

DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT & HOMELAND SECURITY
Communication Interoperability Working Group

June 20, 2006
Minutes

WELCOME, PUBLIC COMMENT AND REVIEW OF MINUTES:

The meeting was called to order at 1305 hours by the Co-Chair, Bill Hackett. The following individuals were in attendance: Jon Barbagallo (COE), Leslie Bliven (CTNG), David Brown (ARC), Stephan Brown (DOT), George Carbonell (ConnDOT), Robert DiBella (DEMHS), Libby Graham (DEMHS), John Gustafson (CMED-NH), Bill Hackett (DEMHS), Paul Jakubson (CPCA), Tyler Millix (TCMP), Jim Monson (CTNG), Jeff Otto (Quinebaug Valley), Roy Piper (DEMHS), George Pohorilak (OSET), Gordon Shand (DPH), Mike Stemmler (DPS), Matt Valleau (CAP/DPS), Keith Victor (CREPC), and Lee Toffey (secretary).

Minutes of the May 15, 2006 meeting reviewed; motion to accept by John Gustafson, second by Keith Victor, 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. Three STOC's boxes were received by the Tech Committee. One went back to the vendor with a problem and was never returned; one was based on a Kenwood Radio System; and one was based on three radio systems. One June 8, 2006 the two boxes were taken to Avon and tested. They were placed 300 feet apart and Task Force 52 came on board, and then South Windsor came on Board, with no problems. When Newington came onboard, they shut the system down due to high power usage. Low power must be used and the system works well. Pro's and Con's for the system were noted and specs will be solidified by the end of July. John Gustafson advised that an incident plan needs to be in place on proper usage of the boxes, and George Carbonell noted that the group needs to figure out how to conform for out of state activation if this becomes necessary.
- B. Governance Committee: Bill Hackett reported in Mike Varney's absence. The bylaws that had been previously sent to the members were discussed. A small change was made in the name of the committee, word "Communications" removed from the title of the committee. Motion to accept the bylaws with the change was made by John Gustafson, seconded by George Pohorilak, unanimously approved.
- C. Training & Exercise Workgroup: Bill Hackett advised that he would cover this report under new business (see section B).

REPORT OF INTEROPERABILITY USAGE AND INCIDENTS:

- A. Bob DiBella advised that the system was used in the Bristol area on 5-25 for a hospital missing aircraft; also used by the Civil Air Patrol to communicate with State Police for this incident;
- B. And on 6-1 for a lost elderly person (also in the Bristol Area). For this incident the Rocky Hill tower was activated instead of the Wolcott tower and the system worked poorly. It

was asked if anyone on scene contacted the message center to rectify the problem and the answer appears to be that they did not.

- C. Jeff Otto reported that the system was used during a high water rescue from the Quinebaug River. It was used to connect out of range fire personnel to sub commanders and also to the State Police fixed wing aircraft.
- D. It was also noted that the system was currently being used and had been since the night before, to assist with search of New Haven for a possible drowning victim. The system was working well.
- E. Bill Hackett commented on the WFSB news article that stated PD's at an incident were unable to communicate. It was apparent to many that this was because the participants did not know how to use the system properly, not because it doesn't work. It comes down to a training issue. Mike Stemmler also commented on the rumor going around that the Control Stations were no longer under contract. He advised that DPS has a contract for service and repairs in place and that these services should not be borne by the individual towns. John Gustafson commented that the system may need to be looked at for tactical needs as some instances only need 15 minutes of communications and then they are done. Paul Jakubson commented that the system is based on static incidents and that PD's may have the need for instant communication in dynamic incidents.

OLD BUSINESS:

