

Communications Interoperability Working Group
12 December 2003
Minutes

Meeting was called to order at 1305. There were no Public Comments. The 18 November 2003 meeting minutes were reviewed. A motion to accept the minutes was made, seconded and unanimously passed.

OLD BUSINESS:

A status of the 800 MHz control station training was provided by LT Wayne Rioux. It was reported that all went well. Ms Rosemary Salerno reported that CTDHS is in the process of reviewing the 800 MHz handheld radio distribution. The review has several purposes. One is to be able to keep track of where the radios are located; who has them and why. Another is to determine who still needs the radios and to schedule future training on the operation of the radios. All thought the review a good idea particularly with the recent elections and possible change in municipal leadership.

Mr. Jim Mona (CONNDOT) provided a brief and a printed summary (attached) of the CONNDOT radio tower upgrade needs/plans. CONNDOT is requesting funding assistance from the Interoperable Communications working group process; i.e. Statewide Homeland Security Program (SHSP) funds. A discussion ensued centered around the need to develop a CONNDOT Communications Plan regardless of the funding source. The plan would then be submitted to the Governor/legislature seeking State funding. The use of federal grant funds could also be considered but in a parallel path. The multi-use of the towers is thought to be key to any plan developed.

NEW BUSINESS:

LT Rioux raised the issue of providing an 800 MHz control station or radio to the Coast Guard. The idea would be to provide the CG Group/Marine Safety Office Long Island Sound (CG GRU/MSOLIS) command center located in New Haven, CT with the ability to be on the 800 MHz command and control system (I-CALL/TAC) the reasoning was that the State Police routinely work with the CG on all types of matters, including port security related to homeland security. Everybody thought the idea was good. A rather lengthy discussion ensued about the legitimacy of providing equipment procured with federal grant money to a federal agency. The point was raised that all of the 800 MHz radios (handheld and control stations) remain the property of the Department of Public Safety. Thus, storing (locating) either a handheld radio or control station in the GRU/MSO LIS command center would not violate any possible law or policy. The issue was tabled so that CTDHS could check with the federal Department of Homeland Security Office of Domestic Preparedness on the "legality" of meeting LT Rioux's idea. If permission is obtained, the State Police will provide an 800 MHz control Station or radio to the Coast Guard.

A new draft of the Communications Plan was presented. There was a discussion about some of the new edits. All agreed that each of the bullets needed to be concise and be expressed in non-technical language keeping in mind that the document needs to be understood by legislators and other non-technical people. All were asked to review the new draft and get any comments/recommended changes to Mr. George Pohorilak ASAP but no later than 5 January 2004. A revised new draft would then be e-mailed to the committee NLT 23 January 2004 to be discussed at the next Interoperable Communications workgroup meeting scheduled for 27 January 2004.

Chief Doug Whalen, Bradley Airfield Fire Department, provided background on a developing strategic communications plan for Bradley and the surrounding towns. The Plan also would include the other State airports. The need for a comprehensive Plan is based on repeatedly documented failures of the current mutual assistance communications system in the area. The present three tiered system (airport, regional and State) relies upon old systems whose reliability is questionable. The goal would be to have one system that would be accessible to locals, on a regional scale and statewide as necessary. Chief Whalen mentioned that a possible solution would be to expand the 800 MHz system. There was discussion about the lack of available 800 MHz frequencies possibly some 806 MHz channels that have been reported "available". Mr. Skip Thomas provided some background on the missed opportunity back in the 1980s for the State to obtain and deploy a statewide 800 MHz communications system. Mr. Mona requested that the Bradley issue be added to the Communications Plan. Chief Mike Varney brought to the attention of the committee that the issue of creating a "one radio for all" system was already in the Communications Plan, not specifically aimed at Bradley but statewide.

There was a short discussion on the need to have the Department of Corrections (DOC) linked to the 800 MHz I-CALL/TAC system. DOC facilities rely upon local fire departments for fire services and the State Police for additional support. As reported at the November meeting, DOC already has 800 MHz radios and will work with the State Police on programming the DOC 800 MHz radios with the I-CALL/TAC frequencies.

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting of the Interoperability Communications working group will be held at 1300 on Tuesday 27 January 2004 at DPSHQ. Members are reminded to review the draft Communications Plan document and submit comments/recommended changes to George Pohorilak NLT COB Friday 23 January 2004.

The meeting adjourned at 1420.