



State Interoperability Executive Council Listening Session
SIEC session 6 – Plaza Hotel, Eau Claire
June 29, 2005 - 1:00 PM to 3:10 PM

At 1:00 PM the listening sessions begins with opening remarks from Major General Al Wilkening.

- Primary focus of listening sessions is to hear the needs and concerns of stakeholders and those most directly affected by interoperability
- Operational concerns are especially of great interest to the council
- While technical and financial issues are an important component of achieving interoperability, they are not the focus of the listening session
- Interoperability is vital
- Civil Support Team is a great new service and excellent resource for the state
 - o Highly trained, 22 member team which deals with tactical operations
 - o Recently there was a 3:00AM unannounced drill
 - Drill included an anthrax scenario at the Alliance Center
- From a Homeland Security and Military standpoint, its very important to support first response

Members of the Executive Council present at the session include: Major General Al Wilkening, Ann Hraychuck

PowerPoint presentation by Tom Lobe (OJA)

- Federal Engineering conducted a statewide study resulting in recommendations from needs assessments
- The recommendations detailed three components of interoperability
 - o These included governance, technical, and funding aspects
- Governance
 - o The FE study recommends authorization of a State Interoperability Committee by either legislation or executive order from the Governor
 - o FE interviews found that 93% of stakeholders indicated the need for an oversight board
 - o FE recommends that SIEC include representative stakeholders from both local and state government
 - o Executive order #87 and subsequent appointment of members to the SIEC by Governor Doyle
- Technical

- FE recommends Wisconsin adopt the methodology set forth by SAFECOM, a national program from the Department of Homeland Security
 - FE also recommends adoption of the P25 suite of standards
- Funding
 - A majority of stakeholders have indicated that funding is a significant issue in achieving interoperability
 - Approximately \$14 million has been allocated for radio interoperability projects in Wisconsin
 - Funding is directed towards voice system interoperability projects
 - Funding and grant details are available in Homeland Security Bulletin 05-4 at <http://oja.state.wi.us>
- Executive order # 87
 - On February 2, 2005 Governor Jim Doyle signed executive order # 87 relating to Wisconsin radio communication interoperability
 - Wisconsin formally
 - Recognized the importance of public safety
 - Recognized the fact that public safety interoperability has not yet been achieved in Wisconsin
 - Recognized the significance of interoperable technology to enhance public safety and homeland security
 - Distinguished the need for interoperability between and within jurisdictions
 - Acknowledges that interoperable communications requires statewide coordination and leadership
 - Establishes the State Interoperable Executive Council (SIEC)
- The SIEC Council consists of members appointed by the Governor and include
 - OJA Executive Director, Adjutant General, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, Secretary of the Department of Transportation, State's Chief Information Officer, a Chief of Police, a Sheriff, a Fire Chief, a local Emergency Management official, a Tribal official
- SIEC committees
 - Outreach Committee
 - Technical Committee
 - Operations Committee
- Mission of SIEC
 - To set goals and objectives
 - To develop a review strategy
 - Set technical and operational standards
 - Develop short and long term recommendations for local government action
- Interoperability Standards (SAFECOM methodology)
 - APCO Project 25 standards adopted

- Portable and radio hardware defined as P25 compliant, must be upgradeable for a cost not to exceed the cost of purchase in a P25 compliant state
- New or replacement radio equipment operating below 700 MHz must meet FCC narrowband requirements
- Repeater system site hardware designed to allow for upgrade to increased capability with minimum amount of hardware replacement
- Power and cooling must be sized to accommodate the installation of hardware above the initial site complement. Planning should include requirements that account for expansion capabilities up to 3 times the initial installation
- Tower loading calculations for antenna and feed line should include future installation of microwave backbone infrastructure
- Infrastructure upgrades that involve linking control points to repeaters or tower to towers, must include planning for expansion to carry both voice and data traffic

Listening session begins:

Question: Excluding funding, what are the immediate and most pressing needs of local, regional, and state jurisdictions with regard to interoperability?

