

**Communications Interoperability Working Group**  
**10 May 2005**  
**Minutes**

**WELCOME, PUBLIC COMMENT and REVIEW OF MINUTES:**

The meeting was called to order at 1306 by the Chair, Mike Varney. The following individuals were present: Chuck Beck (DEMHS), George Carbone II (CONNDOT), Joan Carrasquillo (OSET), Bob DiBella (Glastonbury EMD/DEMHS), John Gustafson (CMED NH), Chris Marvin (Manchester/CREPC), Bob Mueller (New Haven PD), Chris Nolan (CSP), Jeff Otto (QVEC), George Pohorilak (OSET), Rosemary Salerno (DPS), Gordon Shand (DPH), Mike Stemmler (CSP), Richard Tsou (New Haven/UASI), Matt Valteau (CSP/CAP), Mike Varney (DOIT/CFCA), Keith Victor (W. Hartford/CREPC), Jerry Zarwanski (OSET). Additionally, guests from ODP/ICTAP (Doug Harder) and Nextel (Jacqueline Gallus) were present.

There were no public comments.

The 12 April 2005 minutes were reviewed, voted on and approved.

**REPORT FROM WORKING GROUPS:**

A. Technical Committee The STOCS document was presented to the Emergency Management & Homeland Security Coordinating Council (EMHSCC) on 14 April 2005 and received conceptual approval. The STOCS document will need to be reformatted in order to be part of the Tactical Interoperability Communications (TIC) Plan required by ODP. Draft specifications to the STOC "black box" have been provided to DOIT. DOIT is in the process of converting the specifications into a Request For Information (RFI). Discussion turned to the need for Interstate Coordination of ITAC Channels. The Technical Sub-Committee provided a summary of an "interference" problem that occurred on 4 & 5 April in the north central part of CT. The Mount Tom repeater was energized on I-TAC-4 for an Air Drop Fire Suppression Exercise in south central Massachusetts. The problem is multifaceted. In this particular case, the I-TAC-4 channel used is the secondary channel in MA but the primary channel for adjoining Hartford County. The repeater was left on even when the exercise was not being conducted. In CT, all I-TAC repeaters are energized by a central control point; DPS Message Center. MA does not have a central control point allowing anybody with a handheld radio with a key pad to activate a repeater. The power output of the Mount Tom repeater is another issue. The incident highlighted the need for better coordination on use of the I-CALL/TAC system among boarding States. The Technical Sub-Committee provided recommendations to be presented to DEMHS and DPS to pursue in order to correct the problems. OSET will be participating in an FCC Region 8 meeting on 12 May and a Region 19 meeting on 14 June and will raise the issue at both.

B. Telecommunications Accomplishments Report. The final draft of the Telecommunications Accomplishment Report was presented to the EMHSCC 14 April 2005 and approval. The Report has been given to Commissioner Thomas to provide to the Governor and to get published in appropriate new outlets. During this discussion it was pointed out that the workgroup may need to rethink the nomenclature used in the VTAC/UTAC interoperable system. State Tactical On-scene Channel System (STOCS) has been used as the name of the system yet the grouped frequencies are identified as Connecticut Group (CTGP1 through 5). STOCS is an accurate description of the purpose of the system. Using CTGP as channel designation has the potential to be adopted nationwide; (MAGP, NYGP, RIGP, etc).

C. Governance Workgroup Update. It was reported that the Governance sub-committee met and outlined steps that need to be taken relative to meeting federal requirements for a "State Executive Interoperability Committee. Generally the Interoperable Workgroup meets the need. However some additional steps should probably be taken

- Formalizing the Mission (establish a charter replete with an ethics clause)

- Formalizing the name of the workgroup

- Establishing membership requirements/criteria

- Establishing an "executive group" (voting members vs. public participants)

- Defining/designating alternates to the "voting members".

- Defining a quorum

- Establishing sub-committees (Governance, Technical, Operations, Training)

The Governance sub-committee will notify all members of the next meeting. The goal will be to draft a document of the next Interoperable Communications Workgroup meeting in June.

### **INTEROPERABILITY USAGE DURING PREVIOUS MONTH:**

It was reported that the ICALL-TAC system was activated and successfully used during a 54 acre forest fire in the Brooklyn/Hampton/Canterbury area. It was also reported that an attempt to use the I-CALL/TAC system during the mill fire in Plainfield was not as successful due to a coverage problem. Fire units reporting in from across municipal and even State lines reverted to using a cache of UHF radios.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

#### A. Radio Inventory:

A handout was provided that included a Radio Registration form as well as spreadsheet that showed who had not picked-up/been trained on the 800 MHz handheld radio. The registration form is intended to be used annually to maintain a tracking system for radios as well as to keep users informed of some of the guidelines. Assistance was requested of the members of the workgroup to reduce the list of radios not yet distributed by getting the word out among the intended users. There was some discussion on the accuracy of the database and the availability of the handheld radios (i.e. number of radios in the inventory not yet distributed). The issue raised at the last meeting (who will be responsible to maintain the radio database) remained unresolved. DPS maintains the license and the repair contract and technically "owns" the radios.

