

ALMR INSIDER

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National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) Update

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An updated version of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) that addresses technology advances and changes in the regulatory landscape is expected to be released for review by the end of this year.

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) began updating the document at the beginning of this year. Ryan Oremland, branch director of policy and planning for OEC, detailed the process during a Webinar Sept. 4 hosted by the National 911 Program. OEC was formed following Hurricane Katrina and officially launched in 2007. A major initiative of OEC was the development of the NECP, first released in 2008. Oremland noted much has changed in the interceding five years, including advances in technology; new grant programs; changes in regulation and policy that have reorganized federal roles and responsibilities; new stakeholders; and five years of experience responding to incidents, including the Boston Marathon bombing.

"We have a good framework to get the specifics written for this plan," said Chris Essid, DHS OEC deputy director. "It's going to focus on LMR, however, there will be a big focus on maintaining mission-critical voice with the new ecosystem, such as social media and broadband. The capabilities we have today, such as tweeting to citizens after the Boston Marathon to give them updates, we didn't have in 2008. The new national plan talks about all these stakeholders and new technologies."

Other OEC activities include helping states develop emergency communications plans and supporting DHS grant programs to make sure they are reflective of the environment, challenges and solutions for improving emergency communications. In addition, OEC is helping states prepare for the emerging na-

tional public-safety broadband network (NPSBN).

At the beginning of this year, OEC began a stakeholder-driven approach to update the NECP. OEC staff began soliciting feedback from public-safety agencies and emergency communications groups, amounting to about 30 working sessions to date. In addition, the office conducted breakout sessions at trade shows and exhibitions to gather additional feedback.

"We've really been aggressive in trying to get people involved in helping us formulate the plan and keeping everyone and their associations and stakeholder groups updated on where we're going with the plan," said Oremland. "We're going to continue to get input, we're putting together the draft plan, and we hope to get it out for stakeholder feedback later this fall after we've cleared some DHS review hurdles."

OEC plans to build on the original NECP with focuses on governance and planning, leadership, training and exercises, research and development and new technology.

"We don't want to start from scratch," said Oremland. "We acknowledge there are a lot of financial restraints out there, and we need to update what we put in place before and find creative ways to continue to progress down this road."

The update to NECP revolves around three focus areas:

1. A whole-community approach, which leverages the resources and capabilities from across the community to plan for, respond to and recover from disasters and incidents.
2. The emergence of IP-based technologies that are now used primarily for mission support and administration, (continued on page 2)

Incident Command (IC) Zone Use

The summer 2013 Alaska fire season provided numerous events that required multi-agency, multi-jurisdiction on-scene coordination through the utilization of the ALMR Regional Incident Command (IC) Zone talkgroups. There was a greater requirement to establish communications plans and assign specific IC Zone talkgroups to responding agencies than usual, because the fires were occurring in several locations and jurisdictions, often threatening homes and other structures.

Advanced communication planning for these types of incident ensures all participating agencies can communicate with whom they need to, when they need to. Programming of agency subscriber units in accordance with ALMR Interoperability Policy and Procedure 300-3 is critical to the successful development and use of a communication plan for incidents requiring a response involving several ALMR user agencies.

Successful interoperable communications depends on utilizing the ALMR System in the manner set out in the procedure, whether conducting day-to-day, multi-jurisdictional, inter-agency, or task force operations. Events/contingencies could easily become hectic if responders are not fully cognizant of how to utilize their subscribers, as well as the incident command tools already in place on the ALMR System.

To facilitate interoperability, the ALMR Executive Council has mandated all subscribers operating on ALMR should be programmed with all interoperable zones including the Statewide Incident Command (IC), Admin and the OP Zones, and Regional Incident Command Zone (A-F), when the unit capacity supports this. If there is not sufficient capacity, then radios should be programmed with the Statewide IC Zones and the agency's Regional IC Zone, at a minimum. Descriptions, criteria for usage, and points of contact for the Statewide and Regional IC Zones are set out in the ALMR Concept of

Operation (CONOP) located on the web site. Agencies should regularly practice utilizing IC channels in order to establish and maintain proficiency. Smaller exercises are easily coordinated and provide valuable insight into any areas of interoperable communications use where an agency may be deficient.

Proper programming of subscriber units prior to an event and a communications plan for the event are critical to successful operations. Jordan Halden, DNR Forestry, points out it is also important to the ability to communicate between responders at an incident to minimize the utilization of the channels at ALMR sites adjacent to an incident. Most of the wildland fires that occurred this past summer were in areas served by ALMR three (3) channel sites. Since one of the channels is a control channel and not available for radio traffic, only two channels are available for communication for radios affiliated with that particular site.

Mr. Halden further advised that one of the lessons learned this year is that responders at the scene of the incident need to set their radio to the IC talkgroup they are assigned to and not continue to monitor their own agency's primary dispatch talkgroup. Doing so potentially "busies" out the two channels available at the site, impacting the ability of others to access the channels when needed. Dispatch centers can monitor the talkgroup(s) being used by the on-scene responders and can contact their personnel, if required, without overly impacting the site and creating "busies."

If you have any questions, please contact the Operations Management Office.

(Subject matter submitted by Mr. Jordan Halden, Division of Forestry; edited/expanded by Mr. Del Smith, Operations Manager)

NECP Update (continued)

but with the deployment of broadband networks, will provide increasing support for mission-critical emergency response voice, video and data.

