ALMR INSIDER

Volume 15, Issue 1 January 15, 2021

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Inside this issue:

Alaska Public Safety Communication Services 2020 Update

2020 was a unique time with many changes to, and challenges faced by, the State of Alaska Telecommunications System (SATS) and Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) programs. The programs resided in the State of Alaska, Department of Administration for many years, but to better align with department roles and responsibilities they were moved to the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs on July 1, 2020. The transition went well and most changes were internal and not noticeable to customers and users of the various systems and services provided.

Additionally, as part of the Governor's proposed FY2022 budget, SATS and ALMR budget components were combined into one component called Alaska Public Safety Communication Services (APSCS). Our office has used that name for a few years now and combining these components will simplify administrative tasks, as well as more appropriately describe the purpose of the budget component. SATS is still the appropriate name for the sites providing the various State services and ALMR will continue to be known as ALMR. Our staff also supports many other efforts and services that do not fit neatly into SATS or ALMR program descriptions and will now be better served in a broader defined APSCS program.

One major project underway is the $24M update to end-of-life infrastructure components of ALMR. Project execution has been slower than desired due to the current pandemic and the travel and close working restrictions. Motorola is working on the schedule for the next sites to be upgraded. We will post information on the ALMR website, as available.

We also completed several lifecycle infrastructure refresh projects replacing failed emergency backup power systems, end-of-life microwave equipment, and refreshed components and software on our networking equipment. These projects are critical to providing a supportable and highly-available public safety communication system valued at over $200M and comprised of numerous technologies from a wide variety of manufacturers. The process to maintain and sustain a system as large as ours requires continuous lifecycle refresh projects and funding.

We work to maintain, enhance, and improve the reliability of our system and at times that results in scheduled outages. Thank you for your support and understanding. If you ever have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me at scott.stormo@alaska.gov.

(Article by Mr. Scott Stormo, SATS/ALMR Program Manager)

Outreach and Training

In the on-going outreach and training effort, Mr. Chris Letterman, ALMR Operations Manager, continued to personally contact agencies during the last quarter of 2020 and was able to speak to all local agencies. He will be contacting State agencies next.

Surveys on training, coverage issues, and site prioritization were distributed to member agencies in October and November, respectively, and the results were compiled in late December. These will be used to determine areas in need of coverage enhancement or expansion, should funds become available.

Two virtual classes were presented by Mr. Joe Quickel, ALMR Training Coordinator. The first class was the ALMR 101, Organization, Technology and Interoperability, on November 18 and the second was ALMR 102, Motorola Portable Radio Walkaound, on December 15. Both classes were well attended and feedback received will be incorporated into future training sessions. Additionally, the classes were recorded and posted to the ALMR website.

(Article by Ms, Sherry Shafer, ALMR Operations Management Office)

APCO Hosts 2020 Emerging Technology Virtual Forum

APCO hosted the 2020 Emerging Technology Virtual Forum on December 1 - 3, which I attended. The following are some excerpts from my report.

The opening keynote speaker was FCC Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel who gave attendees some insight to the upcoming 470 band deadline. The Commissioner openly admitted it was short-sighted as many metro areas and large cities depend on it for day-to-day operations and expressed her commitment to allow public safety access to the band regardless of the 2021 auction slated to occur in February.

Although a work in progress, California shared their state's experience deploying Next Generation 911 (NG911): "We have stopped talking about Next Gen 9-1-1; we are building it!"

FirstNet Authority and FirstNet built by AT&T focused on recent 3GPP and MCPTT initiatives and the apparent sea change from the top. MCPTT is now clearly being represented as augmenting existing LMR, not replacing it.

Cyber Security was front and center as more denial of service (DOS) attacks have made the news of late and are crippling to PSAPs when they occur.

On the emerging tech side, I learned about Live911 service, which allows 9-1-1 calls to be streamed in near-real-time to officers and first responders in the field.

APCO Senior Counsel Mark Reddish ended with discussions on achieving interoperability without dependency on proprietary interfaces, Wireless 9-1-1 Location Accuracy, and a summary of APCO efforts to protect public safety spectrum, as well as the upcoming 4.9 GHz FCC auctions.

You can visit www.apcointl.org/government-relations for more information.

(Article by Mr. Chris Letterman, ALMR Operations Manager)

New ALMR Interoperability Zones

ALMR has changed the Incident Command (IC) Zones from the old nine zones to three new Interoperability Zones to align with the national standards on interoperability more closely. This change will provide more incident efficiency and simplicity for users. Dispatch centers will continue to monitor the "CALL" (dispatch HAIL/ALL CALL) talkgroup and with concurrence from the incident or on-scene commander, will still assign the other command talkgroups, as needed.

The old Statewide ADMIN zone will remain available for use by outside agencies, such as FEMA or the DOD, when responding to in-state disasters. It is optional whether agencies program them into their radios.