There was no update on the status of Control Stations that still need to be installed. Last month it was reported that the following locations were still outstanding: CONNDOT Bridgeport, Greenwich FD, Meriden FD, Stratford PD, Waterbury PD, Stamford EOC and New Haven EOC.

A question was asked about who the POC within DEMHS would be related to interoperable communications. C Beck stated that he had recently been asked by the Commissioner to be the DEMHS point person.

B. Radio Testing and Training: No information was provided.

C. Letter to PSAPs:

The draft letter intended to be sent all PSAPs reminding them of the “rules and regulations” that they are obligated to follow with respect to the I-CALL/TAC equipment and system was discussed. The draft letter was presented to the EMHSCC on 14 April 2005 for approval. It was not favorably received. The EMHSCC agreed with the concept of limiting the use of the 800 MHz control station provided to the primary and secondary PSAPs and the Millstone Plan host communities. However, the general consensus was that adding other “working frequencies/channels” should be allowed provided there were no operational conflicts; i.e. I-CALL constantly monitored.

There was a lengthy discussion. The 800 MHz control stations were purchased using federal grant money and provided to the PSAPs as part of a system. The primary purpose was to allow the PSAPs to establish interoperability at the command and control level with Incident/Unified Commanders. Any use of the control station other than as part of the system could degrade the system. For instance, if other frequencies/channels are added to the control station use of those frequencies would not allow the operator to monitor the I-CALL channel as intended. There are also maintenance and potentially licensing issues. If a modified control station breaks, who will be responsible for fixing it? As it stands, the control stations are technically the property of DPS. A system is in place to replace a malfunctioning control station with a spare upon notification. If additional frequencies have been installed on the non-functioning unit, it could void the repair contract. The replacement unit will not have the added frequencies thus potentially presenting an operational problem for the PSAP. The license of the 800 MHz handheld and control stations is held by DPS. If additional frequencies are added and used, there could be a violation of that license. It was recognized that being able to use the 800 MHz control station for other purposes had some operational advantages; familiarity, take less space than multiple units, enhance PSAP capability, etc. However, by a 16-1 vote the workgroup felt that the system considerations, the maintenance issues and the licensing concerns trumped the operational advantages. The workgroup asked the Chairman to approach the EMHSCC on the issue again and seek approval of the letter about the “rules of use”.

D. UASI and ICTAP Update: UASI and ICTAP are working on a plan for mobile data terminal (MDT) improvements. The improvements will include the use of a frequency band recently made available for data transmission by the FCC (4.9 GHz). UASI/New Haven has applied for/obtained a license for all of New Haven County. It was reported that FCC Region 19 is developing a 4.9 GHz plan thus, UASI might want to wait until the plan was completed as to not get too far out in front. FCC Region 19 is the “control point” for the use of the 700MHz and the 4.9 GHz frequencies. OSET, who is the CT representative on the Region 19 committee, will coordinate with the UASI/New Haven people by providing drafts of the Plan as they develop. The work being done by UASI/New Haven on the MDT project might be expandable statewide.

The ICTAP representative reported that ODP has rejected the idea of creating a statewide Tactical Interoperable Communications (TIC) Plan as a means of meeting the requirements of the FY 05 HSGP Grant. However, ODP has agreed with the idea of focusing a TIC Plan on the southwest corner region of CT. Once complete the SWCT TIC Plan could be expanded statewide. The ICTAP representative provided clarification on exactly how much work ICTAP will be allowed to perform for CT relative to the TIC Plan. The clarification was based upon previous comments made by ICTAP personnel that they would act as “staff” to the Interoperable Communications workgroup in preparing the TIC Plan. Not true.

There was some discussion about the TIC Plan information session scheduled for 3 June 2005 in Columbus, OH. Details of information sessions already held were provided as insight on what to expect. Additional information was provided about a separate 2 day workshop that could be arranged. Such a workshop was recently conducted in New Orleans, LA and aimed at the State’s interoperable communications committee members. The end result of the workshop was an 80% solution draft TIC Plan. All agreed that CT should pursue.

E. FY05 HSGP Grant: Copies of ODP Bulletins 158, 162 and 165 were provided to the members for informational purposes. Bulletin 158 contained information on the FY 05 HSGP requirement for a State to complete a Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan NLT 30 Sept 2005 and twelve months from the submission of the Plan conduct a significant exercise. Bulletin 165 relaxes the requirement by expanding the deadline of the TIC Plan to 01 May 2006 and for the exercise to 01 May 2007. Bulletin 162 reduces the number of preliminary exercises formerly required to be held as preparation to the major exercise.

