

Milwaukee company's offer means warning system will remain in place

Village of Saukville officials learned Tuesday that the promise of upgraded warning sirens was more than just empty words.

With a federal requirement to upgrade all radio-controlled tornado sirens approaching, officials anticipated a heated community debate on whether the warning system had grown outdated and was not worth the cost of the improvements.

One estimate placed the cost of updating the sirens at \$4,000 or more if control boards needed to be replaced.

The public debate on the work was cut short at a Village Board meeting in February, however, when a representative of the Milwaukee company American Signal Corporation offered to make the needed upgrades at little or no cost to the village.

Officials were delighted with the offer, but waited for final confirmation from the company.

That reassurance came when Emergency Management Director Jack Morrison received a letter from the company detailing what it was willing to do for the village.

Ernie Companion, regional sales manager for American Signal, confirmed that the company would upgrade the village's five existing sirens to narrow-band capable radios and install new command and control centers.

The village will have to provide a computer to control the system. Officials said they have outdated equipment in storage that would be able to handle that task.

"There will be no cost to the Village of Saukville for this action," Companion said as the bottom line in his letter.

The offer was recommended by the Public Safety Committee and unanimously approved by trustees.

Morrison said the new equipment is expected to be installed in fall, "after the storm season."

After the offer was finalized, even Morrison was satisfied.

He originally questioned whether the sirens represented old technology that have been superceded by dedicated weather radios and Internet alerts.

"After seeing all the destruction that happened with the storms that hit the South last week, I now believe we should do whatever we can to keep our residents safe," Morrison said.