

Communications Interoperability Working Group
07 June 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), Steve Brown (CONDOT), George Carbonell (CONNDOT), Bob DiBella (Glastonbury EMD/DEMHS), John Gustafson (CMED NH), Phil Mikan (USCG), Joe Murray (Hamden PD), Bernie O'Donnell (DOIT), Jeff Otto (QVEC), George Pohorilak (OSET), Gordon Shand (DPH), Richard Tsou (New Haven/UASI), Matt Valleau (CSP/CAP), Mike Varney (DOIT/CFCA), Jerry Zarwanski (OSET). Additionally, guests from ODP/ICTAP (Doug Harder and Leo Guilmette) and Nextel (Jacqueline Gallus) were present.

There were no public comments.

The 10 May 2005 minutes were reviewed, voted on and approved.

REPORT FROM WORKING GROUPS:

A. Technical Committee It was reported that the STOCS document was presented to the Governor's office. A question was asked about when the Workgroup could release the STOCS information. The Chairman reported that the Governor's office would like to make an announcement first but only after all parts of STOCS (including the "black box") were in place. The STOCS "black box" RFI is being worked on by DOIT. Discussion turned to the need to approach four municipalities to inform them of STOCS and how it will affect their use of UTAC/VTAC frequencies.

B. Governance There was no report from the Governance subcommittee since it had not met.

INTEROPERABILITY USAGE DURING PREVIOUS MONTH:

There was an attempt to use the I-CALL/TAC system at the Chesire gas tanker rollover. However, there was a "coverage" (i.e. dead spot) problem.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. Radio Inventory: No report on either the handheld or the control stations

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 12 May 2005 for reconsideration and conceptually approved. The Chairman stated that he will discuss the draft letter with the Commissioner and attempt to move it along.

D. UASI and ICTAP Update: The New Haven/UASI representative stated that they are waiting for the FY 04 UASI funds to be released from the State and the equipment requested to be bought.

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

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. Norwalk has agreed to be the designated municipality in SWCT for the development of the TIC Plan for the region. A planning meeting with the Norwalk officials is scheduled for 22 June. The Chair reported that he and C Beck will be attending the TIC Plan workshop in Charlotte on 14 July.

F. USAR Radios: There was a discussion to inform the members of the recent developments related to USAR radios. USAR plans on buying UHF radios with DHS grant money but does 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. It was reported that M Stemmler is checking into allowing USAR to use a "vehicular repeater channel" that belongs to the CSP. The question remains whether USAR should be allowed to purchase a UHF radio without having a frequency to use. In other words, no frequency no radio.

G & H. 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 once again solicited others to participate on the Training & Exercise and the Operations sub-committees.

I, J & K. Presentations: The Chair reported that he, John Gustafson and LT Geoff Morgan (Branford PD) attended the CCM conference to discuss interoperable communications issues and that all went well.

The Chair reported that he attended the June Fire School in Windsor Locks and made a presentation on interoperable communications, specifically STOCS.

Members of the Interoperable Communications Workgroup will be attending the Region 19 meeting to be held on 14 June in New Hampshire. "Re-banding" will be an important topic.

Copies of the draft Region 8 and Region 19 4.9 GHz Implementation Plans were discussed. The 4.9 GHz band will be primarily used for data transfer. It is a short range system whose license will be for 50 MHz band width. CSP holds a license for the 4.9 GHz but it designed for multiple licenses within the same band width. Electronic copies of the Region 8 and 19 Plans will be provided to members.

L. Other: There was a discussion about CRERPA requesting a representatives form the Interoperable Workgroup to attend their monthly meeting on 8 June. C Beck and G Pohorilak will attend.

There was a discussion on Telecommunication Service Priority (TSP). TSP is a service of prioritizing telephone use during a disaster. The State needs a POC as part of ESF-2. It was stated that DOIT has the lead.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Upcoming Training Programs:

There is a Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan workshop on 14 July 2005 in Charlotte, NC that will be attended by two members of the workgroup. (See paragraph E OLD BUSINESS for more detail.)