F. Update on ICTAP Activities: See discussion contained in D.

G. USAR Radios: There was a discussion to inform the members of the recent developments related to USAR radios. The 58 800 MHz digital handheld radios that were initially provided to the CT USAR Team were recalled by DPS to be issued to a graduating class of CSP recruits. As temporary measure, DPS has provided CT USAR with 60 I-CALL/TAC handheld radios from the cache of spares. In addition to the I-CALL/TAC frequencies, DPS programmed the radios with the DEMHS 800 frequency (855.9587 MHz) for state tactical on-scene channel system (STOCS) use.

USAR plans on buying UHF radios with DHS grant money but do not have a UHF frequency to license statewide. It was reported that FEMA has denied the use of the UHF frequencies used by the federally recognized USAR teams. The question was asked about whether USAR should be allowed to purchase a UHF radio without having a frequency to use. In other words, no frequency no radio.

H-J. Subcommittees/ Sub-workgroups: There was a discussion on the need to establish sub-committees to the Interoperable Communications Workgroup in the following categories: Governance, Technical, Operations, Training & Exercise. Governance has met (see paragraph C). The Technical sub-committee has also previously been established and meeting regularly (see paragraph A REPORT FROM WORKING GROUPS). The Chair solicited other to participate on the Training & Exercise and the Operations sub-committees. It was stated that the Training & Exercise sub-committee would need to coordinate with the recently established EMHSCC Training and Exercise Committee. The Chair also solicited members to participate on the Operations sub-committee. Operation would be responsible for establishing policy, procedures and the TIC Plan.

K. Other: None.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. Upcoming Training Programs: There is a CCM Technical Workshop being held on 24 May 2005 in New Haven. Members of the Technical sub-committee will attend and participate in a panel discussion to extol the accomplishments of the workgroup related to interoperable communications.

There is a Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan workshop on 03 June 2005 in Columbus, OH that will be attended by two members of the workgroup. (See paragraph D OLD BUSINESS for more detail.)

The Chair reported that he will be making a presentation at the June Fire School on 6 June 2005 in Windsor Locks.

#### B. Other:

There was a discussion about whether the term of art should be “interoperable” or “interoperability”. Although there was no resolution it was agreed that we need to be consistent, particularly in the title of the workgroup or documents produced.

The Chair advised that the IAFC has published a FIRE CHIEF'S GUIDE TO INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATIONS and suggested that members download it from [www.iafc.org](http://www.iafc.org) for review. However, you have to be a member in order to access the document.

The 800 MHz "Re-banding" Administrator will be making a presentation at DPSHQ on 19 May 2005 at 0800 in the training room on the second deck.

## **CORRESPONDENCE/ GRANT REVIEWS**

### A. CEDAP

The Commercial Equipment Direct Assistance Program (CEDAP) is a program that makes certain equipment available directly to a municipality on a competitive basis. The Town of Vernon has submitted a request for a gateway switch being offered. The request was forwarded to the Chair by the CT SAA with a 7 day turn around time. The Chair consulted with a few members of the workgroup and conditionally approved the request. The condition was that Vernon would be required to coordinate the use of the gateway switch with DEMHS through the Interoperable Communications workgroup.

### B. CAP Request:

The Chair provided hardcopies of the CAP request for HLS grant money needed to recapitalize its communications infrastructure. CAP is requesting \$93,175 to replace 3 repeaters, 7 receivers, an audio delay system and a voter card. The present repeaters are 15-20 years old with limited network capability and hard to find spare parts. Additionally, CAP is being moved to a narrowband operation. Due to budget cuts CAP National HQ can only provide 3 of the 6 repeaters needed for the upgrades. All were asked to review the request and to be prepared to discuss at the next meeting.

C. American Red Cross request: The Chair provided a hardcopy request from the American Red Cross. The CT ARC has requested DHS grant funds (\$77,600) to purchase radio equipment for inter-chapter communications and communications with the SEOC. All were asked to review the request and to be prepared to discuss at the next meeting.

D. NEMA Letter to the FCC: No discussion in that the letter was mistakenly left out of the meeting package.

E. COPS Interoperable Communications Technology Grant. The State has been notified that Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven are eligible to apply for an FY 2005 Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Interoperable Communications Technology grant. The grants are offered on a competitive basis. Commissioner Thomas has written to the Police Chiefs of each of the cities and offered the assistance of the Interoperable Communications Workgroup.

Next Meeting: The next meeting for the Interoperable Communications Workgroup was set for **1300 Tuesday June 7, 2005** at the CONNDOT facility in Rocky Hill. The meeting was adjourned at 1520.