- A. Portable Radio Inventory & Training Programs: 1) George Carbonell advised that ConnDOT would be returning three radios and was directed to return them to Mike Stemmler. 2) Gordon Shand asked if the portables being turned in by USAR could be used for the EMS personnel who didn't receive them yet. 3) Mike Stemmler posed that we need to better define who should have the radios and who should not be receiving them.
- B. ITAC/ICALL Test & Training Issues: Bill Hackett advised that a Train the Trainer class was given to the Fire Academy instructors on June 7th. The program will be posted to the website in the near future; the card with sign on instruction will undergo a color change; and the Fire Academy will produce a training schedule.
- C. Homeland Security Grant Program: Libby Graham reported that 90% of the FY04 funds were spent or obligated and that the FY05 grant was progressing nicely with approximately 81 % spent or obligated. The FY06 grant allocation shows \$13.5 million coming to Connecticut. Libby advised that we did very well with the competitive portion of the grant and that Connecticut was 15th in the country for Homeland Security dollars received. A portion of the remaining FY03 dollars will be sub-granted to DEMHS from DPS in the amount of \$2.5 million dollars with the remainder staying at DPS. Libby advised that if the committee feels it has additional needs that it should communicate with both agencies about project needs. Discussion ensued with regards to the request made by Kerry Flaherty in September 2004 that all EOC's be equipped with high band radios so they could communicate with their area offices and the info relayed to Hartford during a situation. How this would be funded was also discussed. Bill Hackett advised that he would look into the entire project and report back.
- D. Tactical Interoperable Communication Plan: Reported by Bill Hackett, 1) The plan was reviewed by DHS and they requested additional detailed information for the appendix section and once approved, it can then be used as a model for the rest of the State; 2) ICTAP is looking for evaluators, see Bill for further information; 3) Norwalk tabletop, a

review was held last week and other required exercise preparation will be ongoing until the full scale exercise in October.

- E. Bid for Master Catalog: George Carbonell stated that the set aside is already on line and that the rest of the online catalog is almost complete.
- F. Prime Mover radios and Licensing: Mike Stemmler spoke to the lawyer at DPS and the legal opinion is that each town should get their own license as these radios are not part of the DPS system. Discussion ensued. Bill Hackett will check with Brenda for her legal opinion.
- G. ICALL/ITAC Proposal: Paul Jakubson reported that there have been talks with Commissioner Boyle and Mike Stemmler and that several options are available. Since CPCA has 50% less funding than is required for the project, the decision needs to be made as to either seek additional funding or cut the project back. Based on preliminary computerized models, options show 97% coverage through out the State. Reality is probably in the area of 90%.
- H. Other: None

NEW BUSINESS:

- A. National Governors Association (NGA) grant – Notice was sent to Commissioners Wallace, Boyle and Thomas from the Governor’s office to apply for this grant. Five states will be chosen at the end of June 1 with another five states in the fall. The seven page grant proposal was submitted on June 15th, the grant establishes policies for interoperability. George Pohorilak stated that the meetings in DC are on how to write an interoperability plan and consist of two 3-day sessions. The amount of the application is for \$50,000 and a portion of that money can be used to hire consultants. Discussion continued.
- B. David Brown of the American Red Cross addressed the committee. A letter of proposal was distributed requesting access to the ITAC/ICALL system and six radios, one for each regional coordinator (5) and one for the chairman. A lengthy discussion ensued with questions being asked as to priorities and other radio frequencies that might be utilized. David Brown was asked to submit a more detailed description of what they are required to do and establish their need for ITAC/ICALL resources and submit it to this committee.
- C. Leslie Bliven and Jim Monson from the Army National Guard addressed the committee. The National Guard will support civilian activities during a situation and were looking for information on accessing systems. Their units already have FM radios and need the ability to communicate back to Hartford. They are a separate unit from CST who already has that capability. Discussion.

CORRESPONDENCE/GRANT REVIEWS:

- A. USAR – Request of \$186,000 for radios. John Gustafson advised that they not be given the STOC’s frequencies because it would make the system unusable to anyone else. He asked what their communication needs are now, responding, and once on the scene. He felt we needed to evaluate their entire set of needs. Bill Hackett advised that the ITAC/ICALL radios they now use are possibly being returned to DPS. The original plan was for them to tie in with the FEMA frequencies but as of May 16th that is no longer an option. George Carbonell suggested that they be allowed to use the 453 portion of the STOC’s frequency pair. This would not interfere with the 458 channels being used for STOC’s and has DEMHS holding the license, being the best bet for portable onsite communications. Mike Stemmler agreed that this would fix the immediate problem.

Motion to approve the application and move to allow 453 as their operating frequency, low power, 3 channels by Keith Victor, seconded by John Gustafson. Approved unanimously, no abstentions.

B. SHSGP grant reviews: Out for review are:

East Haddam

Montville

Sherman

Stratford

Stafford

Woodstock

Southbury

NEXT MEETING:

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

Meetings open to the public.

Motion to adjourn by Keith Victor; second by Matt Valleau; approved.

Meeting adjourned at 1452hours.