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Use of ALMR Regional Incident Command Zone Channels

In a 2006 meeting among representatives of the Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) user community, it was determined that a Regional Incident Command (IC) Zone approach would afford the greatest flexibility among the six ALMR regions.

Lately, there have been several incidents where communications would have been greatly improved between responding agencies if Regional IC Zone channels were used. These channels are available during local/regional incidents and training exercises.

Regional IC Zone protocol provides common-use talk group channels for each of the six regions. The benefit of having IC zones programmed into ALMR radios is that regions have access to mid-level Incident Command System (ICS) channels during a local/regional incident/event. In addition, the Incident/On-Scene Commander, in coordination with the Communications Leader (COML) and Dispatch, has assignment authority over the Regional IC Zone channels.

When assigned, the Regional IC Zone channels must be tracked by the Incident/On-Scene Commander. As assignment of channels occurs, a record of the assignment of talk groups is maintained and passed on to on-coming personnel for further coordination and re-assignment, as necessary. It is critical the Incident/On-Scene Commander, COML, and Dispatch coordinate and advise each other of IC Zone channel assignments.

Channel 1 of all Regional IC Zones is the Hail channel and is monitored by the primary Regional Dispatch Center. Hail channels should not be assigned during incidents. Channel 8 of all Regional IC Zones is a simplex narrowband conventional frequency (140.6125 MHz) for short-range interoperable communications and provides the same service as Channel 8 of the Statewide IC Zone. Channels 2 through 7, and 9 through 15, are available for assignment on an as-needed basis by the Regional Incident/On-Scene Commander, as well as the pri-

mary Regional Dispatch Center. Channel 16 is an all-call talk group (multi-group). It permits simultaneous communications to all IC channels in the associated Regional IC Zone.

Agencies are strongly urged to program their Regional IC Zone channels, those of their neighboring regions, and the Statewide IC Zone into their radios, at a minimum. If room permits, all six Regional IC Zones, the Statewide IC Zone, and the National Interoperability Channels should be programmed.

The National Interoperability Channels are available for official use and require no advance coordination with Dispatch centers. **NOTE:** If programmed, transmission on any of the Marine frequencies on ALMR radios is only authorized in emergency situations.

The appropriate Regional Dispatch Center should be contacted when use of IC Zone channels is required. Dispatch will make initial channel assignments until the Incident/On-scene Commander or COML assumes channel assignment responsibility.

Current Dispatch centers are:

Region A: AST A Detachment Dispatch – Ketchikan (proposed, pending ALMR build out)

Region B: MATCOM Dispatch – Wasilla
Phone: (907) 352-5401
Email: dispatch@ci.wasilla.ak.us
Monitors Region B Hail channel

Region C: Western Alaska – TBD
(currently outside the ALMR footprint)

Region D: Fairbanks Emergency Communication Center – Fairbanks Police Dispatch
Phone: (907) 450-6507
Email: None at present time
Monitors Region D Hail channel

Region E: AST E Detachment Dispatch – Soldotna
Phone: (907) 262-4453
Email: DPS.all.soldotna.dispatch@alaska.gov
Monitors Region E Hail channel

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ALMR Help Desk

In Anchorage:
334-2567

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Alaska:
888-334-2567

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ALMR Cost Share Issue Update

In August 2008, the Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) Communications System Executive Council reached a consensus on a Cost Share approach to be implemented for State of Alaska (SOA) Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 (July 1, 2009 thru June 30, 2010). ALMR infrastructure owners (the Department of Defense (DOD) and SOA) will continue to fund the maintenance of their respective infrastructure through outsourced maintenance contracts. The Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) will conduct in-house maintenance of its Anchorage Wide Area Radio Network (AWARN) infrastructure and "trade" circuit costs equally with ALMR.

Although initially agreed upon by the ALMR Executive Council, the funding method (i.e. a per subscriber unit fee) for Operations Management, System Management and shared circuit costs met with concerns on the part of some

ALMR user agencies. Due to the complexity of the issues surrounding a resolution on a funding method, a decision was made by SOA and DOD to share the costs for Operations Management and System Management on 50/50 basis for SOA FY2010. SOA will also continue to absorb any circuit costs attributed to ALMR on their State of Alaska Telecommunications System (SATS) for FY2010.

