

Alaska Interoperable Communications Committee

AKICC

February 11, 2009 Meeting Minutes

Next Meeting: March 18, 2009

AST Trooper Headquarters
Anchorage

Anchorage- Marriott Hotel

Major Leveque, Co-Chair DPS
Bryan Fisher, Co-Chair DHS&EM
Kathryn Pyne, DNR
Ted Smith, DHSS
Frank Wesser, DEC
Tim Bundy, DHSS
Tom Smayda, Mat-Su Borough
Michael Paschall, Rural LEPC
Rust Lasell, Denali Borough
Brad Johnson, Fire Chiefs
Peter Murphy, ALMR User's Council
Chris Bushoe, Anchorage FD
John Dickens, ASEC
Kathy Day, DHS&EM

At Large Telephonic

Jeff Tucker, North Star VFD

Guests

Terry Knight- FEMA Region 10
Doug Schoenwald- Telecommunications Planner, DHS&EM
Karl Edwards- Mobile Command Center Project Manager, DHS&EM

Call to Order: 0900

Roll Call and Introductions

Acceptance of Minutes from January 21, 2009

Guest Speaker: Terry Knight

FEMA Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator

Terry thanked everyone for letting him speak. He then showed a slide presentation highlighting the work of Region 10's Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG). Note should be made that Kathy has a copy if anyone would like to view it. He summarized that the Region 10 RECCWG meets twice a year and that it has to submit a report to Congress annually. Members from the AKICC that are on the committee are: Major Leveque, Bryan Fisher, Kathy Day and Chris Bushoe. Currently the Region 10 RECCWG consists of 21 members covering all of the region's states, but there is a push to make the group larger. Currently Region 10's main activity consists of drafting an Emergency Communications Annex Plan for Alaska. This plan is intended to cover the first 96 hours of a large event. The goal is trying to know what Alaska doesn't have so FEMA can provide assistance in the event of large incident or disaster. He also stated that originally the next meeting of the RECCWG was scheduled for May of 2009, but due to many other priorities occurring in May, it may be moved to June of 2009. Tom Smayda asked if locals can contact Terry directly. Terry answered that his job to assist the State so Bryan and Kathy needed to be included in any conversation pertaining to resources. However, he also said that anyone can contact him for information or with questions at: terry.knight@dhs.gov. Terry went on to say that the first point of contact for local jurisdictions should be the State and that FEMA's goal is to assist Alaska and other states in his region when requested to do so.

Bryan added that he and Major Leveque attended the first RECCWG meeting and that it was a valuable experience. Budget wise, if there isn't enough money for FEMA to pay for Alaskans to attend the upcoming RECCWGs, funding can be provided through the various interoperable communications grant programs.

SERC Training Committee

Bryan brought up the fact that he would like a nomination from someone on the AKICC to sit in on the SERC Training Committee. KT Pyne volunteered but added that it would be great if she could have an alternate for the instances she could not attend, especially during fire season. John Dickens volunteered to act as the alternate.

Tribal Representation

Tribal representation on the AKICC was brought up as an agenda item. Bryan stated that he had several discussions during the SCIP Implementation meeting on February 10, 2009 with Fred Brower (North Slope Borough), Archie Ferguson (Northwest Arctic Borough) and Pete Petram (Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium). Pete's recommendation was to bring in someone from the Alaska Association of Village Council Presidents (AAVCP) which covers all villages including those in unorganized boroughs. John Dickens said that the AAVCP works well with the VPSO program, and that they are interested in civil defense and communications. However, he felt that they sometimes needed oversight supervision. Bryan added that the AKICC will work with AAVCP to request a representative to serve on the committee. A spot for a tribal representative has already been added to the organizational chart in the AKICC Charter.

Radio Reallocation

Bryan then brought up the issue of radio reallocation. Currently DHS&EM is tasked with making sure property purchased through various grant programs is accounted for and re-allocated when it is no longer needed by a jurisdiction. This came up recently with Fairbanks Fire when they replaced their EF Johnson radios. Bryan would like to make it a requirement that all grant communications equipment be re-allocated through the AKICC. He also believes that when equipment is reallocated, it should go to local jurisdictions. Chief Cummings of Fairbanks Fire told the DHS&EM grants staff that the Division of Forestry is interested in their old radios. Brad Johnson stated that there are actually two sets of radios. Brad is also replacing his. The problem is that although they are not totally useless, they are no longer supported by the manufacturer. Also, even though they are ALMR compatible, they are VHF. Bryan stated he will work with the DHS&EM grants staff to be sure these types of requests get filtered through the AKICC. The committee will then decide where the radios will go.

