



# **Alaska Land Mobile Radio Communications System**

## **Radio Usage and Transmission Protocols Procedure 300-6**

**Version V12**

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## Document Revision History

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## **Acronyms and Definitions**

**Abuse of User Privileges:** violation of System guidelines, procedures, protocols, or violation of the Membership Agreement may result in termination of the Membership Agreement subject to the review and direction of the Executive Council. A decision by the Executive Council is final and non-appealable.

**Alaska Federal Executive Association (AFEA):** federal government entities, agencies and organizations, other than the Department of Defense, that will operate on the shared ALMR system infrastructure.

**Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) Communications System:** the ALMR Communications System, which uses but is separate from the Alaska Public Safety Communications Service (APSCS), as established in the Cooperative and Mutual Aid Agreement.

**Alaska Municipal League:** a voluntary non-profit organization in Alaska that represents member local governments.

**Alaska Public Safety Communications Service (APSCS):** the State of Alaska statewide telecommunications system microwave network.

**Anchorage Wide Area Radio Network (AWARN):** the 700 MHz Anchorage node of ALMR. AWARN makes up Zone 4 of the System.

**Department of Administration (DOA):** a State of Alaska (SOA) department that maintains the APSCS and provides information technology (IT) and communications technical support to state agencies.

**Department of Defense – Alaska:** Alaskan Command, US Air Force and US Army component services operating under United States Pacific Command and United States Northern Command.

**Executive Council:** the ALMR Executive Council which is made up of three voting members and two associate members representing the original four constituency groups: the State of Alaska, the Department of Defense, Federal Non-DOD agencies (represented by the Alaska Federal Executive Association), and local municipal/government (represented by the Alaska Municipal League and the Municipality of Anchorage).

**Help Desk:** where repair, maintenance and programming issues/problems are reported; assigned under the ALMR System Manager.



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**Local Governments:** those Alaska political subdivisions defined as municipalities in AS 29.71.800(13).

**Member:** a public safety agency including, but not limited to, a general government agency (local, state or federal), its authorized employees and personnel (paid or volunteer), and its service provider, participating in and using the System under a Membership Agreement.

**Minimize:** essential, concise and to-the-point radio traffic only.

**Municipality of Anchorage (MOA):** the MOA covers 1,951 square miles with a population of over 300,000. The MOA stretches from Portage, at the southern border, to the Knik River at the northern border, and encompasses the communities of Girdwood, Indian, Anchorage, Eagle River, Chugiak/Birchwood, and the native village of Eklutna.

**Operations Manager:** the Operations Manager represents the User Council interests and makes decisions on issues related to the day-to-day operation of the system and any urgent or emergency system operational or repair decisions. In coordination with the User Council, the Operations Manager establishes policies, procedures, contracts, organizations, and agreements that provide the service levels as defined in the ALMR Service Level Agreement.

**Operations Management Office (OMO):** develops recommendations for policy, procedures, and guidelines; identify technologies and standards; and coordinates intergovernmental resources to facilitate communications interoperability with emphasis on improving public safety and emergency response communications.

**State of Alaska (SOA):** the primary maintainer of the State's microwave system, and shared owner of the System.

**System:** the ALMR Communications System, as established in the Cooperative Agreement, and any and all System Design/System Analysis (SD/SA) and System Design/System Implementation (SD/SI) documents.

**System Management Office (SMO):** the team of specialists responsible for management of maintenance and operations of the System.

**Talk group:** the electronic equivalent of a channel on a trunked system; a unique group of radio Users that can communicate with each other.

**User:** an agency, person, group, organization or other entity which has an existing written Membership Agreement with one of the Parties to the Cooperative and Mutual Aid Agreement. The terms user and member are synonymous and interchangeable.



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**User Council:** the User Council is responsible for recommending all operational and maintenance decisions affecting the System. Under the direction and supervision of the Executive Council, the User Council has the responsibility for management oversight and operations of the System. The User Council oversees the development of System operations plans, procedures and policies under the direction and guidance of the Executive Council.



## **1.0 Purpose**

This document serves as a guide regarding the use of radios on the Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) Communications System. The goal is to provide a simple and seamless process with no confusion to the end user in both intra-agency (within the same agency) and multi-jurisdictional, inter-agency (between two or more local, State, Federal government organizations) or task force operations. Successful interoperable communications is particularly dependent on utilizing plain/common language in multi-jurisdictional, inter-agency and task force situations.

## **2.0 Roles and Responsibilities**

### **2.1 Executive Council**

2.1.1 The Executive Council (EC) grants authority to the Operations Manager to conduct the day-to-day operations in cooperation and coordination with the User Council.

2.1.2 The EC is responsible for the management and enforcement of sanctions when violations of the Radio Usage and Transmission Protocols Procedure warrant such action.

### **2.2 User Council**

2.2.1 The User Council (UC) monitors reported incidents, and exercise after-action reports, etc., to ensure that no communications problems are experienced due to procedural language difficulties.

2.2.2 The UC developed a "plain language" protocol and recommends all agencies operating on ALMR strive to use plain/generic English terms in their day-to-day operations.

2.2.3 The UC is responsible for the formal approval of the Radio Usage and Transmission Protocols Procedure, and any substantial revisions hereafter.

