

CENTRAL MINNESOTA USER COMMITTEE
Tuesday, October 14, 2008, 6:30 p.m.
Alexandria Fire Hall
Douglas County

MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. Benton County – Marie Herbst
2. Douglas County – Dave Pedersen, Rick Wagner
3. Grant County – Chad Biss, Jon Combs
4. Kandiyohi County – Stacey “Ace” Bonnema, Marvin Calvin
5. Meeker County – Rich Christianson, Joel Engler, Greg Gilbertson
6. Otter Tail County – Dallas Grewe, Mark Hovland, Doug Whiting
7. City of St. Cloud – Tom Justin, Chuck Koetter
8. Stearns County – Paul McIntyre, Jay Sikkink
9. Stevens County – Justin Howe
10. Todd County – Bob Cuchna, James Kreemer, Steve Peterson
11. Wadena County – Donald Weniger

MEMBERS ABSENT:

12. Big Stone County
13. Mille Lacs County
14. Morrison County
15. Pope County
16. Sherburne County
17. Swift County
18. Traverse County
19. Wilkin County
20. Wright County

CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting called to order by Chair Paul McIntyre at 6:35 p.m.

ROLL CALL/INTRODUCTIONS:

Quorum present with 11 of 20 entities present. Introductions were conducted.

COMMUNICATIONS:

No communications since last meeting.

INCIDENTS:

Jay Sikkink asked St. Cloud Corrections to report on their drill. Last week Corrections had a drill where they requested outside agencies such as Stearns, Sherburne, and Benton Counties to participate. They are all in different frequencies and used a patch from Stearns County to use their VHF utilizing mobile task force, communications worked much better and more clear than anticipated. Jay stated Stearns County purchased two of these communication patch devices, one is stationary and the other is mobile. They are in the process of working out a procedure on who to contact to check it out, process, etc. and added the devices were not very expensive.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Dave Pedersen moved to approve minutes, Chuck Koetter second to approve minutes of August 12, 2008, upon a vote motion carried.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chuck Koetter moved, Jay Sikkink second to approve agenda, upon a vote motion carried.

REPORTS:

SRB/ARMER UPDATE; MnDPS/MnDOT:

SRB Update:

A lot of communications discussed at the SRB with the need to communicate with Canada, the state is looking as what information is confidential such as tower sites, it is in a subcommittee status at this time and in a few weeks a decision should be made.

Interop Committee

Tom, Jay, Tim Lee, and Richard Neitz had a meeting last week on interop and how they will communicate on VHF in the central area in the interim. Tim Lee will be putting together a matrix indicating a console with utilizing towers and repeaters as the state patrol could handle the traffic in a pursuit as it will cross several counties and jurisdictions. He is also checking into other options and cost feasibility in the interim since over the next several years Central MN will not have all agencies on 800. Andy Faith stated if there is a long chase, MNSEF channel will not be able to cover it all and can the State Patrol switch over once that is reached and Tom Justin stated yes that was considered when finding a workable solution. Tom explained how the process of a console is utilized using the various towers, resources, crossing the jurisdictions, and the advantage of utilizing the State Patrol to manage the pursuit and the reduced training of staff needed. A big issue to consider is when the pursuit leaves this region, how is it handed off from there taking into consideration talk groups, tactical channels, their boundary limitations, and resources being utilized.

Dave Pedersen stated they also have bioterrorism concerns.

OTC Update:

Jay Sikkink stated there was an OTC meeting today and they are working a lot on clean up of standards. Originally they were all created in the Metro; they then created the State Radio Board which adopted all of the Metro standards and now they are determining what is a State or Regional standard. They are renumbering the standards and creating a standard on how to make a standard. They also are working on the aviation plan where the DNR helicopters, State Patrol, and Lifelink communicate; one test flight was completed and they anticipate on another test flight next week and hope to have an answer in the near future.

There was a graph hand out which is the stats for the RNC (Republican National Convention). They had 18 primary tacticals to run the RNC, states are over eight days, at one point they had 2800 active radios on the system, for the eight-day period they had 20 hours of talk time and only 1 minute 30 seconds total of busies and for all tacticals there was over 100 hours of talk time and only 1 minute 30 seconds total busies. Jay is looking for stats on the Democratic National Convention to compare results.

Jay handed out Standard 2.5a which explains how a talk group approval process takes.

CMNRRB UPDATE:

The CMNRRB will meet at the end of this month and have not met since the last User meeting.

REPORTS: (CONTINUED)

CMNRAC UPDATE:

RAC meeting was last Friday, still working on the training facility at Alexandria College to see if they can be utilized as a training facility and use the system.

