

Communications Interoperability Working Group
07 December 2004
Minutes

WELCOME, PUBLIC COMMENT and REVIEW OF MINUTES:

Meeting was called to order at 1306 by the Chair. The following individuals were present: Skip Thomas (OPM), Bob DiBella (Glastonbury EMD), Chuck Beck (OEM), Keith Victor (W. Hartford/CREPC), Steve Brown (CONNDOT), George Carbonell (CONNDOT), Jerry Zarwanski (OSET), Gordon Shand (DPH), John Gustafson (CMED New Haven), Mike Varney (DOIT/CFCA), Phil Halibozek (CSP), Mike Stemmler (CSP), Joan Carrasquillo (OSET), George Pohorilak (OSET), Mark Colangelo (DPS), Paul Jakubson (CPCA), Joseph Murray (Hamden PD/MECCA), Bernie O'Donnell (DOIT), Rosemary Salerno (CTDHS), LT Wayne Sinclair (DMV). The 09 November 2004 minutes were reviewed, corrections made to the attendee list, voted on and approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. Radio Inventory: Rosemary Salerno stated that all of the radios distributed to the LE community had been verified and verification of the fire community has improved but moving slowly. No mention was made of the EMS or EMD communities. There was a brief discussion on the need to procure and distribute a spare battery for the I-CALL/TAC radios. It was stated that money was identified out of the FY 04 SHSP grant for to meet this need.

B. Control Station Installation: Mike Stemmler provided an update on the installation of the 800 MHz control stations. He reported that there were only 6 more control stations to install. He mentioned that Wethersfield had thus far not responded to requests to schedule the installation visit. Skip Thomas stated he would contact town leaders.

C. Radio Testing and Training: Keith Victor reported that the CREPC November test of the I-CALL/TAC system was cancelled. He also stated that the I-CALL/TAC system had been activated and used during the tanker truck accident and gasoline spill in Farmington. It was also reported that Clinton had used the I-CALL/TAC system due to telephone lines being cut; the decontamination trailer and radio cache was used. The I-CALL/TAC system was used for a drill conducted in lower Fairfield County which included participants from adjoining New York communities. The system was used during USAR training on 4 & 5 December. There was no report on the issue raised at the November meeting about who energized repeaters during the November CREPC drill.

D. Technical Sub-Committee Update: Mike Varney provided a draft Tactical Emergency Communications Interoperable Plan. The Plan deals with the establishment of a VTAC/UTAC statewide system using existing frequencies and black box technology. There was a lengthy discussion on whether or not current license holders would need to relinquish their frequencies. The collective answer was no but that the current holders would have to be educated on possible interference issues. Once the VTAC/UTAC plan

is implemented, current license holders/users will have to go to a secondary frequency if the VTAC/UTAC is activated in their area. There was some discussion about the Nextel migration plan which could have an impact on both the I-CALL/TAC frequencies and the 800 MHz frequencies being considered as part of the VTAC/UTAC system. Regions 8 and 19 will be consulted on the role out of the Nextel migration time table. It was reported that the I-CALL/TAC frequencies would be the last of the 800 MHz frequencies to be moved.

Mike Varney re-emphasized that the VTAC/UTAC system would be built around existing systems throughout the State and would be low wattage, non-repeater grouped frequencies. The “keeper” of the regional VTAC/UTAC system would fall to whoever had the most robust capability in a particular region. As no follow-on discussion about selecting an area of the state to conduct a pilot project, the Southeast corner of the State could serve as the pilot in conjunction with TOPOFF 3 if we can get the VTAC/UTAC in place by March.

E. Telecommunications Accomplishments Report: Gordon Shand presented a draft document that details the accomplishments of the interoperable communications workgroup. The intent is to publish the document in various association newsletters (CPCA, CFPC, CCM, etc). There was also discussion about using the document as well as examples of the equipment procured to put together a “dog and pony show” to present and various forums (CBIA, CCM conference, Media Days at the Legislature, EMS conference, etc.). There was discussion about using the CSP capability to cross-patch radios as a demonstration. There was also discussion about the potential to have the new DEMHS Commissioner conduct an “editorial board” as a means of getting the word out to the public on what has been put into place within the State.

