

## STATE INTEROPERABILITY COUNCIL MUTUAL AID FREQUENCY COORDINATING GROUP

APRIL 26, 2011  
OFFICE OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE  
1 S PINCKNEY STREET  
MADISON, WI 53703  
10:00AM

### MEETING MINUTES

#### CALL TO ORDER - 10:15 AM

#### ATTENDANCE

##### MEMBERS

- |   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| ▪ Thomas Czaja                              | ▪ Steve Hansen                |
| ▪ Robert Goldstein                          | ▪ Jim Meilahn                 |
| ▪ Dave Spenner                              |                               |
| ▪ Gerald Thorpe                             | ABSENT                        |
| ▪ Carl Guse                                 | ▪ Matt Joski (excused)        |
| ▪ Kent MacLaughlin                          | ▪ Paul Wittkamp (excused)     |
| ▪ Debora Johnson (alternate for Doug Meier) | ▪ Warren Warrington (excused) |
| ▪ William Bouma                             |                               |
| ▪ Jeff Ohnstad                              | OJA STAFF                     |
|   | ▪ Jennifer Lord               |

##### GUESTS

- Gene Oldenburg
- Tim Pierce

##### *QUORUM ESTABLISHED*

#### MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER BY CHAIRMAN CZAJA AT 10:15AM

#### APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 4, 2011 MFCG MEETING

##### MOTION

- Motion made by William Bouma to approve the January 4, 2011 meeting minutes with corrections
- Motion seconded by Robert Goldstein
- Motion carried

#### CORRESPONDENCES

Chairman Czaja led a group discussion regarding a letter from Patrick Beghin, Columbia County Emergency Management regarding Narrowbanding and operation on Wisconsin mutual aid frequencies. Patrick Beghin wrote a letter inquiring whether wideband operation via the current licenses on mutual aid channels will be allowed to continue until November 2012. Mr. Beghin would like to know if exceptions can be granted outside of the current time for reprogramming mutual aid channels, which is April- November 2011. Members discussed the various options and decided that the policy for reprogramming mutual aid channels by November 2011 will be upheld since it is an Interoperability Council policy. In the letter, Beghin also expressed concern about the reprogramming of POINT and State EMS channels. He asked the committee to consider designating an exact date for narrow banding those channels. Chairman Czaja stated that the policy has been in place for almost 2 years and it is difficult to change. Additionally, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has alerted public safety agencies for more

than 10 years about the date for Narrowbanding, which has given agencies more than enough time to financially plan for Narrowbanding. Guse said that as of this date, approximately 39 counties have narrowband plans, and 4 have already completed Narrowbanding the radios for their county. There was discussion among the members about the deadline, and the pros and cons of altering the date. It was decided by group consensus that the timeframe of April to November 2011 will be upheld. Chairman Czaja will respond with a letter reflecting the group's opinion.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

**MFCG/SCIP Policy Development Committee** - Dave Spenner led a discussion on the activities of the MFCG/SCIP Policy Development Committee. The SOP draft will be completed with one additional meeting. Spenner would like to meet on May 12th, to review the plan, and create a final version for the MFCG to consider. Spenner asked the group if they would like to create a governance booklet for all the rules, in a similar fashion to what the State System Management Group is doing for WISCOM.

#### **MOTION**

- Motion made by Dave Spenner to develop a draft document that will incorporate charter, bylaws, Annex K, and universal standard operating procedures for all interoperability channels and WISCOM, into an administrative manual for review by the MFCG.
- Motion seconded by William Bouma
- Motion carried

**Update on the Racine County/Illinois DNR MARC Issue and MARC repeater coordination for Racine and Lafayette counties** - Chairman Czaja received a letter from Dave Pagel, regional frequency coordinator for the Forestry Conservation Communications Association, notifying the committee that the requirement for a letter of concurrence from Illinois for a MARC Repeater in Racine and Lafayette Counties has been removed. Guse said that there are a few changes that Racine had to make to their application, however, they have been completed and the application is preceding forward. Lafayette County resubmitted their application at 160 watts, and has passed the coordination process, and is being considered by the FCC.

**Discussion regarding updates on Annex K to the SCIP Plan including VTAC##DG and distribution of the Annex** - The updated Annex K has been posted to the website, and the website has been updated both in the document library and in the governance section.

**Discussion regarding the SASIG's review of ICS 205 into Appendix D of the SCIP Plan** - The SASIG has not met since the last meeting, so this item will be delayed until the June meeting.

