidance on use of radio devices in hospitals - which incidentally has recently been relaxed - applies to all radio systems and not just TETRA, and criticised Airwave's capabilities in respect of data when it is in fact delivering in line with its specification.

Given the strong global scientific consensus that there is no evidence of adverse health impact from TETRA based systems that are compliant with international safety guidelines, the article may alarm people needlessly. Such misplaced concern has already been responsible for delaying the introduction of Airwave in some areas of the country where the emergency services have been desperate to replace legacy radio systems that are some considerable way past the end of their useful life. TETRA is delivering, not just in the UK but around the world. For more information, readers should visit our website at www.tetrahealth.info.

Yours sincerely