

Communications Interoperability Working Group
08 February 2005
Minutes

WELCOME, PUBLIC COMMENT and REVIEW OF MINUTES:

The meeting was called to order at 1310 by the Chair. The following individuals were present: Skip Thomas (DEMHS), Wayne Sandford (DEMHS), Bob DiBella (Glastonbury EMD/DEMHS), Chuck Beck (DEMHS), Roy Piper (DEMHS), Keith Victor (W. Hartford/CREPC), Chris Marvin (Manchester 8th Fire District/CREPC), Steve Brown (CONNDOT), George Carbonell (CONNDOT), George Pohorilak (OSET) Jerry Zarwanski (OSET), Gordon Shand (DPH), John Gustafson (CMED New Haven), Mike Stemmler (CSP), Phil Halibozek (CSP), Joseph Murray (Hamden PD/MECCA), Bernie O'Donnell (DOIT), Jeff Otto (QVEC), Phil Mikan (USCG), Wayne Sinclair (DMV), Rosemary Salerno (DPS). Additionally, guests from ODP/ICTAP were present: Doug Harder and Leo Guilmette. The 11 January 2005 minutes were reviewed, voted on and approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. Radio Inventory: Rosemary Salerno reported that there were approximately 80 I-CALL/TAC radios that needed to be distributed to EMS/EMD people once they completed the training. Three training sessions have been planned: one in Feb and two in March.

B. Control Station Installation: Mike Stemmler reported that there are still 6 more control stations to be installed. He is waiting responses from the 6 on their desired training dates.

There was a discussion about the need for a refresher course on the control stations. A potential solution discussed was to post the Control Station power point presentation on the OEM/DEMHS web site as well as to e-mail the presentation to all of the PSAPs. Bob DiBella is to provide the power point presentation to Chuck Beck and Mike Stemmler who will get it posted and bang it out to the PSAPs respectively.

Two other issues related to the 800 MHz I-CALL/TAC control stations were discussed.

- On the January 20, 2005 as the result of an operation between the CSP Trooper 1 and Bristol PD, it was discovered that the Bristol control station's antenna had been disconnected.
- It has been discovered that municipalities that have received the control stations have been reprogramming the channels which is counter to establishing a standard throughout the State.

The ensuing discussion included possible solutions to such issues. One solution was to provide a policy statement to all PSAPs and municipalities that have the 800 MHz control station that would cover when the radios should be on and monitored (7x24x365) and how the channels should be programmed. It was recommended that a letter be drafted to all fire departments, police departments, CMEDs and PSAPs. The content of the letter would remind all of their obligations as well as the fact that the control stations are

actually the property of the State. A yearly verification of the control stations was discussed. Mike Stemmler is to provide information to Chuck Beck who will draft the letter to be considered by the committee.

C. Radio Testing and Training: Keith Victor reported that the CREPC January 20th test of the I-CALL/TAC system was held. It was discovered that the Granby control station was inoperable. All were reminded that the radios are covered under a warranty. The number to call DPS's network control to report problems is etched into the face of the radio. Jeff Otto reported that the NE region of CT will begin monthly testing of the I-CALL/TAC system in a month or so. He also reported that there have been several instances where the I-CALL/TAC system has been used to provide interoperable communications for a real incident. There was further discussion about contacting the DPS message center to ask for the I-CALL repeater to be energized to conduct a role call. All deemed it to be a good idea with the caveat that there could be heterodyne issues if multiple repeaters are energized simultaneously.

D. Technical Sub-Committee Update: George Carbonell stated the draft parameters/specifications for the Tactical Emergency Communications Interoperable Plan (CTGP) "black box" were approximately 50% complete. He anticipated that the specs would be completed in 2 to 3 weeks. He also reported that the license for the 800 MHz frequency has been approved and the licenses for the other frequencies (VHF/UHF) are expected soon. There was discussion on the need to get the word out about the CTGP frequencies to the local/municipal first responders so that they can reprogram their existing radios to include the CTGP frequencies. Possible solutions were discussed.