Rentschler Stadium Radio Request: The Chair reported that Captain Masek (CSP) resubmitted the request for SHSP funding for the radio system needed for Rentschler Field. His attempt to obtain a different grant was unsuccessful. Captain Masek will submit a request to the workgroup in writing.

Municipal 800 MHz Repeater Operators: Jerry Zarwanski reported that a meeting had been held on 12/6 with the municipalities (except Meriden) who have their own 800 MHz repeaters. Information on the proper use of their systems relative to the statewide system was provided. All committed to work with the DPS Message Center on repeater activation.

Common Language Protocol: Several of the members had reviewed the FEMA Communications course discussed at the last meeting. The consensus was that the course was too general and did not provide the glossary desired. John Gustafson will do some research starting with the recently published NIMS and NPR documents, the IACP and others.

Communications Project Requests: The need to create a tool to evaluate and score local/regional/state proposals to improve communications interoperability using the SHSP grants was discussed again. Based on the discussion on the VTAC/UTAC system, it was decided that any radios bought by a municipality with SHSP funds would have to carry the VTAC/UTAC frequencies in addition to any frequencies desired/needed by that municipality. The SHSP funds could also be used for the reprogramming of existing radios. It was also decided that CT OEM would apply for and hold the licenses for the VTAC/UTAC system. Estimated cost will be \$4,900.00. There was little to no discussion on the draft decision making document/tool presented at the last meeting.

Naugatuck Valley Community College: The NVCC request for two I-CALL/TAC radios for their Public Safety Department was discussed again as was the need to identify other public safety entities throughout the State that may have not been accounted for yet. It was mentioned that about a year ago, CTDHS had agreed to the need and committed to identifying all such entities via a CSP or POST database. All agreed that since NVCC did have sworn officers, they were entitled to one I-CALL/TAC radio once the training was received. It was stated that a training session was going to be conducted in the Danbury area. The training will be conducted by CSP for the CAP, Chief State Attorney, the Capitol Police, and the Department of Corrections. NVCC will be invited.

ICTAP: Mike Varney provided an update on the interoperability communications support service provided through ODP. The Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP) visited New Haven as one of the Urban Area Security Initiative cities. (New Haven and its 6 contiguous surrounding towns is a UASI city.) The ICTAP process will involve a technical inventory of communications equipment, a current capability assessment and a needs projection. The workgroup still would like the ICTAP review to encompass the State. All were reminded that approximately \$2M was earmarked out of the FY 04 SHSP grant for statewide interoperable communications projects

DEMHS: The Chair stated that search to fill the DEMHS Commissioner position was ongoing. The new Department will become official on 01 January 2005 yet neither an organizational diagram nor a location has been decided upon. The next meeting of the DEMHS Coordinating Council is slated for 16 December 2004 at the CSA facility in Rocky Hill.

NEW BUSINESS:

FY05 SHSP Grant: There was some discussion about the FY 05 Homeland Security Grant. The discussion centered on the cuts compared to the FY 04 grant. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the FY 05 grant does not provide any money to the New Haven UASI. It was also stated that the City of Stamford had received a \$500K grant for communications interoperability direct from the federal government.

Hartford Courant Article: A copy of an article (commentary) critical of the lack of communications interoperability that appeared in the 6 December 2004 Hartford Courant was distributed. The content of the article served as an example of why it is necessary to get the word out about the accomplishments of the interoperable communications workgroup.

The next meeting for the Communications Interoperability Workgroup was set for 1300 Tuesday 11 January 2005 at the CONNDOT facility in Rocky Hill. The meeting was adjourned at 1451.