

CENTRAL MINNESOTA USER COMMITTEE
Tuesday, November 18, 2008, 1:00 p.m.
Starbuck Community Center
Pope County

MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. Douglas County – Dave Pedersen
2. Grant County – Jon Combs, Matt Jensen
3. Kandiyohi County – Stacey “Ace” Bonnema, Brad Hanson
4. Meeker County – Rich Christianson, Joel Engler
5. Mille Lacs County – Bruce Cochran, Brian Payne
6. Otter Tail County – Dallas Grewe, Mark Hovland, Mathew McGuire, Doug Whiting
7. Stearns County – Paul McIntyre, Jay Sikkink
8. Stevens County – Judy Diehl
9. Todd County – Bob Cuchna
10. Traverse County – Stan Churchill, Amy Krenz

MEMBERS ABSENT:

11. Benton County
12. Big Stone County
13. Morrison County
14. Pope County
15. Sherburne County
16. St. Cloud, City of
17. Swift County
18. Wadena County
19. Wilkin County
20. Wright County

CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting called to order by Chair Paul McIntyre at 1:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL/INTRODUCTIONS:

No quorum present with 10 of 20 entities present. Introductions were conducted.

COMMUNICATIONS:

No communications since last meeting.

INCIDENTS:

Scott Miller stated they have allocated funds for hospitals and looking at installs tri-county, Wadena, Brainerd, Kanabec, Kline??, and hope to be live by the 1st of the year.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Dave Petersen stated there are two p’s in Hippa, minutes will be approved next month due to lack of quorum.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

No additions to agenda – can not approve due to lack of quorum.

REPORTS:

SRB/ARMER UPDATE; MnDPS/MnDOT:

SRB Update:

Jay Sikkink stated they are doing some cleanup of items and bonding for 911 went through and have been sold so the 800 system will continue to roll out.

OTC Update:

Jay stated the Operations and Technical Committee have been working a lot on cleaning up the State standards, realized no one had a complete list of all standards from MnDOT, State, SRB, etc. Numbering system was very confusing with skipped numbers, duplicate, etc. He stated it will be on the RAC agenda for this region on Friday to review. The goal is to have a standard be the same across the state i.e. standard 3 – “How to Utilize Talk Groups” in Central Region, it would be the same numbering if in a different region. There will be a central DPS to maintain the standard list state-wide. Jay stated they mainly concentrated on the Metro and State standards and then Central MN will be added.

Jay stated standard 2.5a will become 2.9 and reference to approval process to obtain a state-wide talk group and the guidelines. This group will need to determine which talk groups need to be able to roam region-wide and state-wide.

Interop Committee

Jay stated they met last month, in Stearns County they have been meeting for 3-1/2 years and in the last three months everyone is reporting under incidents that everything is working fine, dispatchers know how to utilize the system, etc. He stated once Todd, Morrison, Wright, Mille Lacs, etc. come on – we may have items to discuss under interoperability and incidents.

CMNRRB UPDATE:

Jay stated the RRB approved the go-ahead with the Central MN Project Coordinator with funds coming through Central MN EMS and this person will be responsible to put a TIC Plan together. Scott asked who is the hiring body and Jay stated it would be the City of St. Cloud as the fiscal agent. The job description was 95% complete.

Another position was discussed since it takes a lot of Micah’s and Jay’s time to do some of the coordination of all of the various groups and keeping the Central MN Region going.

Jay stated at the last OTC they have been working hard on the aviation piece, how to handle the Life-link, State Patrol, and completed some initial testing and are hoping to have additional information in the upcoming meetings.

CMNRAC UPDATE:

Jay stated they are going forward with Alexandria and utilizing their tech college as an area 800 training center for individuals to send their dispatch to. Another item is the county studies are coming closer to being completed. They approved to move forward and have Mille Lacs County study completed through GeoComm.

CMN REGIONAL INTEROP COORDINATOR UPDATE:

RIC Justin on vacation – no report available.

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND NEW BUSINESS:

Tower Sites Update:

Bruce DeBliek stated he brought updated graphs of tower sites. In Central region there are seven tower projects under way – Holdingford, Buffalo, Willmar, Ortonville, and Barnesville in various stages. As of late last week they had Team Mobile doing some microwave upgrades on towers in Hoffman, Harris, Glenwood, New London, and Kimball. This will allow them to start bringing up towers that are ready to go at Benson, Hallaway, Morris, Browns Valley, and Wheaton, MnDOT will be working in the next few weeks to get them up.

Bruce indicated MnDOT is still looking for land acquisitions in some areas. Jay asked if the microwave was up if MnDOT would be about 60% complete and Bruce confirmed yes. Dave Pedersen asked if Alexandria Technical College came on as a training center if they would need to have a tower put in, Jay stated he didn't think so. The system load such as capacity would be a big concern. Bruce stated he thought the Lake Carlos site is what would serve it and a particular site has not been identified to date and consultants are working on it.

Funding and Grant Writing:

Chair McIntyre asked if anyone was aware of grant writing or new funding since last meeting – nothing reported at this time.

10 Codes – Plain Talk Radio Communications:

Chair McIntyre reminded that the 10-codes will be going towards plain English. Jay stated they are working on this at a State level and feels there is about half a dozen that will need to be kept, goal is to go away from 10-codes as much as possible.

