

Communications Interoperability Working Group
15 March 2005
Minutes

WELCOME, PUBLIC COMMENT and REVIEW OF MINUTES:

The meeting was called to order at 1307 by the Chair, Mike Varney. The following individuals were present: Bob DiBella (Glastonbury EMD/DEMHS), Chuck Beck (DEMHS), Keith Victor (W. Hartford/CREPC), Steve Brown (CONNDOT), George Carbonell (CONNDOT), Jerry Zarwanski (OSET), Joan Carrasquillo (OSET), Peter Beckwith (USAR), Chris Nolan (CSP), Gordon Shand (DPH), Bernie O'Donnell (DOIT), Jeff Otto (QVEC), Phil Mikan (USCG), Paul Jakobson (Madison PD/CPCA), Richard Tsou (New Haven/UASI), Robert Muller (New Haven PD), Andrew Campion (New Haven FD). Additionally, guests from ODP/ICTAP (Doug Harder) and Nextel (Jacqueline Gallus) were present. The 08 February 2005 minutes were reviewed, voted on and approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. Radio Inventory: No report available. I-CALL/TAC 800 MHz handheld radio training was held in Danbury last month but another session was rescheduled to 31 March due to bad weather. Several members expressed a need for I-CALL/TAC "refresher training" to be held. There was discussion about using the VHS tapes of the training provided to each municipal Emergency Management Director to allow municipalities to train their own and any new members of their forces. On 31 March, Ellington is holding a radio distribution meeting for stragglers.

There was no report on the Control Stations. However, members were provided a draft of a 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. These rules would apply to the handheld radios as well. All members of the workgroup were asked to provide feedback on the draft letter to Chuck Beck by Friday 18 March.

B. Radio Testing and Training: Keith Victor reported that the CREPC will no longer be conducting monthly tests due to unresolved technical issues. The technical issues have been documented in the minutes of previous meetings. If steps have been taken to resolve the issues, notifications have not been made. It was requested that DPS/CSP review past minutes, identify the problematic issues, take steps to correct the problems and report to the workgroup any corrective actions that have been taken.

It was reported that testing of the I-CALL/TAC system will commence in Northeast CT soon. It was also reported that the I-CALL/TAC system was recently used during the natural gas explosion and fire in Putnam. There were some problems activating the system and getting people to understand the use of the radios but overall I-CALL/TAC was a useful tool. It was also reported that as the group was meeting a decon trailer and the I-CALL/TAC system were being used in a response to an incident in Milford.

C. Technical Sub-Committee Update: George Carbonell handed out a 15 March 2005 DRAFT of the State Tactical On Scene Channel System (STOCS), otherwise known as the VTAC/UTAC system. All present were asked to review the document and to provide feedback to George NLT 31 March 2005. The goal is to get the SOP/plan in final form by the next workgroup meeting so that it could then be presented to and approved by the members of the Emergency Management and Homeland Security Coordinating Council (EMHSCC) at their 14 April meeting. It was reported that responders in the CREPC area were already loading the frequencies in their radios.

It was reported that the specifications on the “3 unit box” were moving along. In response to a question, it was stated that the VCALL/UCALL implementation is targeted for Fall 2005. A vote was taken unanimously approving the title of the system as STOCS.

D. Telecommunications Accomplishments Report: Gordon Shand provided a revised draft document that details the accomplishments of the interoperable communications workgroup. Once again all members are asked to critically review the document and provide feedback to Gordon NLT 31 March. The goal is to get the finished product to the EMHSCC on 14 April so that it can be approved and then distributed widely about CT. 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.

Common Language Protocol: N report.

Protocol on use of I-CALL/TAC

There was a discussion on the need for the development of a protocol on the use of the I-CALL/TAC system and radios. All were reminded that such a protocol was developed and is part of the training that was done. The protocol is also on the quick reference cards that were provided. It was decided that a reemphasis of the protocols could/should be the topic of another article.

UASI and ICTAP: The UASI towns are waiting for the FY 04 HSGP grant. It was reported that the FY 04 grant “arrived” in CT yesterday (14 March). Now that the FY 04 grant has been approved and arrived, funds will be distributed to UASI and the municipalities.

On 16 February 2005, a letter signed by Commissioner Thomas was sent to ODP requesting Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP) to service all of CT. The ICTAP representative stated that one of the requirements of the FY 05 HSGP grant was for the State to select an urban area and develop a Tactical Interoperability Communications Plan. The communications plan requirement is part of the requirement to develop a table top exercise centered on an urban area and an improvised explosive device (IED). A review of the FY 05 HSGP grant application needs to be made.

NEW BUSINESS:

FY05 SHSP Grant: The EMHSCC approved the funding allocation formula drafted by the ISIP workgroup on 10 February 2005. New MOAs will be drafted and distributed to the 169 municipalities and two tribal nations soon. Informational meetings on the FY 2005 HSGP will begin the week of 21 March and conclude one 31 March. Eight (080 sessions will be held regionally during the day and evening.

Request form the Civil Air Patrol:

No one present new anything about the topic so it was tabled until the next meeting.

Data Network Survey

OSET recently forwarded a request for information/survey on data networks. The survey is intended to gather information regarding Connecticut data networks currently serving public safety. The information gathering is part of the process to develop projects using the 9-1-1 surcharge funds.

ICALL/TAC Handheld Radio Cache:

Clarification was sought from the group regarding where an IC/UC should turn to get additional I-CALL/TAC radios during a response to an incident. All agreed that beyond the radios (6) that come with a deployed decon trailer, the next resource would be the cache of radios held by DPS. Radios located in decon trailers NOT deployed to or near the scene should not be stripped from the trailers and provided to an IC/US as a cache.

Membership:

There was a discussion on defining the membership of the Interoperable Communications Workgroup. The workgroup has certainly grown from the original members and tends to fluctuate from meeting to meeting. However, there is a recognizable corps of individuals/people that has remained steady. There may be an issue just over the horizon of who gets to vote on issues such as the approval/disapproval of communications projects submitted by jurisdictions using HSGP and Fire Act Grant funds. All members were asked to think about the issue and be prepared to discuss at the next meeting.

Unresolved Issues:

There were no reports on action items from the February meeting;

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

Next Meeting: The next meeting for the Communications Interoperability Workgroup was set for **1300 Tuesday, April 12, 2005** at the CONNDOT facility in Rocky Hill. The meeting was adjourned at 1434. However, all retired to the hangar for a demonstration on an example of the STOC system conducted by Gordon Shand.