3. The modernization of responder communications capabilities and the broader communications environment, including alerts and warnings, text-to-9-1-1 capabilities and eventually next-generation 9-1-1 (NG 9-1-1), and the increasing importance of citizens using social media and smart devices to report on emergencies.

"The plan will remain focused on government-to-

government communications during incident response. This is the core mission of OEC and the charge the Congress has sent to develop the NECP," said Oremland. "But we're also broadening the scope with this plan to cover other key emergency communications functions and stakeholders, including communications from government agencies to the public, as well as public communications during an emergency and communications from the public to public-safety answering points (PSAPs) during emergencies."

(Article by Kristen Beckman, Assistant Editor, Mission Critical Resource Magazine, September 11, 2013)

ALMR Subscriber Updates

End of Life - Motorola™ XTS 5000 and XTL 5000 Models

The following information was received from Motorola™ Solutions and is provided as an information only service to the ALMR users.

The purpose of this notification is to inform ASTRO 25 subscriber owners of the pending cancellation of the XTS 5000 portable and XTL 5000 mobile subscriber models as of November 30, 2013. It is recommended that last time purchases be considered at this time to cover anticipated or planned customer expansion and lifetime spare units.

For both the XTS and the XTL models, the following applies:

- **Last order entry:**
October 31, 2013 All Electronic Price Pages (ECAT) will be pulled from visibility no later than the second week of November 2013.
- **Last customer scheduled ship date:**
November 30, 2013 (Schaumburg factory [SCOG])
No customer ship dates will be scheduled after this date.
- **Last field service-5 year support to conclude:**
December 31, 2018

With the end-of-life announcement for the 5000 series radios, the new APX subscriber series will be the workhorse unit for the foreseeable future. The APX has already been approved to operate on the ALMR System. The Acceptance Test Procedure (ATP) requirements and results, as well as subscriber specifications are located on the ALMR web site at www.alaskalandmobileradio.org.

Recently Completed/Upcoming ATPs

The EF Johnson™ Viking series VP600 (single band) and VP900 (multi-band) portable subscribers recently completed all required ATP testing September 23 - 25 and have been approved to operate on the ALMR System.

Both models also successfully demonstrated over-the-air rekeying (OTAR) capabilities. The ATP requirements and results, as well as the specifications are located on the ALMR web site at www.alaskalandmobileradio.org.

The Harris Corporation is scheduled to ATP their XG-75 multi-mode portable radio the week of October 28.

The Tech Corner:

Providing Lightning Protection to ALMR Sites Through Proper Grounding

The purpose of lightning protection is to intercept, control, and direct unpredictable lightning surge energy to ensure it does the least amount of damage.

Although Alaska experiences less lightning than the lower 48 states, there is still enough to warrant taking the extra measures necessary to mitigate damage as much as possible.

We all know a great number of the wildfires that Alaska experiences are caused by lightning strikes. While there is little that can be done to prevent these wildfires, damage to the highly-sensitive and extremely expensive equipment of the ALMR System due to lightning strikes is preventable.

There are several reference guides available today with information regarding the requirements for proper grounding for infrastructure equipment associated with lightning strikes. They are the National Electric Code (NEC), National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), and the Motorola™ R56 Standard, which is the standard utilized for ALMR.

All of the aforementioned standards can be accessed via the internet.

The benefits provided by proper grounding include:

- Personnel safety
- Improved equipment reliability by protecting against power surges)
- Improved equipment performance with less system noise
- Improved power quality
- Predictable results
- Meets manufacturer's warranty requirements.

If you would like to learn more information regarding the theory and application of proper grounding techniques, there are companies that tour the United States providing grounding training classes (at a cost). If you are interested in obtaining more information on these companies, please contact the ALMR Operations Management Office.

(Article submitted by Mr. Rich Leber, Operations Management Office Technical Advisor)

Training Year 2013 Results

One of the constant comments the ALMR Operations Management Office has heard from users over the past several years, is “we need more training” on interoperable communications and use of subscriber units.

During State of Alaska (SOA) Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, a training grant managed through the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs (DMVA) sought to address training needs of Alaska’s first responders. Although the primary focus of the grant was to provide training for agencies outside the ALMR coverage area, training was also provided to several ALMR user agencies.

The FY 2013 ALMR Training Program trained more students and covered more locations than in FY 2012. The following are some statistics regarding

the FY 2013 ALMR Training Program:

Locations Visited:	25
Classes Conducted:	42
Students Trained:	615

Classes by Region:

Region A – Southeast:	12
Region B – MatSu/Valdez	4
Region D – Fairbanks:	7
Region E – Kenai Peninsula	9
Region F – Anchorage	10

The agency with the most students to attend ALMR training was the SOA Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

(Excerpts taken from the FY 2013 ALMR User Training Final Report. July 22, 2013, written by Mr. Joe Quickel)

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7.13 Migration

Together with 20+ Motorola™ staff located on site at JBER, Zone 1 (Anchorage), Zone 2 (Fairbanks) and Zone 4 (Municipality of Anchorage), the ALMR/ETS//MOA teams successfully upgraded the System on August 6, 2013, to include the:

- 3 Master Sites
- 99 RF sites
- 70+ Consoles
- 28 Dispatch Centers

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