**Distribution and discussion regarding NEWCOM's policy for use of VTAC 36 for tactical operations** - Gerald Thorpe said that NEWCOM is planning on having a meeting in the next month to discuss the proposal to use VTAC 36 for tactical operations. MacLaughlin says WEM has been in discussion with the SWAT teams regarding the use of encryption on VTAC 36. Guse says that we need to wait for NEWCOM to discuss the use of the NEWCOM encryption code for SWAT team operation statewide. If NEWCOM rejects the proposal, then the MFCG will need to reconsider an encryption code for SWAT operations on VTAC 36. Jim Meilahn (from WEM) said that WEM is encouraging SWAT teams to work with the RICS to coordinate the use of encryption on mutual aid channels. Guse said that the regional SWATs can start the process by programming VTAC 36 into their radios. They can also consider purchasing mobile repeaters for tactical use. The MFCG will have to create a policy for releasing the key to SWAT teams around the state. Thorpe says that NEWCOM is trying to create a common policy for the distribution and programming of the encryption code to appropriate public safety entities. By the next meeting, NEWCOM should have a standardized encryption code for their members.

**Discussion regarding DES no longer an active P25 encryption standard** - Guse was notified by Craig Jorgensen, chairman of the P-25 committee, via email that DES is no longer a P-25 encryption standard. From a P-25 perspective, DES is not recommended because it is no longer a standardized platform and there is no way to certify any form of DES compliance between different brands of equipment. Members discussed the possibility of creating a state-wide AES encryption code. It was determined that the MFCG will wait for NEWCOM's decision before considering a state-wide AES encryption code.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Discussion regarding standardized naming of local/tactical channels** - Gene Oldenburg, Southeast Regional Interoperability Coordinator developed a Radio Channel Naming Standards document for the MFCG to review. He said that the end users need an instruction manual on how to use radios. Oldenburg says that the channel name is not important, what matters is that everyone calls it the same thing. He did some research on a recent Kansas City UASI communications exercise, and says that it is preferred that all counties follow a protocol for naming their local channels. Oldenburg recommends that the MFCG create a similar protocol in Wisconsin, based on the Channel Naming Standards document that Carl Guse distributed in 2006. He says that through the regional councils, there is an opportunity to create this standard for the entire state. He also recommended that there be an end date created for implementation of the standard naming of local frequencies. Guse thanked Oldenburg for bringing this issue forward. He said that the first group to implement the naming convention was the West Central Interoperability Alliance (WCIA) in 2006, with the purchase of a regional repeater system. Guse would like to see more counties implement the naming convention, but mentioned that there could be some controversy in implementing this on a state-wide basis. He said that the Narrowbanding requirements present a great opportunity for the regional coordinators to implement the standard naming convention. Oldenburg said that this document builds upon Carl's original document, and gives locals the opportunity to create a standardized naming convention. He says that this can affect multiple players, including public health and EMS. Guse said that his document was based on standards created by the national naming convention standards. Czaja said that standardizing channel naming will make it easier to coordinate multi agency responses. There were some problems during the response to the Capital Protests because law enforcement agencies had the same frequency on their radios, but each agency used a different name for that frequency. This demonstrates the need for using standardized naming of frequencies. Some group discussion about the issue ensued. MacLaughlin agreed with the need for standardized naming based on experiences at SIMCOM and the Capitol Protests. Czaja recommended that the group incorporate a standardized naming convention into the MFCG Administrative Manual. Goldstein said that he is starting on a standardized list of channel names for the Milwaukee area, and would like to be involved in working on a standardized naming convention. Oldenburg said that he will further discuss the proposal with other RICs and bring their opinion and a draft document back to the MFCG on June 28<sup>th</sup>. Czaja thanked Oldenburg for bringing this issue to the MFCG.

**Discussion regarding Green County MARC Repeater** - The voting system of the MARC Repeater in Green County malfunctioned, causing it to remain on for an extended period of time. The problem is in the process of being fixed and should not affect MARC operations in the future.

**Discussion regarding VTAC36 repeater test** - The use of repeated VTAC 36 has been tested and is currently in use on the 80 foot WEM tower. MacLaughlin said that this will be very helpful because now the tower will have multiple frequencies available for use during a disaster. Chief Hansen from Racine mentioned that he plans to program his portable repeater to operate on VTAC 36 as well.

**Discussion regarding changing the frequency of WEM repeaters to VTAC 36** - Kent MacLaughlin discussed the need for local agencies to program VTAC 36 into their radios.

**Email from Keith Butler, La Crosse County Emergency Management regarding IFERN** - Spenner discussed a letter from Keith Butler, La Crosse County Emergency Management, requesting to fund IFERN2 placement in dispatch centers. Spenner inquired whether the group thought that OJA should fund IFERN 2 connectivity in county dispatch centers. Bouma thinks that everyone should first have access to IFERN and then it would be appropriate to discuss providing IFERN2 connectivity via grant funding. Hansen says that the issue is more prevalent in urban areas than the rural areas. High radio traffic in Illinois can prevent access to IFERN in South Eastern Wisconsin. Hansen thinks that it is important to provide IFERN access to all MABAS counties across the state, then it should be a priority to provide IFERN2 access to dispatch centers in Southeast Wisconsin. Bouma said that it is also important to provide funding to replace base stations that cannot be narrow banded. Spenner said that approximately 25 dispatch centers have received funding from OJA for IFERN access. Czaja will respond to Mr. Butler that the priority will be to get IFERN into all applicable dispatch centers, then add IFERN2 into dispatch centers in Southeastern Wisconsin, then provide access to IFERN2 for the rest of the state.