Frank Wesser brought up the issue of how to surplus conventional equipment. He wanted to know the process and thought that usually such items go to General Services (GS). Bryan thought we could talk to General Services about this. Frank thought that the equipment also goes to the Enterprise Technology Services (ETS) shop for property transfer, and they get the calls from interested parties, but there is also a channel for GS use. Pete Murphy stated that Saber radios aren't compatible and are not

narrowband. Major Leveque stated that AST has had conversations with Search and Rescue about this matter. AST told Search and Rescue that they will give them their radios and Major Leveque thought that the FCC won't come and take them away. Major Leveque said that the AST radios are older but not junk. They might be part of a bigger picture because they're not upgradable, not compliant and they are not sure how much it will cost to reprogram them.

Rusty Lasell stated they are looking to ramp up their communications capabilities in the schools because during their last exercise they found the schools had no real capabilities. They want to give key people in the schools radios. Tom Smayda stated that the Mat-Su Borough has a large school district and they have walkie talkies they can't use. This played out during the recent bomb threat they had. Bryan stated that all radios don't have to be ALMR compatible, and can function to allow people to talk when the phones are down. KT Pyne added there is a need to keep the legacy systems up. Frank Wesser stated that surplus radio requests come to them from park rangers when they hear about spare radios. Bryan stated that he and Kathy will take this project on as an action item to see how DHS&EM will handle the reallocation issue. Additionally, it needs to be determined how to reach out to various jurisdictions to distribute excess radios. It will be the job of the AKICC to figure out the reallocation of unwanted radios and how to re-allocate things to the un-served and underserved. Mike Paschall agreed with Bryan that re-allocation requests should come through the AKICC for radios purchased with federal dollars and that this can apply to all radios and interoperable equipment as well. Mike wanted to know if the committee will be making the radios available to everyone. Brad Johnson thought that once an assessment is done, the committee will see where the radios are needed.

Bryan added that he doesn't want State agencies to get them and would prefer they go to the un-served and underserved. Pete Murphy brought up the issue of spectrum. Bryan stated that when radios are reallocated, jurisdictions and agencies will get the radios "as is" and will need to reprogram them, get licenses, etc. Brad Johnson stated that once the committee gets the equipment to the "have nots", we will have to provide back up to them for things like technical assistance. Bryan stated we'll get hard number for the Fairbanks Fire radios and then see who needs them. Tom Smayda questioned whether, for state owned radios and equipment, does ETS need to buy in? Frank Wesser thought that based on experience

with ETS, there are parties that step up looking for radios and who meet with ETS periodically.

Other Business: Inventory and Programming

Rusty Lasell brought up the issue of inventorying Emergency Medical Services equipment. He was asking about what to do after their life cycle of ten years. Bryan told him to refer to the DHS&EM property handbook that can be found online. Bryan also stated that grants person Jim King usually keeps track of such things. Tom Smayda stated that there is a \$5,000.00 cap just for the radios which doesn't include programming, batteries, encryption, etc, which are counted as part of the cost.

Rusty also brought up the issue that there are an awful lot of people programming radios but there is no consistency in how this is done. He thought maybe the various company reps could get together to get some consistency. Brad Johnson stated that for ALMR there are a minimum set number of talk groups that have to be programmed. Mike Paschall stated that every month their guy reprograms their minimum volume setting but that this sometimes creates problems in the field. He thought that it would be a great opportunity if all the programmers got together to determine a consistent way to program radios. Bryan stated there are SIMPLEX frequencies out there with NPSTC (National Public Safety Telecommunication Council) channels that can be set as a minimum template. He thought that the committee could start work with vendors. Tom Smayda thought that this would benefit Mat-Su since they don't have a full-time radio person and someone just does it "on the fly". KT added that ETS doesn't have many folks to do programming. Frank Wesser knows when he needs programming he puts in a work order to ETS. Major Leveque stated that AST's experience has been that sometimes the programmer can make the radios way too complicated. As they train people to unlock Motorola's list, they are learning that every button can do thirty things. He wants to know how they can give radios so that things aren't over complicated. AST has had problems with emergency button activations that were done by mistake. Rusty stated that the threshold is to keep things simple and there are functions that make things easier, such as caller ID that is user friendly. KT brought up the possibility of having a class for

communications technicians that would be a notch below COML training, whereby locals can be trained in programming. Brad Johnson agreed that this could be a step down. He stated that fire still does tech training and the National Wildfire Coordinating Group has basic training like that. Bryan thought that perhaps this training could be taken and “Alaskanized”.

Additional Comments

John Dickens thought that there should be some discussion about worst case scenarios. He stated that he was recently at a meeting where he was involved in figuring out how to medivac people out in case of the volcano eruption. If satellites get knocked out what kind of infrastructure do we have? What kind of backup systems do we have? He added, “When we go out we really go out”. Tom Smayda encouraged him to talk to ham radio operators. Brad Johnson stated that he also brings ham operators in during emergencies. KT thought that the assessments that are being done should look at alternatives for back-up systems during a worse case scenario

Meeting was adjourned at 9:50.