
Have Faith In Wireless... But Have A Backup

by Dave Egenberger

Last month something happened that reminded me that having a good backup plan is a very necessary thing. One of the musical groups that we work with is currently touring the U.S. with two or three other bands. One night in February they were playing in an arena just outside of Denver and things got interesting. Sound check and rehearsals went just fine that afternoon; the wireless microphones and in-ear monitors had no problems. Then suddenly at 7:30 PM, just before show time, all of the wireless systems shut down. No matter what frequency, manufacturer or product, nothing worked – just static and panic. The lead singer who uses our wireless just shrugged and said, “Guess I sing wired tonight”. Many of the other bands had to scramble to come up with wired microphones, monitor alternatives and other ways around their dependence on wireless systems. The show went on, but just barely.

From the best information I could put together, something of a “military” nature was going on at 7:30 PM that night in Colorado but there is no confirmed explanation. While it is unlikely that the same thing will happen to you on a Sunday morning, there are many other things that can go wrong with a wireless system and

it is a good idea to have a backup plan. That plan can include redundant wireless systems on different channels, extra transmitters, wired microphones, wired monitor speakers, or even going acoustic without the PA. Whatever backup plans you go with, here are a few things to keep in mind.

Backup wireless systems should be on different frequencies and in different TV channels. One of the most likely disruptions to a Sunday morning service is a new digital TV transmitter coming on line in your area. If the backups are in the same TV channel as the main, they won’t work when you need them.

Make sure you have all of the microphones and cables for wired backup. Know where you are going to plug them in and how you are going to arrange the cables. Store the equipment in a secure area and check it against the equipment list once in a while. There is nothing like going to the backup to discover that someone has “borrowed” the 30ft XLR cable.

Write down the backup procedure and have a copy with the A/V gear. Include wiring diagrams, alternative wireless channels and contact information for your audio resources. It never hurts to practice, either. A

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good exercise is to pretend that the wireless systems are down and set up the backup systems to make sure that you have all of the necessary equipment and that it all works.

With faith and a good backup plan, the service will go on. After all, the best backup plan is the one you never need to use. Good luck and good Audio. ♦

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