(General comment):

- Does the state have a vision?
- Recommendations were made by Federal Engineering but the regional interoperability projects that we conducted show differences with the FE study
 - Interoperability studies now are a short term fix
 - FE should show a long term strategy

(Gale Sorum of OJA):

- Wisconsin has a history of strong home rule
- The intent of SIEC is not to set mandates
 - Its most beneficial to ask locals about what they need and to find a common goal
- The past history of other states and their decisions can help us decide what not to do
 - States that failed said afterwards to make sure and gain support from the bottom
 - Georgia rushed into the process and failed. Now they're forced to start over
 - They have more counties than we do
 - They also have a strong home rule history
- This should be conducted from the bottom up

(John Verhyen of Wisconsin State Patrol):

- When we say that the state and counties should be doing this, they are!
- The issue is integrating different technologies to build the state network

- Connecting these technologies is an issue
- SIEC is still a young group so there are things that they are unaware about
- At a state level we are trying to build tools and a base to implement future strategies
- VHF/800 frequency issues still exist
 - The challenge is to try and share these limited number of frequencies
- CTA consulting firm has frequency allocation module to help
 - Developing a statewide frequency plan is imperative
 - There are lots of frequencies available but they're being used
- We are meeting with vendors to see who will help pull networks together
- There are many alternatives and solutions available on the table
- We will need to build an infrastructure to support interoperability
- Information is needed from municipal and county level (grass roots)
- SIEC has been going for a few months and by the end of the year and they may have plans and solutions
 - It is not too long to wait. SIEC is doing well
 - It is a proactive solution to the interoperability problem

(John Elliott of Jackson County Emergency Management):

- I am representing one of the 13 entities in the west/central interoperability alliance
- We are continually looking for solutions
 - We have a group that looks to find solutions for our area and it works very well
 - All areas have different needs and therefore different solutions are necessary
 - How can we deal with this and bridge our solutions?

(Tom Lobe of OJA):

- One misconception about SIEC is that we are looking to find a one size fits all solution
- The goal is to take information from around the state and see how everything fits together
- Definitions of interoperability varies
- We are looking at practical solutions that involve locals as well

(Jennifer Lord-Kouraichi of Clark County Emergency Management):

- West /Central interoperability alliance is working
- Thanks to the Governor and OJA for the money and the study
- A major issue is unused resources
 - "Badgernet"
 - Many opportunities to use 'voice over IP' to link dispatch centers
- A good solution may include using MARC repeaters for the counties
 - It's a good resource for mutual communication
- Look at multiple frequencies that aren't being repeated
 - We can use and repeat them
 - How about establishing some mutual aid frequencies on repeaters?
- Talking on a county level is very important
- Solutions are best when shared

(Ann Hraychuck - Council):

- Technology is not the biggest problem
 - o The sandbox issue continues to haunt us

(Jennifer Lord-Kouraichi of Clark County Emergency Management):

- Look at global reprogramming
- Our region believes in the solution and we need to look to a statewide level

(Gary Kollman of St. Croix County Emergency Management):

- I understand that the state paid for the Federal Engineering study
 - o There seemed to be a focus for the state to convert to UHF trunking
 - o That idea should be looked into
- Is the money being spent wisely?

(Gale Sorum of OJA):

- The Federal Engineering study pulled together surveys, studies, compiled information and conducted interviews to determine the state of interoperability in Wisconsin
 - o After the tabulation, in addition to WEM information, their recommendations aren't necessarily and totally applicable statewide
 - o They made numerous recommendations
 - o Most were common sense and included the idea of using as much existing technologies as possible
 - o Use old systems and interconnect systems in place
 - o By April/May it was seen that much of the data used was old and voluntarily given so there were clearly holes in the information
- The more interoperability people are willing to take on, the more money they should receive
- FE should have had more guidance as to what is needed
- It is best to develop short and long range goals
 - o Narrowbanding is a solution some have thought of but it forces the replacement of many radios up north
 - o The 800s give us significant reprogramming issues
- The FCC recommends in each state an organization with the responsibility to carry out directives for interoperability such as the SIEC
- OJA funding can include interoperability items and not just radios and hardware
- Wisconsin is probably in the lower third of all states in interoperability capabilities
- It may be wise to look at NIMS for direction

(Lois Ristow of Wisconsin Emergency Management):

- There seems to be lots of technical talk but basically it comes down to a lack of planning at the real base of the problem
- If the emphasis is on planning, money isn't a huge factor
- There aren't just physical, but also technological issues to take into consideration
- Plans can be expanded and modified
- Working with local committees and elected officials may be the key

(General comment):

- Hard-nosed home rule is working against us
- Mandates are working for incident command
- The process is confusing an inefficient when command is not clearly defined
- Organizations and agencies should be forced on board
- At the federal level, there are computer/internet courses on this material
 - o Rather, strings are needed to pull money for control on interoperability

(Tom Lobe of OJA):

- So what kind of incentives are needed to make everyone come together?

