

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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AVFD Improves Communications With Starlink Systems

By Andrew Tickle
AVFD Fire Chief

One of the most important parts of serving our community and assisting neighboring departments is maintaining reliable communication. Unfortunately, our radio system isn't what it once was, and cellular service throughout our district can be unreliable, especially in the rural areas we frequently respond to.

About a year ago, we installed a Starlink system on one of our ambulance to improve communications. It allowed us to utilize Wi-Fi calling and internet connectivity in areas where traditional communication methods were limited. After seeing how successful that

system was, we made it a priority to expand the project throughout the department.

To accomplish this, we applied for grant funding and sought community partnerships to help purchase additional Starlink units, tablets, subscription costs, and tracking software that will allow us to better manage our resources on emergency scenes.

As of today we have expanded from one Starlink unit to seven Starlink-equipped department vehicles. These Starlink systems were generously purchased by Pinnacle Bank, and we are extremely grateful for their investment in public safety. We have also received grant funding that

is helping us complete the remainder of the project.

We are currently finalizing the tablets that will be installed in each apparatus. We wanted to ensure they are fully compatible with the tracking software and other applications we plan to utilize before making that investment. Once those tablets are in place, we'll be able to implement real-time apparatus tracking.

This technology will be a tremendous benefit during larger incidents. Instead of tying up radio traffic trying to determine where a tanker or another apparatus is located, officers will be able to quickly identify resource locations on a map. That means less radio congestion, better

coordination, and faster decision-making on the fireground.

The Starlink systems have now been operational for several months, and they have already proven their value on numerous incidents. They've not only benefited our department but have also provided Wi-Fi connectivity for neighboring agencies operating alongside us during mutual aid responses.

To be responsible stewards of our funding, we will utilize Starlink's Sleep Mode whenever units are not expected to be used for an extended period. This significantly reduces subscription costs while still allowing the systems to remain available for limited communication needs until they are placed back into full operation.

Overall, this communications project has been a tremendous success and represents another step forward in improving



The Arnold Volunteer Fire Department has installed seven Starlink systems on department vehicles to improve communications, made possible through community partnerships and grants. - Courtesy photo

how we serve our community and our neighboring departments. Reliable communication is one of the foundations of effective emergency response, and these upgrades will continue to make our department safer, more efficient, and better prepared for the future.

Finally, I would like to extend a sincere thank you

to Pinnacle Bank for their incredible generosity, as well as the organizations that are provided grant funding to help bring this project to completion. Your support is making a lasting impact on the safety of our firefighters and the communities we proudly serve.

SORC's High Speed Pursuit Paused by Sudden Downpour

After three days of racing and events, a large crowd gathered at the city park last Saturday night to enjoy a barbecue, bid on some great items, and hear results from the 26th Annual Sandhills Open Road Challenge. After SORC Board member Skip Hecox welcomed the crowd, Becky Dailey stepped up to the mic to thank all the volunteers.

"It wasn't a perfect day, and it was a long day for them. It wouldn't happen without them," said Dailey, referring to the late start to Saturday morning's open road challenge from Arnold to Dunning and back again.

That morning, the 155 drivers and their navigators had a long delay, as they waited for a rain storm to pass. A notification came in at 10:20 a.m. to be ready for an 11:00 a.m. start to rally up north and race back. The rally required a top speed of 65 mph, with no passing. The drivers were timed on the way back.

"Mother Nature didn't cooperate very well, but we made it work," said SORC President Clay Mohr. "The scary part was the lightning. There was no way we wanted to put our course workers out in that. The drivers were really understanding. They love coming to Arnold, and if they get to race, that's just gravy. Countless racers say this is the only race where they feel welcome. They basically say the same thing: At other races, no one cares if you're there or not. This isn't just a race - it's an event."



Up at Dunning, cars entered in Saturday morning's road race were redirected to dryer streets due to the school's parking lot being a muddy mess after a rainstorm passed through. - Linda Teahon photo



Luke Coleman's steer was purchased by NP Crop Solutions, Ned & Jenny Pelster and Arnold Insurance Agency. Luke is the son of Aaron and Sara Coleman.



Delanie Weinman's steer was purchased by Nansel's Best Service and Pinnacle Bank Arnold. Delanie is the daughter of Cam and Katie Weinman.

Arnold Businesses Support 4-Hers to Feed Students Local Beef

Since 2022, local businesses and Arnold Public Schools have partnered to bring high-quality beef from the Custer County Fair straight to school lunches. This incredible joint venture continues to grow strong, supporting our hardworking local producers and fair youth while fueling our students with top-tier, locally raised nutrition.

A big thank you to the local businesses stepping up to support our youth and school lunch program this year: Luke Coleman's steer was purchased by NP Crop Solutions, Ned and Jenny Pelster, and Arnold Insurance Agency. Delanie Weinman's steer was purchased by Nansel's Best Service and Pinnacle Bank Arnold. South Loup 4-H results inside!