

Radio System Interoperability Committee

Meeting Notes – March 21, 2003

Skip Thomas opened the meeting with an opportunity for public comment. None was offered. The notes of the October 22, 2002 meeting were reviewed and accepted.

Report on the radio bids: Captain Scott Martin, State Police, reported that an order for 761 radios with chargers was placed with Utility Communications of Hamden on March 12, 2003. This will use essentially all of the \$700,000 available from the Office of Policy and Management and the Office of Emergency Management. The original intent had been to purchase 532 radios, but the low bid price permitted purchasing an extra 229 radios. The radios are expected to be shipped from Motorola to State Police on April 2, 2003. They will be engraved, but will require several days to program and inventory.

The committee turned to a discussion of how to best utilize the extra radios. The original plan was to issue one to each of 90 organized police departments, 305 fire districts, and 122 EMS organizations, plus 15 spare radios for service purposes. Mike Stemmler suggested bumping up the spares to 30, and prepositioning “kits” of radios around the state so they could be made immediately available at disaster scenes. Chief Jakubson asked which kinds of government officials would get radios. Skip Thomas replied that the radios are restricted to first responder personnel. John Wiltse pointed out that the 21 decontamination trailers can each hold 6 radios in charging racks, and will be positioned around the state. Chief Jakubson questioned whether radios stored in these trailers would be properly maintained, and how readily available they would be. Lt. Col. Carpenter opposed the trailer location for the same reason. John Wiltse replied that he is confident that the chiefs to whom trailers are assigned will properly maintain the radios. He noted that the radios don't have to actually be in the trailers, just available for use with them.

Skip Thomas said that the larger cities need more radios to give 24-7 coverage and because of the higher number of command staff in such police and fire departments. Chief Varney would like radios assigned to the 36 state fire coordinators, who handle the fireside of large scale regional fire situations. George Carbonnell would like 15 – 20 radios for DOT. This would put them up right away, and help them coordinate traffic situations around disaster scenes. John Wiltse said that state agencies should not get radios out of this round. He recommended maximizing radios to municipalities, with extras going to larger jurisdictions. They could distribute the extra radios as they see fit. State agencies can buy their own radios off the contract. Eric Fine stated that the Bridgeport Fire Department objected to getting only three radios. He pointed out that many small jurisdictions have multiple fire districts, and thus will get more radios than Bridgeport.

Mike Stemmler said that whatever the distribution of the radios, they should be limited to scene commanders. If it gets beyond that, there is great potential for extraneous conversation. The system has limited capacity, and a big potential for misuse. Bob DiBella mentioned that 18 municipalities have 800 Mhz systems, which may mitigate their need for additional radios. Skip Thomas said that municipalities depend upon key state agencies to render aid in times of emergency. Those agencies need mutual aid radios. He reminded the committee of its role. We are developing recommendations, which OPM under secretary Brian Mattiello will take to the commissioners and the Governor. Jim Mona pointed out that DOT operates 24-7 statewide and controls access to disaster scenes. It is important that DOT be able to communicate with incident commanders to properly route traffic into and out of the scene efficiently. Chief Varney said the statewide fire coordinators would definitely want to talk to DOT. DOT would be a priority agency for them. Captain Martin said he also favored giving radios to DOT, and also said that if a spare stock of radios is kept at State Police, they will be properly maintained and could be quickly helicoptered to any state location.

Lt. Col. Carpenter reminded the committee that the primary goal was to get mutual aid radios to the municipalities. Skip Thomas recommended keeping DOT in the mix, pointing out that 90% or more of the radios were going to municipalities. John Wiltse said that it is essential to get all EMS providers on the system. Gordon Shand will check out the number of radios needed to cover all municipalities. The committee settled on the following allocation plan:

90	police departments}	
305	fire districts}	(original plan)
122	EMS providers}	
30	spares for service purposes}	
36	state fire coordinators	
15	DOT.	

The remaining 163 will remain unallocated for now, and will be subject to further discussion at the next meeting.

Moving on to the next steps in issuing the radios, Mike Stemmler said that licensing would be taken care of by State Police. On the issue of training, he said that we need to reach out to any agencies with their own ICALL/ITAC capability and invite them to the training so that they will cause no conflict in the system. They must be a part of the system. Bob DiBella said it is a condition of their 800Mhz licenses that they obey FCC rules for ICALL/ITAC, or their licenses can be revoked. Skip Thomas said that training needs to be by regions and be held days and evenings. He agreed that current 800 Mhz users need to be part of the training. He suggested the training sessions be held April 21st to the 25th. The training group will meet directly after this meeting to make plans.

The next item of discussion was dispatch centers and control stations. Skip Thomas said that these are our next priority. More money is on the way from the federal government, and OPM will provide any required match. Chief Jakubson said that the mutual aid channels could eventually serve as a common channel interface for all police agencies down to the patrol car level. He would like to see this issue be a future consideration for this committee.

Eric Fine reported that six decontamination trailers have been received and deployed. Two more are on the way. Training has been done for the first ten recipient agencies. The program is going well.

The next meeting will be held April 15, 2003 at 1:00 pm at State Police headquarters in Middletown.