The Chair reported that he and several others will be attending the FEMA Region 1 Telecommunications Emergency Response Training Seminar being held at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy on 9 June.

B. Other:

A draft of the TOPOFF 3 After Action Report (AAR) has been provided to the Chair for review.

There was a follow-up discussion on problems encountered with the 800 MHz Control Stations that were provided to the 140 primary and secondary PSAPs. It was reported that West Hartford's control station suffered a problem thought to be caused by a power surge similar to the problem encountered by East Granby previously. The discussion fell into two main areas: the need to provide proper surge protectors and the discovery that yet another control station had been "re-programmed". Although there is no reason to believe that the power surge issue is related to the re-programming of the control stations, the fact is that the units were re-programmed contrary to there intended use. The need to complete and send the letter to all PSAPs was re-emphasized (See OLD BUSINESS Section C).

The Emergency Management and Homeland Security Coordinating Council (EMHSCC) has created a Training Committee. The Chair has been asked to provide recommendations on training requirements for key communications positions such as ESF-2 and Communications Unit Leader.

It was reported that Senator Lieberman's staff have been contacting and questioning individual fire departments, ICTAP and others seeking anecdotal communications problems that occurred during TOPOFF 3.

CORRESPONDENCE/ GRANT REVIEWS

A. CAP Request:

The Chair provided hardcopies of the CAP request for. CAP is requested \$93,175 of HLS grant money needed to recapitalize its communications infrastructure: 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. After discussion, all agreed that the CAP request should be approved.

B. American Red Cross request: The CT American Red Cross has requested DHS grant funds (\$77,600) to purchase radio equipment for inter-chapter communications and communications with the SEOC. There were many issues discussed related to the request. The request was submitted by the Greater Hartford Chapter of the ARC. There was doubt that the Greater Hartford Chapter had the authority to speak for all of the Chapters in CT. There was also concern about providing funding to build out an amateur radio system vs a public safety system. It appears that the funds requested will be used to replace aging HF gear used to talk between ARC units. Lastly, it was felt it would be inappropriate to place STOCS frequencies into an amateur radio system. The members agreed that the ARC request should be disapproved.

C. Interoperable Communications Project Review: The process that has been established for reviewing the Interoperable Communications Projects submitted by municipalities and State agencies using Homeland Security funds was discussed. The current process is that the Projects are to be submitted to the HLS Grants Manager then forwarded to the Interoperable Communications Workgroup via the DEMHS representative for review. The projects are supposed to be submitted using the form that was created and approved by the workgroup last year. In order to facilitate a timely review, electronic copies of the Projects have been forwarded by the DEMHS representative to the Technical Subcommittee. A draft recommendation has been added to the Project requests to serve as a straw man and a 48 hour turn around has been sought.

Several issues were discussed. One issue was should Project requests be returned without action if the forms are not completely filled in. After discussion, consensus was that as long as there is sufficient information included to be able to ascertain whether or not the Project would support the State's communication strategy, the review should be completed. It was agreed that the goal of the group should be to approve the Projects if at all possible. If not possible to approve the Project as submitted, then the review would include recommended changes that would need to be made to the Project.

The group agreed that licensing issues were not within the purview of the Project review process. However, the group suggested that a change to the memo submitted by the Interoperable Communications Workgroup to the SAA should be amended to include a statement about the need to adhere to all FCC rules and regulations. The group also

agreed to review mobile data terminal Projects even though our focus has been on radio communications.

Lastly, there was considerable discussion related to a second form that had been created to use as a review template for Projects submitted. The original form had already been widely distributed around the State. There were misconceptions about the origin of the original form being used. A review of the alternate form being recommended was needed. The group was asked to review both forms for discussion and the matter was table until the next meeting.

Next Meeting: The next meeting for the Interoperable Communications Workgroup was set for **1300 Tuesday July 12, 2005** at the CONNDOT facility in Rocky Hill. The meeting was adjourned at 1510.

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