

Communications Interoperability Working Group
05 October 2004
Minutes

WELCOME, PUBLIC COMMENT and REVIEW OF MINUTES:

Meeting was called to order at 1305. The following additional individuals were present: Bob DiBella (Glastonbury EMD), Chuck Beck (OEM), Rosemary Salerno (CTDHS), Chris Marvin (CREPC), Keith Victor (W. Hartford), George Carbonell (CONNDOT), Joan Carrasquillo (OSET), Jerry Zarwanski (OSET), Gordon Shand (DPH), Skip Thomas (OPM, Chair), Richard Tsou (New Haven), Phil Mikan (USCG), Mike Varney (DOIT/CFCA), Steve Brown (CONNDOT), Joe Suchecki (DOC), George Pohorilak (OSET), Phil Halibozek (CSP). The minutes were reviewed a minor correction made voted on and approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

It was reported that an 800 MHz I-CALL/TAC radio training session was held in Woodstock, CT (the Town Hall) on 16 September 2004 netting another 12 radios being distributed to local Emergency Management Directors (EMDs). There was no update available on the installation of the 800 MHz control stations. It was stated that Bob DiBella had been conducting I-CALL/TAC training to the recruits undergoing training at POST.

On Sept 20th, CREPC conducted a no notice test of the I-CALL/TAC system. CREPC plans on conducting similar tests on the 20th of each month on I-TAC 4. Only 8 of the communities responded. This may be caused by an interference problem. There seems to be a problem with an odd noise (relay type noise) that is causing dispatchers to turn the volume down on the 800 MHz control station. DPS Message Center will put in a trouble ticket to investigate the problem.

FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI) conducted training and a table top exercise in the Capitol Region on the Incident Management System (IMS). It was reported that the EMI instructors were impressed with the I-CALL/TAC system that has been activated in CT.

Mike Varney provided a Technical Committee report. He presented information on the progress of establishing a V-TAC/U-TAC system for interoperable radio communications at the "tactical" level. There potential problem related to other entities already having a license on some of the frequencies being considered for V-TAC/U-TAC was raised again. It was stated that OEM will apply for the license for all of the VTAC/UTAC frequencies as a service to the local communities. This would be similar to DPS holding the license for the I-CALL/TAC system. The need to create a State Plan for the VTAC/UTAC system was discussed. The Plan would be the critical catalyst that would insure coordination with neighboring states as well as to organize CT municipal organizations that may already be operating on the frequencies. Bob DiBella and George Carbonell volunteered to work with Jerry Zarwanski to draft a State Plan.

A draft Grant Document was presented for review. The document will form the basis of evaluating local/regional/state proposals to improve communications interoperability using the SHSP grants. The idea is to educate the municipal leaders as a means of managing expectations. All members of the committee were asked to review the draft Grant Document and provide recommended changes to Mike Varney as soon as possible.

A question was asked about whether or not the evaluation tool would apply to the Emergency Management Communications project presented by Director Flaherty at the 08 Sept meeting and would FY 04 SHSP funds be sought. The answer was yes to both. A follow-on question was asked concerning whether or not the project was looking to buy new or enhance existing equipment. The answer in short was yes. The plan would enhance existing equipment where possible and buy new when needed. Another question was asked about requiring emergency power to be a factor in any of the proposals. Requiring emergency power was deemed to be a reasonable factor.

There was no further old business. There were no reports on the following action items from the 08 September 2004 meeting:

- *Telecommunications Accomplishments Guide for Idiot* (Shand, Victor, Stemmler, DiBella)
- Radio Console for Rentschler Stadium (Thomas)
- Educating Municipal 800 MHz Repeater Operators vs DPS Management of All 800 MHz Repeaters (OSET)

NEW BUSINESS:

Rosemary Salerno provided a brief on an interoperability communications support service provided through ODP. The Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP) will provide on-site support to assess current communications infrastructure for gaps and to translate operational requirements into technical requirements that can be used to design an interoperable communications system. The ICTAP is aimed specifically at the Urban Area Security Initiative cities. New Haven (and its contiguous surrounding towns) is a UASI city. However, Ms Salerno reported that ODP is considering allowing the ICTAP to be applied to all of CT due to the size of the State. The idea of having an outside source “evaluate” the interoperable communications current capability and desired goals created a lively discussion among the members in attendance. By the end of the discussion all agreed that obtaining the independent, non-binding evaluation would be a good thing. There is an ICTAP New Haven Initial Planning Meeting being held in New Haven on 14 Oct 2004. Members of the Interoperable Communications Committee will be invited to attend to gain additional information.

Skip Thomas provided an update on the development of the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS). The new Department will become official on 01 January 2005. It will consist mainly of what are now the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and the CT Division of Homeland Security (CTDHS). One deficiency already identified in the legislation is the lack of an Administrative and

Finance element for the new Department. Initially, the parent organizations to OEM and CTDHS (the Military Dept and DPS) will provide these services. The Coordinating Council is a legislatively created body, part of the legislation that created the new DEMHS. All of the positions on the Coordinating Council have been filled. A list of the members of the Coordinating Council was provided. The intent is to have different members of the Coordinating Council make presentations to the Council over the next several monthly meetings as a means of bringing the entire group up to speed on preparedness issues. The next meeting of the DEMHS Coordinating Council is slated for 21 Oct 2004 in room 310 of the Capitol building. It was further reported that nationwide search to fill the DEMHS Commissioner position will hit the press by week's end. A search committee has been formed chaired by Lisa Moody, Chief of Staff for Governor Rell.

There was some discussion on the delay to implementation of the FY 04 SHSP/LETPP/Citizen Corps Grant in Connecticut. The main reason is the delay in the federal budget process. The delay is supported by OPM because the formation of DEMHS which will change the State Administrative Agent (SAA) for the grant from the Department of Public Safety's Division of Homeland Security to the new DEMHS.

Lastly there was discussion concerning an e-mail that the Executive Director of the Windham Council of Governments (WINCOG) sent to Mike Varney. The e-mail contained a request for money and assistance from the FY 04 SHSP grant and the Committee respectively to conduct a communications feasibility study for the WINCOG area. The discussion centered around the previous discussion on the ICTAP. It was agreed that if ODP agreed to allow the ICTAP to apply statewide, the service would meet the request from WINCOG at no cost to the State or locals. Mike Varney agreed to respond to WINCOG and advise of the intent to pursue ICTAP.

The next meeting for the Communications Interoperability Workgroup was set for 1300 Tuesday 9 November 2004 at the CONNDOT facility in Rocky Hill. The meeting was adjourned at 1420.