The need to develop an SOP and distribute widely was also discussed. The SOP would cover among other issues such things as the need for all to program all 5 channels into the radio and the limits on power out. Another issue that would need to be addressed is what to do if the designated CTGP frequency interfered with an established working frequency. The SOP would also request that actual uses of the CTGP system (as well as the I-CALL/TAC system) be reported to the interoperable committee.

An article concerning Nevada's interoperable communications dilemma was discussed. The crux of the article was that if a State did not comply with the P 25 standards when making communications purchases, that State might not be eligible for future HLS grants. The visitors from ICTAP provided an excellent dissertation on what P 25 was and what it was not what it affected and what it did not. Bottom-line is that P 25 applies only to common air interface for new systems (digital) and is aimed primarily at use of the 700 MHz which is several years away.

The issue of the CTGP system being limited to low wattage, non-repeater grouped frequencies was raised and discussed again as was the inclusion of low band radios. Nothing new was introduced. By the end of the discussion consensus was to press on with the CTGP plan as is. Adding repeaters and low band frequencies to the system could/would be revisited and a later date.

E. Telecommunications Accomplishments Report: Gordon Shand discussed the draft document that details the accomplishments of the interoperable communications workgroup. He received comments from two members of the workgroup related to the draft he distributed. Gordon will try to put the finishing touches on the article. The goal is to get the article in final form and present it to the EMHSCC at the March 2005 meeting.

Rentschler Stadium Radio Request: A position paper was presented. The cost for the equipment needed to upgrade the communications suite at the stadium has been reduced to \$33,993.00. Acquiring and installing the equipment would give the stadium the same capability as the State EOC. It would also free-up the CSP mobile communications truck during events at Rentschler. The committee voted to support the communications needs of the stadium.

Common Language Protocol: John Gustafson reported that the common language protocol issue is a work in progress. He provided a Best Practices draft for review and asked for comments.

UASI and ICTAP: A question was raised about when the UASI towns could expect the equipment ordered through the FY 04 HSGP and UASI grants. Rosemary Salerno explained that the State had not received the FY 2004 grant yet and the reason why. The FY 2004 HSGP/UASI grant was placed on hold with the feds due to the pending deactivation of CTDHS and OEM and the activation of DEMHS. In January 2005, the DEMHS officially applied for the FY 2004 HSGP/UASI grant. Approval is expected in late February. Once the grant is approved, funds can be distributed to the municipalities.

ODP has approved the Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP) to service all of CT as requested by a letter jointly signed by UASI and the former CTDHS. The ICTAP folks requested a new letter of request be sent from the DEMHS. Chuck Beck will draft for the Commissioner's signature. Representatives from ICTAP will make every effort to attend all interoperable communications workgroup meetings.

DEMHS: The Chair provided a brief update on the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS). Work continues on the organizational diagram and physical location of the new Department. A new Division of Finance and Administration has been added. There were 69 applicants for the Division Chief position. It was stated that the next meeting of the DEMHS Coordinating Council is Thursday 10 February 2005 at the Chief State's Attorney facility in Rocky Hill.

NEW BUSINESS:

FY05 SHSP Grant: Rosemary Salerno provided a brief update on the FY 05 Homeland Security Grant. The DEMHS staff has held meetings of a workgroup charged with creating the FY 05 Initial Strategy Implementation Plan (ISIP) which is basically the spend plan. The distribution formulae have been completed and will be presented to the EMHS Coordinating Council for approval on 10 February 2005. New MOA will be

drafted and distributed to the 169 municipalities and two tribal nations soon. Informational meetings on the FY 2005 HSGP will be held regionally in the coming months. The grant performance period for the FY 05 HSGP will run concurrently with the performance period of the FY 04 HSGP. There was a question about the stipends for volunteers. It was reported that the stipend issue is under review by the ISIP workgroup.

Other New Business:

TOPOFF 3 was discussed. There are three basic “lanes” that people will fall into relative to TOIPOFF 3: Controllers, Players, and Real World.

It was recommended that somebody from the workgroup or the DEMHS needs to reach out to Manchester on the CTGP issue.

The FCC Region 19 meeting is being held in CT the week of 07 March 2005.

Next Meeting: The next meeting for the Communications Interoperability Workgroup was set for **1300 Tuesday, March 15, 2005** at the CONNDOT facility in Rocky Hill. The meeting was adjourned at 1520.