Over the next twelve months, the Executive Council will continue to examine potential Cost Share methods to address those concerns expressed by some ALMR user agencies subsequent to the August 2008 decision regarding the implementation of a per subscriber unit fee. The goal is to arrive at a Cost Share method in a timely manner allowing agencies to budget appropriately for State FY2011, if necessary.

Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP) Updates

Mr. Mike Sutton, 5 Star Team, is in the process of updating the regional Tactical Interoperable Communication Plans (TICPs) for Alaska. Each regional TICP provides a source document for communication Points of Contact (POCs), detailed information about tactical radio governance, shared systems, radio caches, shared frequencies/talk groups, gateway concept of operations (CONOPS), and ALMR-unique programmatic. There are five regions in Alaska covered by ALMR.

- Region A** Haines, Juneau, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Sitka, Skagway, Wrangell (limited ALMR coverage - only Juneau and Skagway at this time)
- Region B** Big Lake, Glennallen, Houston, Palmer, Talkeetna, Trapper Creek, Valdez, Wasilla
- Region D** Cantwell, Chena Gold Stream, Delta, Fairbanks, Galena, Healy, Nenana, North Pole, Northway, Steese, Tok
- Region E** Girdwood, Homer, Kenai, Seward, Soldotna, Whittier
- Region F** Anchorage

The regional TICPs have been reformatted to the new Department of Homeland Security format and were sent the first week of June to the regional POCs for dissemination and review by the regional stakeholders. Once each region's stakeholders have completed the TICP updates, the 5 Star Team will host workshops in each region to discuss and solve any remaining issues. The workshops will also provide attendees with the latest information on ALMR, communication gateway operations and discuss the objectives and scenario for a follow-on communications exercise (COMMEX). The TICP update workshops will be held locally in each region and are scheduled to take place the last part of July.

A COMMEX tabletop exercise is also planned for each of the covered regions in order to test each the region's TICP against an incident scenario. The COMMEXs, which will follow the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program guidance, are currently scheduled to begin in late August and finish in September.

MotoBridge® Gateway Project Update

The MotoBridge® gateway project is continuing this summer. As of July 8, equipment has been installed at 21 sites, connectivity has been established to 17 of these sites and 16 sites are fully tested and operational.

With the exception of sites awaiting towers, all hardware will be installed by the end of July. After that, communications need to be established to the remaining sites fol-

lowed by completion of operations documentation, operator and administrator training and development of emergency communications drawer plans.

A current installation stoplight report is available at www.alaskalandmobileradio.org/motobridge.htm.

The ALMR MotoBridge® Project Officer is Mr. Joe Quickel, joequickel@5starteam.net or 907-269-8618.

Annual User Council Training Conference

Annual User Council Training Conference will be held at the BP Energy Center, September 22-23, as part of the week long Alaska Symposium on Emergency Communications (ASEC). Day one is open to the general public safety audience. Key speakers include Scott Gillis from San Diego County & Imperial County Regional Communications System, Ron Timmons, PS Communications Director, Plano, Texas, and author of *"Don't Blame the Radio"* and Lance Valcour from Canada Cross Border Interoperability.

Hands-on radio training will be provided outside of the briefings for agencies wishing to send personnel over for an introduction/re-familiarization to using subscriber units on the ALMR System.

A session for Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP) updates will also be held during the week.

If you would like to attend the conference, please RSVP with the requested information at: <http://www.alaskalandmobileradio.org/announcements.htm> or email sherryshafer@5starteam.net for more information.

Communications Leader (COML) Training

The Communications Leader (COML) has been a key position for many years in Wild land Fire response agencies such as the Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. However, only in the past few years has the value of a COML been recognized as an important position for other local, State and Federal response agencies.

Recent incidents, both natural and man-caused, involving agencies that may not work together on a day-to-day basis have highlighted the need for a position that Incident Commanders can depend on to ensure interoperable communications among responding organizations.