Looking at hiring a Central MN Project Coordinator which will help with the TIC Plan; grant money is available for this position, a committee was formed to draft job description and duties, awaiting RRB approval and will be hiring someone this fall.

Mark Englund is heading up the ring-boundary counties as there are counties in this region who may only have one tower in their county yet another tower(s) may be in phase 456 and are asking the SRB to build out all of these towers in a priority process for these counties so we can get these counties on the system sooner as they are ready to go onto the system.

Talked about standards such as when you come onto the system, what type of paperwork and approval process is needed.

Completing county studies that GeoComm was hired to complete for each county on what it will take to go 800, interop, etc. Plans are coming along; they are behind schedule and will be completing the regional plan once the county plans are complete. Mille Lacs County has now approved to be a part of this region.

Discussed the need to have all colleges and universities complete a study and how they may come onto or the need to come onto the system. Tom Justin added the MNSCUE may also be completing these studies and did not want to duplicate so that is why it is tabled until after the first of the year.

Tom Justin stated encryption was also discussed, currently no one runs all of their traffic encrypted a main reason is you don't want to hide your communication and have the chance of being sued as air traffic is public information made as an executive decision by the FCC. There may be times under Chapter 13 where the data may be investigative and can be encrypted. He explained the difference of when encryption may be needed. Discussion at the RAC is a standard should be written as to when encryption is utilized and the RAC felt it should be discussed at the User Committee. Perhaps write a standard as to when or where to utilize encryption and if day to day traffic should be encrypted. Another concern would be for inmate transport and if encryption would be a safety concern and not only just investigative.

Discussed if medical information such as HIPPA data is private as it may be essential data and it was determined that patient data at his point is not private data. Chair McIntyre stated they are not releasing any more information from the medical side as the data is already released by the time they arrive. Question was asked what the difference was of utilizing the current radios that entities use and if they need something confidential, why can't they utilize a cell phone. Tom stated because you can monitor cell phone conversations and you can't encryption. It was asked what Metro is utilizing; Tom stated it has been addressed by them following a lawsuit and stated encryption will not be utilized all of the time.

Jay stated his concern is that radios are not encrypted all of the time as it will cause issues with the agency as well as the region. Question asked why we need a standard, Chair McIntyre stated that way it will protect the region from a lawsuit and Tom Justin stated without a standard it will be hard for the region to turn off someone who is abusing the encryption.

REPORTS: (CONTINUED)

CMNRAC UPDATE: (CONTINUED)

Question asked when an entity completes a fleet map, perhaps they encrypt some of their talk groups and others are not so they have an option to encrypt any one of their three talk groups on their tacticals. Tom Justin stated special investigations uses encryption all of the time, the regular patrol very infrequently. Jay stated there are different types of encryption depending on the tactical you are on and the type of radio you have. Bob Cuchna felt we need to include in the training the topic of encryption and the recommended uses at that time.

Tom stated Scott Wiggins sent out an email today referencing asking questions and the SRB's website will be starting to build a site such as "The Most Frequently Asked Questions." He stated once a question is asked, the answer will be sent to the various RACS to send out on their list serve and then the question will be posted on the "Frequently Asked Questions" list on the SRB's website.

CMN REGIONAL INTEROP COORDINATOR UPDATE:

See above.

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND NEW BUSINESS:

Tower Sites Update:

Tom Justin stated Dave Klema is sending out emails as towers are lit up. He had coverage all the way up to Alexandria, last week he went to Ortonville to the RAC and had coverage from Glenwood on and off the whole way except approximately eight miles from Ortonville. He had a map available with all current tower sites and microwaves.

Funding and Grant Writing:

Chair McIntyre asked for any new funding sources - Meeker County just received a US Fish and Wildlife grant and purchased four radios from the RNC. He stated funds are available approximately every year. Jay stated there are approximately 90 radios left from the RNC and they are approximately \$600 off the price. Chair McIntyre stated they are model 2500's and includes desktop charger, extra battery, and encryption capable.

Question about sales tax on radios, Jay stated they have legislators working on this and it is requesting the sales tax be retroactive from the first of the year.

Telecommunicating or Centralized Meetings:

Chair McIntyre stated at last meeting we discussed centralized meetings, suggesting Pope, Todd, and Douglas Counties. Question with Pope County is they charge for meetings and asked if we want to rotate between Todd and Douglas County. *Greg Gilbertson moved to have meetings in Alexandria, Jon Combs second, upon a vote motion carried.*

Tom Justin moved the RRB pay a stipend for coffee, supplies, and facility fee not to exceed \$20 per meeting, Greg Gilbertson second, upon a vote, motion carried.