**Distribution of ICS 205 used for protests at the State Capitol** - While he distributed the ICS 205 used for protests at the State Capitol, Chairman Czaja expressed his appreciation for the Interoperability Symposium. He thought it was an educational meeting, and appreciated the depth and knowledge of the presenters. He especially enjoyed the presentation by Jim Westover of the State Patrol and Rick Lange from Dane County Communications on using Communications Unit Leaders (COML) during the Capitol Protests.

**Discussion, critique and recommendations regarding interoperability issues and mutual aid frequencies used at the Capitol Protests** - MacLaughlin said that the narrow banding deadline presents a great opportunity to update out Mutual Aid Frequency Plan. He went on to provide an overview of interoperability at the Capitol Protests and SIMCOM and the use of VTAC. He proposed the idea of recommending that all radios have a WI Interop Zone on radios. He also suggested a priority list for first responders. Guse replied that there is a list in the back of Annex K and perhaps we could consider looking at the list. MacLaughlin also recommends that all agencies include 2-5 federal interoperability channels on their radios. MacLaughlin recommends that the emergency police services officers have at least 16 basic interoperability channels on their radios. MacLaughlin requests that the MFCG consider the possibility of switching air ambulance communications from MARC 2 to EMS-C. Guse said that there were multiple issues with doing this because this is a statewide channel. Plus there is interference on EMS-C in several parts of the state caused by private industry. Bouma said that he support the use of MARC2, because it is used across the state. Hansen said that most dispatch centers can currently monitor air operations through MARC2, however most centers cannot monitor EMS-C, so it is important to keep air ambulance operations on MARC 2. Thorpe debated that MARC2 has been used for many years; however it might be beneficial to change the frequency now that there are many additional mutual aid frequencies available. Bouma said that it is important for dispatch centers to be able to monitor air ambulance operations, so it is critical to stay on MARC2. Pierce said that perhaps we could look at alternate air operation channels during large scale events and disasters. Hansen asked if there was a possibility to use MARC 3 or 4 for air ambulances. Guse stated that there are numerous private sector conflicts on those frequencies, making it impossible to insure clear operations across the state. MacLaughlin suggests adopting a Wisconsin Incident Radio Communications Plan as a basic ICS 205. He thinks that will be very helpful for COMLs across the state. Spenner said that he would like to take some of the material from MacLaughlin's report and integrate it into the administrative guide. Czaja said that MacLaughlin did a nice job presenting the material. There was a group consensus on taking the material to the policy group for additional consideration.

**Discussion regarding email from Rob Rude, Wisconsin Emergency Management, regarding the Michigan/Wisconsin border project** - Rob Rude wrote a letter to inquire why the border county Michigan system dispatch connection is not mentioned in Annex K. Spenner said that they can be listed in the county plans. Czaja said that it would not be appropriate to list it in Annex K because it is not a statewide initiative. Guse agreed and said that the material should only be reflected in a county level plan because it is not a conventional mutual aid channel. Czaja will respond with an email to Rob Rude reflecting this consensus.

#### **AUTHORIZATIONS**

**Request from Franklin and Greendale Tactical Response Team to use 8TACGOLD, 8TACBLACK and 8TACGRAY** - Carl Guse wrote an authorization letter to Franklin and Greendale Tactical Response Team to use 8TACGOLD, 8TACBLACK and 8TACGRAY.

**Request from the City of Oconomowoc to license a VHF base on VTAC11, VLAW31, IFERN and MRAC 2**  
Guse says that the City of Oconomowoc has been licensed to use a VHF base on VTAC11, VLAW31, IFERN and MARC 2.

#### **NEW DISCUSSION**

There was some new discussion about authorizing ARES/RACES to use mutual aid channels. RACES is authorized to use public safety frequencies on a national level. This application would extend that that authorization to ARES for amateur radio operators working with state and local departments. They would only use these frequencies while assisting public safety departments. There was group discussion about allowing ARES to operate on mutual aid frequencies. There will be an agenda item at a future meeting for this issue. There was also discussion about the most recent SSMG Technical Meeting regarding service specific talk-groups on WISCOM for regional specialty teams such as collapse rescue, HAZMAT, Bomb Squads and SWAT teams. The group discussed the possibility

presented with these new talk-groups and it was decided that the group would put this item on the next meeting agenda.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION**

- Motion to adjourn made by Robert Goldstein to adjourn
- Motion seconded by Gerald Thorpe
- Motion carried

**MEETING ADJOURNED AT 2PM**