After action reports have clearly pointed out the need for coordinated communications capabilities to ensure appropriate command/control and tactical response among local, State, and Federal first responders and that it is absolutely necessary during multi-agency, multi-jurisdiction incidents.

Having recognized the need, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has been funding COML training classes around the nation for the last couple of years, to substantially increase the availability of trained COML personnel for first responder agencies.

In the interests of furthering communications interoperability and coordinated response to incidents in Alaska, the State of Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS & EM) is sponsoring an All-Hazards Type III Communications Leader training in Anchorage July 21, 22, and 23.

Kathy Day, State of Alaska Interoperability Coordinator at DHS & EM advises that although the available slots for the training have been filled for this particular class, it appears likely that they will be able to sponsor another COML course later on this year due to the interest of Alaska first responder agencies.



Anchorage Wide Area Radio Network (AWARN): Training



As Anchorage moves toward the day when all Municipal agencies operate on the Anchorage Wide Area Radio Network (AWARN), training radio users becomes an important consideration.

Anchorage has a variety of users having unique experience and training requirements. Anchorage Fire Department, and most general Government departments, have been operating on our analog trunked radio system for 10 to 20 years. The switch to the Project 25 compliant ALMR/AWARN technology will include few new concepts for them, except interoperability. For all users, widespread interoperability among State, Federal and Municipal organizations will be new. Because the

ALMR/AWARN level of radio connectivity is nearly unprecedented nationally, there are few other areas we can look to for guidance on how to provide both initial and on-going training to our user community. We are talking to some areas that have instituted local, state, and to some extent, Federal systems that interoperate. San Diego California is closest to our example with city, county, and Customs and Border Patrol interoperating. Colorado and Utah are other jurisdictions that have high degrees of commonality between state and local governments.

Hoping to draw on the experiences of these areas, Anchorage issued a Re-

quest for Proposals to vendors on June 25th to develop and provide training to our users. This effort is being led by the Municipality's Office of Emergency Management Director, Mr. Kevin Spiller, and Training and Exercise Officer, Mr. Rob Fitch. Funding comes from a grant under the US Department of Commerce Public Safety Interoperable Communications Program. Training is expected to be available in early 2010. One goal is to have a program that would be useful to other organizations in Alaska transitioning to interoperable, trunked radio systems.

Submitted by:
Wireless Communications Director,
Trygve Erickson

Regional IC Zone Channels (cont)

Region F: Anchorage PD Dispatch
 Phone: (907) 786-8900
 Email: dispatch@ci.anchorage.ak.us
 Monitors Region F Hail channel

patch_fairbanks@dps.state.ak.us
 Monitors Statewide Hail channel

Statewide IC Zone: AST D Detachment Dispatch – Fairbanks
 Phone: (907) 451-5100
 Email: dis-

For assistance in programming any of the IC Zone or National Interoperability Channels, contact the ALMR Help Desk at (907) 334-2567 or (888) 334-2567 or email ALMR-Helpdesk@inuitservices.com.

Help Desk In Anchorage Bowl:
 334-2567

Toll Free within Alaska:
 888-334-2567

Fax: 907-269-6797

Email: almr-helpdesk@inuitservices.com

Website: <http://alaskalandmobileradio.org>

Transportable Area South Kulis Deployment

The National Guard 176th Wing located at Kulis Air National Guard Base passed their Organizational Readiness Inspection the week of June 1 - 8, 2009. In anticipation of increased communications requirements they requested the Communications module and Power/Tower skid from the Transportable Area South. The equipment was deployed just south of the Ted Stevens International Airport from May 18 - June 24 to provide optimal in-building coverage, as well as to reduce the anticipated increase in busies due to simultaneous inspections at Kulis and Elmendorf AFB.

CMSgt Delmar Schaefer, 176th Communications Flight, Operations Branch Chief, "...the Transportable made a big difference and continues to provide better coverage than we normally experience."



FACTOID:
Agencies on ALMR:
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New Web Site Location

The ALMR web site has moved. The new address is: alaskalandmobileradio.org. The previous DMVA-hosted site will redirect you to our new site location. Please update your browser location/favorites.

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 Operations Management Office
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