### **2.3 Operations Management Office**

2.3.1 The Operations Management Office (OMO) has the responsibility for developing policies and procedures concerning radio usage/transmissions. These policies and procedures will be reviewed on an annual basis and updated, as necessary.

2.3.2 The OMO works with user agencies to ensure that plain/common language is used on the ALMR System when working with multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional events. The OMO also encourages agencies to adopt this standard for their day-to-day operations.



2.3.3 If problems are noted, the OMO investigates and determines if corrective actions are required and makes recommendations to the UC, as appropriate.

## **2.4 User/Member Agencies**

2.4.1 The responsibility for having a viable interoperable communications system, that meets the technical and operational requirements of the user agencies, lies with everyone who utilizes it.

2.4.2 Users will utilize the System in a professional and courteous manner. Per the Membership Agreement, the ALMR System will only be used for official business. Any abuse of privileges will be dealt with in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined in the Membership Agreement and applicable policies and procedures.

2.4.3 User agencies should hold regular, in-house training sessions on radio use. This training should include, but not be limited to, day-to-day operations, emergency button use, and multi-agency/multi-jurisdictional responses. Agencies who train regularly will be able to transition seamlessly to emergency operations, when interoperability is required.

2.4.4 Agencies should adopt and encourage the use of plain language protocols.

## **3.0 Standards**

### **3.1 Plain/Common Language Protocols**

Necessity dictates use of plain/common language when multiple agencies, across a wide range of disciplines, share a common infrastructure for day-to-day communications. Therefore, special care must be taken to avoid any impediment to effective communications during emergencies.

The use of jargon (specialized terms used to refer to the same object, circumstance or procedure in different jurisdictions and disciplines), which is a common aspect of most occupational specialties, including law enforcement, fire, EMS and emergency management, is one such impediment. A plain/common language protocol promotes use of the simplest and most efficient language for public safety first responders.

### **3.2 Development and Utilization**

A common/plain language standard was developed, reviewed and evaluated among agencies operating on ALMR and agreed upon for voluntary system-wide use. Similar policies and terminology in use by adjoining regions/states or jurisdictions was taken into consideration. This standard should be utilized for day-to-day operations, as well





as multi-jurisdictional, inter-agency and task force operations/scenarios within the jurisdiction of the ALMR System and its member agencies.

### **3.3 Non-participating Agencies**

Agencies, who choose not to participate in utilizing a plain/common language protocol, but continue to utilize their particular codes/unit identifications, must realize this course of action could severely hamper interoperability efforts during multi-agency emergency response situations.

## **4.0 Procedures**

### **4.1 Transmissions**

4.1.1 All transmissions will be professional, concise and avoid the use of agency-specific jargon.

4.1.2 When performing test-related or exercise-related transmissions, they will be preceded and followed by the appropriate notification (i.e. “The following transmission is a test of ...,” “Test 1, 2, 3; Test 3, 2, 1; test,” or “Exercise, Exercise, Exercise,” and “This concludes the test of ...”). This sequence is especially important in case the monitoring dispatch center misses the initial announcement.

### **4.2 Required Interoperable Zones**

4.2.1 Radios should be programmed with all interoperable zones, if programming capacity will support it. The interoperable zones include Statewide Incident Command (IC), Regional Incident Command (A-F) and the OP Zone. If this is not an option due to the limitations of the radio, the Statewide IC Zone and the agency’s Regional IC Zone should be programmed, at a minimum.

4.2.2 During specific events, responders can go to the Regional HAIL channel and request the monitoring dispatch center direct them to the appropriate channel for the event within the Regional IC Zone.

### **4.3 Encryption**

Use of encryption will be coordinated among the individual participating agencies. If, and when, encryption is utilized in multi-agency operations, the user agency’s unit identification (assigned by the Communications Unit Leader) will be used.

### **4.4 Emergency Traffic**

Unit leaders, radio operators and dispatchers will defer to emergency traffic, when identified as such, until normal traffic can be resumed.



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### **4.5 Minimize Procedures**

Minimize traffic procedures may be put into effect during emergency situations, if System traffic dictates the need. The System Management Office (SMO), in consultation with the OMO, will make the determination if minimize traffic is required.

### **4.6 Security**

Radio operators comprise the majority of ALMR users and can compromise the System through unauthorized or inappropriate use of a subscriber radio.

Therefore, each user in this group shall:

- Not utilize the System for commercial or financial gain, including, but not limited to, any illegal activities
- Be subject to all US criminal, civil and administrative laws regulating appropriate use of government information systems
- Inform their immediate supervisor or the System Manager when access to the ALMR System is no longer required (e.g. completion of project, transfer, retirement, resignation)
- Not unilaterally bypass, strain or test System information assurance/security mechanisms
- Address any questions regarding security policy, responsibilities and duties to the ALMR Information Systems Security Manager
- Understand that violation of any security measure could result in the loss of access privileges
- Immediately notify the SMO if a subscriber radio is lost or stolen by following the steps outlined in Asset Management Procedure 400-8, paragraph 2.7.

### **5.0 Compliance**

Compliance with the Radio Usage and Transmission Protocols Procedure is outlined in ALMR Radio Usage and Transmission Protocols Policy Memorandum 300-6.