Monthly Meeting Stipend Update:

Chair McIntyre stated it was recommended for individuals to go back to their respective counties for reimbursement to attend the User Committee meetings. We will know more about stipends for holding monthly meetings following the Friday RAC meeting.

Discussion – County Interoperability Use of Regional Tactical Channels:

Chair McIntyre stated as Benton County came onto the system they were given Stearns Fire TACS to utilize, now do they continue to utilize Stearns' tactical channels or do they get their own? Interop Coordinator questioned as more agencies come onto the system, do we need additional PTACS? Discussion is do we have just one tactical reference – i.e. all PTACS or all ATACS, etc. In Stearns County they have a pool of fire TACS, if you can maintain the incident within your own county you would utilize that channel, if you needed to include other mutual aid agencies then it would get moved over to a regional tactical. Currently we have 14 tactical channels and we have 20 agencies, if there was a lot going on, it would not take long to utilize all of those regional resources and maybe it would be a good idea for each agency to have their own tactical channels.

Bob Cuchna asked how do we know what talk group channels each county can have or have they already been assigned? Jay stated each county can come up with their own. He handed out Stearns County's fleet map document and the last page is what Benton County is looking at utilizing, another page is what Stearns County utilizes for operations. It allows for tactical channels for agencies that routinely come in Stearns County to assist in mutual aid. He also provided a general fire layout includes Zone A, B, and C. Dave Nohner stated the paging is still VHF and they have a county fire talk group, their policy states if there is a mutual aid coming they would use a local tactical talk group not a regional one; that way the agencies on the mutual aid can talk to each other and dispatch does not need to listen to it. Jay stated 98% of the time you would be operating their day-to-day traffic on zone A.

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND NEW BUSINESS: (CONTINUED)

Discussion – County Interoperability Use of Regional Tactical Channels: (Continued)

Zone B is the regional talk groups and would go to Central MN tactical channels. Zone C would be the state-wide talk groups and would be if agencies such as Minneapolis, Duluth, etc. assisted and this was utilized for the RNC. Bob Cuchna asked if you need only one ID number for Zone A and Jay stated it would require an ID number for each talk group.

Chair McIntyre stated Interop Coordinator Justin has a presentation which should be at the next meeting and would demonstrate how an agency creates a master list of talk groups for their county. This would apply with incidents such as fire, law enforcement, ambulance, etc.

Jay stated the key with Tom Justin's letter is like in Zone B, it has just as many tacticals – would need to determine how to name them to be consistent. He stated in Stearns County they have been utilizing them for 3-1/2- 4 years and are now just understanding more clearly how to utilize the zones to the best of their abilities. He stated if you were outside of your own discipline, you would go to a PTAC, if it was for law enforcement it would be a LTAC, if it was fire it would be FTAC.

Chair McIntyre stated we need to be looking at the 14 tactical channels, do we give it one name and share within the region or does each county come up with their own individual tacticals. He stated this will be discussed at the RAC on Friday as well. Not all departments like Public Works would be on the channel all of the time so maybe try and keep it simple and have a combined tactical. It was asked what happens when not all utilities come onto the 800 as they know some in their area are not, Chair McIntyre stated that is where the interop issues come into play and patching.

Jay stated it would be nice to be consistent throughout the state since we border five other regions, yet we can do whatever we want for our region and this should be something to think about.

Other Items of Interest:

Jay stated there may be an opportunity for a stipend especially for the Volunteer Fire Departments as there is no reimbursement available to them, there may be an amount up to \$100,000 available for reimbursements. This is significant if this would go through and hopefully in the next 30-60 days we will have an answer on this decision.

Chair McIntyre stated there are a lot of individuals who are not in attendance, try and car pool especially with the ones that do get reimbursed and help reduce the costs. He also asked for any new discussion for next meeting, nothing suggested at this time.

It was asked what it would cost to come onto the system, Chair McIntyre stated if an entity can operate on the State's backbone there would be no infrastructure costs. There is firmware cost of about \$20 per radio per year, there may be extended warranty costs if an entity chooses to. He stated since Gold Cross does not have anyone to program, etc. they have the City of St. Cloud do the programming, etc. and they charge \$109 per radio per year. He stated each county could come up with their own fee structure.

Jay stated in the last three years Stearns County picked up the expense for the whole county and in 2009, they decided to charge for the firmware expense i.e. \$20 per radio back to the individuals. He stated there is no charge from the State. There is a lot of discussion on the firmware cost as being optional, Jay stated he feels it should be mandatory because when it is upgraded every entity would need to upgrade the firmware – it is not optional. This would make it easier for everyone to budget and set aside something each year.

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND NEW BUSINESS: (CONTINUED)

Other Items of Interest: (Continued)

Dave Nohner stated this is a huge project between the Law Enforcement and IT Department, they budget one full-time person for the radios and it worked very well. Jay stated he would offer Kristen from Stearns' staff to help an entity get started and let them know what to expect. He stated perhaps two – three counties can share a person to make it more feasible and contact Stearns to help them out and not re-invent the wheel.

STANDARDS:

See above.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

December:

Chair McIntyre stated most of the other radio groups do not have meetings in December and asked if we should skip December – Bob Cuchna stated yes.

January:

January 20, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. at Alexandria Fire Hall. Debbie stated she thought we may need to conduct elections at the January meeting as it is the annual meeting, she will verify with the by-laws and let everyone know.

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Debbie Backes, recording secretary.