

Alaska Interoperable Communications Committee
(AKICC) Meeting August 19, 2009

Next Meeting: September 16, 2009
Location: Department of Public Safety Headquarters
Commissioner's Conference Room
5700 E. Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska

Teleconference: 1-800-315-6338 Passcode:7138

DOT Conference Room, Anchorage

Bryan Fisher Co-Chair DHS&EM
Peter Murphy- ALMR
Jim Kohler, DOA
John Dickens, ASEC
Jim Larsen, AARL/ARES

Kathy Day, DHS&EM
Doug Schoenwald, DMVA
Heather Handyside, 5 Star Team

At Large Telephonic

Frank Wesser, DEC
Rusty Lasell, Rural LEPC
Brad Johnson, ACOPS
KT Pyne, DOF
Jeff Tucker, North Star VFD

Call to order: 0930

Roll Call and Introductions

Acceptance of Minutes from July 15, 2009

Motion made to approve minutes from July 15, 2009 and seconded. The minutes were passed without objection.

Guest Speaker: Mallorie Teubner-SEARCH a non-profit agency

Mallorie is a national expert on the COML (Communication Unit Leader) position and program. Mallorie spoke about how to utilize COML's through the Incident Command System (ICS). The Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) has asked SEARCH to provide technical assistance on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Their vision is that each Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) or Metropolitan Statistical Area should have a TICP that needs to be exercised, and a plan that can be maintained and executed by a COML. So far there have been 1200 public safety personnel that have completed the COML training nationwide. OEC has had lots of requests about certification, credentialing, and COML usage. As a result, OEC interviewed a number of states and are in the process of putting together a COML "best practices" document.

How do we certify COMLs? Some states use the word "recognize". Guidance from OEC is saying that states can determine their own process to certify or recognize COMLs. In most cases the completed task books that are standardized nationally are submitted to COMLs, subcommittees, task forces, and or emergency managers. Some states train a COML in every county. A COML may be responsible for the regional Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP). In other states COMLs are being established in each Homeland Security region.

Last year OEC brought training to each state. Now training has to be requested through DHS's Technical Assistance Program. A Train the Trainer course is also available now. The course is based on the one initially rolled out by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group. However, it was modified and went through a lengthy trial process before the official version was finalized. What is the appropriate number of COMLs for Alaska? Other states base the number upon the number of TICPs (minimum of 1 per plan). Alaska may want to consider COMLs for each area that has communications assets in it. Only the AKICC can make a determination of how many COML's are needed for Alaska.

The current training targets local responders for Type 1, 2, and 3 incidents. It also teaches how to prepare for COMLs that may be coming from Type I and Type II teams when requested. Mallorie will provide best practices to Alaska from other states, particularly Ohio. In Ohio the first step is to pass the COML class. Then, once they deploy, they can have task book signed by an incident commander or another COML that is deployed. In Tennessee they trained 60 COMLs. The only way you get a task book signed is by participating in a state exercises. They are then reviewed by other certified COMLs. The Tennessee Emergency Management Association (TEMA) then credentials students through their state-specific credentialing system.

Bryan Fisher – This committee may not be the right body to recognize/credential COMLs. It would be preferable to have a specific direction from the Feds to the states on the credentialing issues. Many tasks in the books require actual deployment on an incident, however, Alaska has no state all-hazards team, no state mutual aid compacts, but we are working on these issues. There are only a limited number of mutual aid agreements around state. DHS&EM is trying to develop trained cadre of responders for a Type III all-hazards team. Mallorie: OEC is working with FEMA to coordinate such a process.

Bryan –There is no one in our agency that is “certified anything” yet. State Forestry and the Fire Service grandfathered everyone in at a certain point. The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) has stringent requirements but State is working with NWCG to get people out in the field. Mallorie: Just because you haven’t had the training doesn’t mean that you can’t fulfill that role is from OEC’s perspective. OEC sends a copy of COML student class certification of completion to the state record-keeping agency.

Bryan: There is the possibility of integration of SERC training and interoperability groups for training and credentialing COMLs. Next COML class in Alaska will be November 3,4 and 5th, 2009. ICS 300 will be scheduled soon.

Bryan reviewed the course evaluations for the last COML and noticed some attendees stated that it would have been better to have a course customized more for Alaska.

Marrorie: OEC's direction to instructors is that they must teach the minimum curriculum but they are welcome to add local information that will enhance the training from specific areas.

John Dickens added "kudos" to State Forestry on their input during the last class. Mallorie added that in the national technical assistance catalogue, you can request an ICTAP train-the-trainer class through the technical assistance manual. OEC has also expanded the number of seats available in the national train-the-trainer classes.

Bryan: Local folks doing the training is key....but you must have a signed task book.