(General comment):

- Money

(Hal Swanstrom of Eau Claire Emergency Management):

- There are ways to entice people
 - o There needs to be a good, working model to demonstrate that a system can work for us
 - o What about a scale model or tabletop?
 - o This would help define goals

(General comment):

- SAFECOM recommendations say funding should go to the agencies that are affecting larger areas
- Is this how OJA views the issue?

(Gale Sorum of OJA):

- We are talking about interoperability
- Of the money allocated to Wisconsin, the larger portions will go toward areas which promote SIEC recommendations
- Money for interoperability must be spent on interoperability
 - o But that money is not enough to cover everything
 - o Other funds are encouraged for use in these areas

Question: What should we consider an acceptable level of interoperability?

(General comment):

- We need direction
 - o Solutions cannot be decided on until we can define what we want

(General comment):

- We have regional teams and task forces
 - o If they're deployed around the state we need to communicate with them and other teams
 - o Statewide interoperability is essential

(Lois Ristow of Wisconsin Emergency Management):

- A few years ago we tested communication around the Mississippi River with Minnesota
 - o There are definitely dead spots for communications, especially around Pepin
- I don't need to talk to Milwaukee directly but must have links of some sort to pass on information

- o Identification of frequencies is necessary but difficult
- Can we take what we have and make links and forge connections?

(Major General Al Wilkening - Council):

- Military interoperability is vital
- I monitored high speed chase on the Beltline
 - o Many agencies were involved and not communicated
- Why isn't there a tactical frequency?
 - o Apparently there is a lack of use of the system

(Pam McInnis of Eau Claire County 911)

- I agree with Lois
- From a communications center perspective
 - o We're busy
 - o There's too much stress on our system
 - o The system cannot handle 100% relay especially with a large incident in addition to other issues

(John Elliott of Jackson County Emergency Management):

- The Jackson County EM needs to be in communication with all of Jackson county and that is an acceptable level
 - o This doesn't mean it's necessary to talk with the other half of the state
 - o Mutual aid includes all neighbors
- The study was not good in seeing who we need to talk to
 - o Regional agencies need to communicate directly regionally
 - o Not all agencies need the same level of interoperability
 - o Needs assessments are crucial
 - Everyone doesn't need to talk to everyone else all of the time

(General comment):

- Every region has borders
 - o Regional plans may overlap so the big picture is needed
 - o Every week line makes for flaws in the system and a loophole for terrorists
- Something else to look at is the switch in protocol changes
 - o There is much confusion on a technical level
 - o System need to be simplified since we're dealing with the 'human factor'
 - o Practice and integration is a good step in overlapping systems

(Jennifer Lord-Kouraichi of Clark County Emergency Management):

- SIEC should establish protocols, mutual aid frequencies, and general frequencies for the state
- Area solutions are necessary

(Major General Al Wilkening - Council):

- FAA has some common frequencies
- There are some tactical frequencies available too

(General comment):

- It works if all are on high band
- UHF and VHF tactical channels are not an option

(Cynthia Engelke of Monroe County Emergency Management):

- Has SIEC looked at federal military installations?
- They've gone digital
 - o Fort McCoy
- Will the state help operational concerns here?

Question: What non-technological issue remains the biggest hurdle to achieving radio interoperability?

(General comment):

- It's a people issue
 - o There simply aren't enough people working together
- Its also a matter of willingness rather than just ability
 - o When looking at the state as a whole, cooperation is essential

(Gale Sorum of OJA):

- Ten codes are something to be amended
 - o They are not uniform
 - o Cause more confusion than good
- Cross training for hooking dispatching

(John Elliott of Jackson County Emergency Management):

- Under the NIMS plan that was laid out, plain talk was suggested
 - o Plain talk is a better alternative than the ten codes

(Lois Ristow of Wisconsin Emergency Management):

- It is good to set standards
- I'm not worried about everyone getting on board
 - o People will fall into place once the system is set up
 - o Long term strategies will work out and they will have to adjust
 - o It's best now to help the eager ones to get the process going

(Edward Kassing of Eau Claire Fire Rescue):

- There is no need to reinvent the wheel
- There are good models already available to look at

Question: What training issues need to be addressed to achieve radio interoperability?

