

Poor communications during Angora Fire lead to changes elsewhere

Publisher's note: *The actual number of structures lost in the Angora Fire was 254 houses.*

By Dana M. Nichols, Stockton Record

SAN ANDREAS – Calaveras and Alpine counties are pioneering a microwave-based communications network for public safety agencies that will speed the work of law officers on their beats and patch the communications gaps that have hindered inter-agency cooperation during major disasters such as the 2007 Angora Fire near Lake Tahoe.

The planned network will cross the crest of the Sierra Nevada in places where there are no phone lines, beam signals into remote canyons that are emergency radio dead spots, and allow officers to run license checks and other queries from terminals in patrol cars.

Eventually, it is expected to serve as a model for a \$50 million network that will link virtually all California and western Nevada emergency agencies from Lake Tahoe north.

The effort is the brain child of Clay Hawkins, a former Calaveras County Sheriff's Department captain who is the county's chief assistant administrative officer, and Robert Levy, the undersheriff in Alpine County. Levy saw first hand what a communications meltdown means when he arrived with five Alpine patrol units to assist evacuations and traffic control at the Angora Fire in June 2007.

"This fire was so bad, everybody threw everything they had at it," Levy said. "We got up there, and there was no

communications.”

Read the whole story