Mallorie: However, in the absence of a task-book sign-off process, the State can send a letter supporting candidates for the train-the-trainer class.

Bryan: We can work with Tom Vaden for SERC training committee to get the program going.

July 2009 COML Class Anchorage

Kathy and Bryan then spoke about the COML class that was given in Anchorage. Several committee members attended. John Dickens stated that he really liked the class and learned a lot. KT Pyne, Rusty Lasell and Tom Smayda were in the class. It was mentioned it would be better to do during the winter to get better hotel rates but everyone thought it was a good mix of folks who attended the class. KT was glad that several certified NWSCG dispatchers attended so they could get a taste to respond to an incident other than fire. Bryan stated he was glad to see the fire folks there and that there were 2 Fire COMLs present. Everyone thought the instructors were very knowledgeable and that there was a good mix from throughout the state in including amateur radio. Bryan added we received the class materials and instructors for free; we just had to pay the cost of travel and per diem. Kathy added that DHS&EM is hosting an ICS class prior to the next COML class in November. Bryan thought it was good that we could be flexible and allow students to attend COML who hadn't taken the ICS 300 yet.

Bryan looked over the evaluations and negative comments had to do with shoddy slides, some of which were unreadable. It was also mentioned that instructors felt constrained by the format. Bryan thought we need to use the TICPs and that if we can, customize ICS classes for Alaska. We should be able to do so for COML. Mallorie added that the first generation course is now being updated. Everyone praised the Division of Forestry for their participation. Bryan stated that the SECC relies on Forestry to respond to disasters. With COML, another issue has to do with the prerequisites

required for trainers. Bryan stated that there would be trouble finding suitable trainers for COML based on the requirements that are stipulated by OEC. He felt we should have the flexibility to designate trainers of certain courses internally. It was also added that having a class in November may also be problematic due to fall sea storms and other meetings going on throughout the fall.

Mallorie stated that Alaska could request a Train the Trainer class. We could either have instructors come to Alaska or send candidates to a class being offered in another state. The question came up pertaining to the appropriate number of trainers. Mallorie stated that some states have 5-10, some have two. Bryan thought that Alaska has a good model for ICS classes by letting the locals teach them except for the very basic classes.

Bryan had a question about whether potential instructors needed to have their task books done to be a trainer. Since Alaska doesn't have a process in place this could be problematic. Mallorie stated that you need task books completed before becoming a trainer but if Alaska doesn't have a process in place, the State agency could send a letter of support for someone in that situation so they could become a trainer. It was added that it would probably be good to get the COML issue on the agenda for the SERC. KT thought it would be good to have COMLs that are locally knowledgeable.

Heather Handyside- 5 Star Contractor for Statewide Interoperable Communications Training and Exercise Program (SICTEP)

Heather gave an overview of the progress of SICTEP. They're looking at 71 communities and know that the one size fits all approach won't work throughout Alaska. They're developing a 5 tiered system based on variables such as the likelihood of events and level of sophistication for training. They will then develop some standards for training based on who has the most risk based on capabilities. Heather will continue to give updates as things progress.

Committee Membership

Bryan stated he hasn't had time to get the recruitment letters out but that we need to recruit members for new committee including: Tribal, National Guard, FEMA, Juneau PD (urban law enforcement) and an Urban LEPC since Sarah Sanderlin has not been able to attend meetings and has resigned. Brad Johnson thought we should contact Jim Knopke from Tanana who's the VPSO. Bryan stated that especially for the two tribal positions he's like

to see created, it would be nice to be able to pick and chose committee members from eligible applicants.

2009 IECGP

Bryan and Kathy spoke about the 2009 IECGP award allocations for equipment. We were able to save money since Doug Schoenwald had the free satellite phones to give to jurisdictions that requested them in the grant. The grant review committee stuck to goal of funding the un-served and underserved as most of the awards went to small jurisdictions who had never received funding before.

2007 PSIC

Kathy and Bryan went over the PSIC expenditures. These seem to be moving along well. Bryan stated that since we don't know if PSIC will be extended, we're probably looking at November of 2009 for reallocations of funds.

Seldovia Excess Equipment

Kathy brought up Seldovia's excess equipment request. Seldovia purchased all their radios but realized that they needed spare batteries, which they failed to order or request during the grant application process. There was discussion about this and about excess equipment issue in general. It was added that there was very little technical assistance available for the smaller jurisdictions during the PSIC application process. Most people were in agreement that Seldovia should get the spare batteries, but Jim Kohler said that we have to look at the position we took on this at the last meeting and bring it up again as another discussion item. He brought up the idea that there should be some kind of limiting parameter on equipment, such as an established criteria for these types of cases. It has to be related to functionality that gives the committee some flexibility but doesn't leave the door open for abuses.

The meeting ended at 1200