(Hal Swanstrom of Eau Claire Emergency Management):

- Any work on repeating systems would be helpful
 - o There must be a policy for who is using repeaters
- At a time of emergency there needs to be training, planning, and coordination
 - o Tower strength needs to be analyzed
 - o This presents a real challenge for the future

Question: What role should vendors play in the future of interoperability?

(Tom Lobe of OJA):

- There are some concerns already raised in regards to some agencies being 'held hostage' because of reliance on one vendor

- Sellers are writing RFPs, etc.

(Hal Swanstrom of Eau Claire County Emergency Management):

- The vendors have been helpful with knowledge and we welcome their expertise
- P25 is good solution

(Ann Hraychuck - Council):

- What about state bids?

(Gale Sorum of OJA):

- We have had multiple vendors
 - o We have standardized design with pieces to be filled
 - o State procurement is /has been used
 - Not as a system though. Only for parts
- We could look at engineers to build a system and then make them responsible for it
 - o This is an issue not just for vendors but also engineers

Question: What is the role of municipal, county, and tribal governments in interoperability?

(General comment):

- To coordinate with the state

(Lois Ristow of Wisconsin Emergency Management):

- It isn't possible to communicate unless you know who you're communicating with
- Know the people in the system and learn to be comfortable interacting with them routinely

(General comment):

- It seems that the SIEC committee is unbalanced
- Half of the people on it represent law enforcement
 - o What about volunteers and other agencies?
 - o People will notice (eventually) the tipped scales

(Gale Sorum of OJA)

- SIEC has a diverse composition
 - o Look at the committee level
 - o If there are questions or concerns about the composition of the SIEC, then recommend someone

General comment (Jeff Hein of the Price County Emergency Management):

- We are already sold on interoperability
- There are problems with leadership (County Boards)
- Many boards don't see the need to fund interoperability since terrorists do not directly effect them (that is the mindset)
- Elected officials make the decisions
 - o Appeal to them by using education
 - o Since the officials are elected
 - Extend the education to the general public
 - The public needs to want it too

(Ann Hraychuck - Council):

- We are looking at a statewide Mayors Association for extending the education

(Cynthia Engelke of Monroe County Emergency Management):

- Make sure to bring the training and education to them
 - o Don't make them come find you
 - o They won't bend over backwards for you
- Bring these issues to the county clerks because they can help set up this initial contact

(Frank Karnauskas of MN Metro Radio Board):

- Good job on taking these steps
- It is essential to talk to one another
- Build it and they will come

(Major General Al Wilkening - Council):

- There was a National Homeland Security Meeting where 4 major points were clearly defined
 - o Intelligence fusion
 - o Networking
 - o Exercise
 - o Don't expect money from the feds to increase

Final comments submitted by Ann Hraychuck on behalf of Dean Roland who could not be present for the meeting

Immediate and most pressing needs:

Equipment that is compatible with other agencies, common frequencies, roam capabilities, common groupings of counties and/or other municipalities that work together on a regular basis, and common frequencies that can be utilized throughout the state for various situations.

Acceptable levels of interoperability:

It depends on the situation and demands of those involved (natural disaster, missing child, fire, fugitive hunt, plane or train crash, etc.) It also depends on the number of jurisdictions involved on a local, county, state, and federal level. This question should be considered from many different scenarios.

Non Technical issue:

Educating supervisory boards as to the need and agreements between agencies.

Vendors:

Vendors need to supply consumers with a choice of equipment that will serve the needs and at the same time be functional, meeting the needs of the economic situation of the buying agency.

Local municipality role:

Get involved ASAP with this program and have input into the process so they don't feel that big government is dictating what they will do when the deadline arrives.

Meeting Ends at 3:10 PM

Attendance at listening session:

Brian Lokkesmoe, Richard Turner, Lyle Groves, Carl Guse, Dave Kaun, Steven Moe, John Elliott, Hal Swanstrom, Jeff Hein, Jenny Moschkau, Bryan Rassbach, Richard Lindholm, Jonathan Stone, James Backus, Cynthia Engelke, Jennifer Lord-Kouraichi, Lois Ristow, Linda Thomaschefskey, Franane Van Zile, Jim Rassbach, Mark Samelstad, Steven Bahneman, Gary Kollman, Bruce Fuerbringer, Edward Kassing, Pam McInnis, Jerry Matysik, Bradley Venaas, Gale Sorum, John Verhyen, Brian Hudson, Steve Edge, Frank Karnauskas, David McCauley, Michael Knoll