10 Codes – Plain Talk Radio Communications:

Tom Justin stated the State is looking at a standard that will indicate what codes will be considered a 10-code and it will be minimized to only a few. He indicated that even plain language may not mean the same from entity to entity.

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND NEW BUSINESS: (CONTINUED)

By-Laws Approval:

Dave Pedersen moved to approve amendments as presented, Jay Sikkink second, upon a vote motion carried. These will then be presented to the RRB at their October meeting for approval. Tom Justin suggested under Article VIII, Section B after materials to change the word “will” to “shall” to be consistent with other board languages.

Ron Vegemast Letters:

Tom Justin explained the original and second Vegemast letters, and Scott Wiggins’ Responses on August 25th and a second letter dated September 19th. At this point of time, ARMER will no longer respond to any further letters, Central MN RAC Chair Myers and Stearns County Interop Committee Chair Sikkink responded to the letters and indicated no one contacted either of them on the performance of system in Central MN. Tom stated if anyone sees any additional letters regarding this to feel free to forward the letter(s) to either himself or Micah Myers. Debbie will send the letters out on the list serve for informational purposes.

Phase 3 Build-Out Status and Boundaries:

Tom Justin asked the State for a contact to be notified when tower information becomes available and progress is being made, this will be sent out on the listserv through Debbie.

Other Items of Interest:

Jay thanked Bruce DeBlied and his staff for all their hard work getting the towers up and the progress they are making. He stated the New London, Hoffman, and Kimball towers had additional steel put on them to reinforce the towers.

Tom stated he has the State Statute for anyone interested in the Outside of the Levy Limit and the house file number for the matching PSIC funding.

Chair Myers asked for any additions to future meetings, Dave Pedersen stated their bioterrorism group purchased radios and he has concern that they do not have a process in place to get these radios set up and are unsure what will happen to the radios and how they get them set up for the parties that need to get them set up. Jay felt perhaps a subcommittee may need to be set up and come up with some talk groups and fleet mapping such as Stearns County did. Chair McIntyre stated their group should address it and bring this back to the whole group; Dave suggested them come to the bioterrorism meetings.

Tom stated who they would get the User ID’s from and Jay thought the EMS has their own set of ID’s and they could go to the State for that and it would be an EMS ID. Chair McIntyre stated there is a regional meeting on EMS and can include the Bioterrorism group. In our Central MN Radio Region there will be at least five Bioterrorism Regions within our region. Between Jay and Chair McIntyre they will coordinate with Dave on the next meeting. Bob Cuchna asked if the Bioterrorism group needs to have a participation plan to be on the system. Jay stated yes and would also need a letter to join the system and must be sponsored by a local entity therefore each pertinent county would need to sponsor them and be forward to the RAC and then the RRB for approval.

STANDARDS:

1.10d Training – 800 MHz:

Jay stated a couple of years ago a considerable amount of time was spent on training, a trainer is required to attend initial training and then attend a refresher class and need to train at least once per year to remain a certified trainer and get updated every 24 months. Every person coming onto the system must have training; a large concern was all of the volunteer firefighters involved and it was determined it is up to the individual agency to keep track of their staff and training records. A refresher course is required every 12-18 months for all personnel. Standard provides history of ARMER and what is required in the training. He stated the Central MN standard is more stringent than the State's standard.

1.10e – Interop Training Standards – Non-Participating Radio Users:

Jay stated this training includes agencies such as the VA Hospital, St. Cloud State, Sartell Schools, etc. where they have a unit that can come onto the system and may even come onto the system through a patch and they will need training as well before utilizing the system.

Appendix C – Talk Group Permission Letter Template:

Jay explained an entity will need permission to put another agency's talk group into their radio and the letter needs to be on file. For Central MN Regional Talk Groups, the permission is not required – it is only for an entity's main talk groups. It was asked if the letter needs to be complete for each separate radio or can one be filled out for the whole agency, it was clarified only one for the whole agency. Tom stated if you can hear a talk group, you can also talk on it. Question was asked why there is a checkbox for receive only on the form and it is explained because you can hear it although you are agreeing that you will never intend to talk on it and it is for scan purposes only.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

November:

November 18, 2008 at 1:00 p.m., Starbuck Community Center in Pope County.

December:

December 16, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. at Alexandria Fire Hall.

January:

January 15, 2009 at 1:00 p.m. at Alexandria Fire Hall.

ADJOURNMENT:

Dave Pedersen moved to adjourn at 8:30 p.m., Justin Howe second, upon a vote motion carried.

Minutes recorded by Debbie Backes, recording secretary.