

DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT & HOMELAND SECURITY
Communication Interoperability Working Group

March 21, 2006
Minutes

WELCOME, PUBLIC COMMENT AND REVIEW OF MINUTES:

The meeting was called to order at 1308 hours by the Chair, Mike Varney. The following individuals were in attendance: Jon Barbagallo (HH), Peter Beckwith (USAR), George Carbonell (ConnDOT), Robert DiBella (DEMHS), Libby Graham (DEMHS), John Gustafson (CMED-NH), Bill Hacket (DEMHS), Doug Harder (ICTAP), Paul Jakubson (CPCA), Chris Marvin (CREPC), Tyler Millix (Tolland), Jordan Murdock (CTNG), Jeff Otto (Quinebaug Valley), George Pohorilak (OSET), Vincent Sciortino (CTNG), Gordon Shand (DPH), Mike Stemmler (DPS), Michael Varney (DOIT/CFCA), Jerry Zarwanski (OSET), and Lee Toffey (secretary).

Minutes of the February 21, 2006 meeting reviewed; motion to accept by John Gustafson, second by Chris Marvin, unanimous/moved and will be posted on the DEMHS website.

There were no public comments.

SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Technical Committee: Presented by George Carbonell. The first STOCs box was tested and some technical concerns came up that will be checked out, with further testing needed. Possibly two other boxes will be tested before a final specification is developed.
- B. Governance Committee: Mike Varney stated that he is working with Brenda Bergeron, the legal representative of DEMHS, to update the documents. They will meet to finalize the documents and bring to the committee for review.
- C. Training & Exercise Workgroup: Mike Varney stated that the committee did not meet as a formal group but will review the Area 1 TICP exercise at the end of the meeting.

REPORT OF INTEROPERABILITY USAGE AND INCIDENTS: None.

OLD BUSINESS:

- A. **Portable Radio Inventory & Training Programs**: Per Mike Varney, a meeting needs to be set up with the Fire Academy to update ITAC/ICALL training, and address inventory and the issuance of new batteries. Gordon Shand inquired about how to handle remaining radio battery distribution. Per Mike, will work on scheduling regional training dates. Rosemary sent the info that 463 batteries were issued at the March 1st event.
- B. **ITAC/ICALL Test & Training Issues**: Michael Varney has contacted Sgt. Nolan of DPS communications regarding issues but has not received an answer as of yet.
- C. **UASI**: No report.
- D. **Homeland Security Grant Program**: Libby graham reported that the radio orders are ready to move as soon as the contract is in place, and the Unit will be making people available to go out in the field to help towns coordinate their purchases and place orders. The application for FY2006 has been sent. A minimum amount of 7 million will come to CT, but the grant application is requesting 30 million, a portion of which will be ear marked for interoperability. The Unit expects to hear from Washington in June.

- E. Tactical Interoperable Communication Plan: Doug Harder reported that a meeting will be held in Region 1 to review the plan as it exists and look at the information being entered into the CASM tool. Some info needs to be removed and the appendix adjusted. A tabletop exercise will be held on May 24. An initial planning conference has already taken place with a second scheduled for April 13th. Two other exercises that will be held are an Executive Tabletop for Mayors and CEO's, and a functional exercise similar to a tabletop but with the use of radios. Both will take place before the full scale exercise on October 28th. There will also be an operational tabletop for the region scheduled sometime in June.
- F. Bid for Master Catalog: Per Mike Varney 20 bids were received and have gone through the administrative review. The catalog review will hopefully be started this week with the contract in place by the end of next week.
- G. Request from CT-IMT4: nothing new.
- H. Prime Mover radios and Licensing: Mike Varney attended a meeting at DPS to review the status of the radio licenses. The info is currently with DPS legal department to review and decide on the direction to be taken, hopefully with a quick resolution.
- I. ICALL/ITAC Proposal: Chief Jakubson spoke with Lt. Col. Cheryl Malloy and a meeting will be set up with Col. Lynch and Commissioner Boyle. The Chief will report back to this committee after the meeting takes place.
- J. Communications Demo – March 1, Rentschler Field: Mike Varney advised that this event was set up to discuss and demonstrate communications capabilities and equipment, inventory radios, and distribute batteries. The demonstrations showed that the system does not work 100% all the time. Per Mike Stemmler, one of the issues was putting 200 people on the same channel at the same time. An onsite ICALL repeater would have made it possible for people to hear each other talking and alleviate some of the walk over. Mike explained how the system is designed with voted receive sites on ICALL which does not allow for users in the field to hear each other calling in. Gordon Shand felt that we need to be sure these kinds of events are very successful, as the problems with this event only added to the decreased confidence in the system. He has been dealing with some backfire from the problems at the presentation. Mike Varney advised that Interop needs to be more involved earlier during the planning of these events to be sure they are as successful as possible. Job Barbagallo suggested that the time was bad because so many volunteers could not participate in the demonstration. Paul Jakubson asked if before the next event, the issue of taking back the batteries for proper disposal could be addressed. He felt all the batteries should be swapped so old batteries are not left out in the field. Discussion continued on various issues related to this demonstration. Mike Varney mentioned that he believes that the planning efforts and involvement by the committee have been addressed for the future and he will speak to Commissioner Thomas to let him know the committees concerns.
- K. Other: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

- A. ICTAP Coverage Study & CD: Doug Harder did a quick review of the ICTAP Study of ICALL / ITAC portable, mobile and fixed tower coverage and made CD's available to those who wanted a copy. Mike Stemmler had been told by some that the coverage was slanted and stated that the system was designed as a mobile system, not a portable one, and when used as a mobile system there is good coverage. The study shows coverage with and without the additional repeater sites.

- B. Mike Varney – Point of Information: He met with persons from the Regional Dispatch Centers. Concepts are being investigated in regards to putting in for a T-band waiver statewide (470 MHz), to be used as needed encompassing the entire band width. To be sponsored by the Connecticut Fire Chief’s Association.
- C. The guidance documents for the Fire Act Grant have been released. Mike Varney suggested compiling a document with the proper statewide strategy information so that when towns write their grant applications, they have the proper info to allow the grant to move forward, at the beginning of the process.

CORRESPONDENCE/GRANT REVIEWS:

- A. ICTAP – Monthly newsletter.
- B. FCC New Release. Mike Varney will forward both documents to all.
- C. SHSGP grant reviews: All approved – Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, Goshen, Colchester, Capitol Region COG, Easton PD, Newtown, and Monroe.

NEXT MEETING:

Next meeting will be **April 18, 2006, at 1300 hours**, DOT Central Lab, Rocky Hill.

Meetings open to the public.

Motion to adjourn by Jerry Zarwanski; second by George Pohorilak.
Meeting adjourned at 1428 hours.

Presentation of ICTAP Study held after the meeting for all interested.