The new geographic zones are North, Central, and Southeast. North will be for dispatch centers North of Cantwell, Central for everything south of that on the road system, and Southeast will be for all locations south of Cordova.

These tables provide the transition plan for each of the new zones and are also available on the ALMR website. ALMR has planned this transition to ensure if it takes an agency or group additional time to reprogram their radios, they will still have a talkgroup in their radios to communicate with others. All old "IC' Zones currently programmed into radios will be deleted at a future date (TBD) and the new Interop Zone talkgroups will be the only ones available. Agencies would be notified well in advance before this change takes effect.

(Article written by Ms. Sherry Shafer, ALMR Operations Management Office)

Current — Interior Region D and IOP

CH	Description	Display	Rx Freq	Rx Tone	Tx Freq	Tx Tone
1	Regional Hail	D Hail	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
2	Regional IC	D IC 2	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
3	Regional IC	D IC 3	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
4	Regional IC	D IC 4	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
5	Regional IC	D IC 5	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
6	Regional IC	D IC 6	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
16	Regional IC Multigroup	D MG	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
IOP 3	National Search&Rescue	NSAR	155.1600	-	155.1600	156.7
IOP 2	State Conventional	EMS 5	159.2100	-	159.2100	156.7
IOP 8	National Calling	VCALL10	155.7525	-	155.7525	156.7
IOP 9	National Tac 1	VTAC11	151.1375	-	151.1375	156.7
IOP 10	National Tac 2	VTAC12	154.4525	-	154.4525	156.7
IOP 11	National Tac 3	VTAC13	158.7375	-	158.7375	156.7
IOP 12	National Tac 4	VTAC14	159.4725	-	159.4725	156.7
-	IOP Repeater	VTAC36	151.1375	-	159.4725	136.5
IOP 1	State Conventional	LE SX	155.2500	-	155.2500	156.7

New — North Interop

CH	Description	Display	Rx Freq	Rx Tone	Tx Freq	Tx Tone
1	North Dispatch Hail/ All Call	North CALL	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
2	North Command 2	N CMD 2	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
3	North Command 3	N CMD 3	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
4	North Command 4	N CMD 4	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
5	North Command 5	N CMD 5	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
6	North Command 6	N CMD 6	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
7	North Multigroup	N Multi	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
8	National Search&Rescue	NSAR	155.1600	-	155.1600	156.7
9	State Conventional	State 2	159.2100	-	159.2100	156.7
10	National Calling	VCALL10	155.7525	-	155.7525	156.7
11	National Tac 1	VTAC11	151.1375	-	151.1375	156.7
12	National Tac 2	VTAC12	154.4525	-	154.4525	156.7
13	National Tac 3	VTAC13	158.7375	-	158.7375	156.7
14	National Tac 4	VTAC14	159.4725	-	159.4725	156.7
15	IOP Repeater	VTAC36	151.1375	-	159.4725	136.5
16	State Conventional	State 1	155.2500	-	155.2500	156.7

Current — Valley Region B and IOP

CH	Description	Display	Rx Freq	Rx Tone	Tx Freq	Tx Tone
1	Regional Hail	B Hail	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
2	Regional IC	B IC 2	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
3	Regional IC	B IC 3	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
4	Regional IC	B IC 4	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
5	Regional IC	B IC 5	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
6	Regional IC	B IC 6	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
7	Regional IC Multigroup	B MG	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
IOP 3	National Search&Rescue	NSAR	155.1600	-	155.1600	156.7
IOP 2	State Conventional	EMS 5	159.2100	-	159.2100	156.7
IOP 8	National Calling	VCALL10	155.7525	-	155.7525	156.7
IOP 9	National Tac 1	VTAC11	151.1375	-	151.1375	156.7
IOP 10	National Tac 2	VTAC12	154.4525	-	154.4525	156.7
IOP 11	National Tac 3	VTAC13	158.7375	-	158.7375	156.7
IOP 12	National Tac 4	VTAC14	159.4725	-	159.4725	156.7
-	IOP Repeater	VTAC36	151.1375	-	159.4725	136.5
IOP 1	State Conventional	LE SX	155.2500	-	155.2500	156.7

New — Central Interop

CH	Description	Display	Rx Freq	Rx Tone	Tx Freq	Tx Tone
1	Central Dispatch Hail/ All Call	Central CALL	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
2	Central Command 2	C CMD 2	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
3	Central Command 3	C CMD 3	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
4	Central Command 4	C CMD 4	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
5	Central Command 5	C CMD 5	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
6	Central Command 6	C CMD 6	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
7	Central Multigroup	C Multi	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
8	National Search&Rescue	NSAR	155.1600	-	155.1600	156.7
9	State Conventional	State 2	159.2100	-	159.2100	156.7
10	National Calling	VCALL10	155.7525	-	155.7525	156.7
11	National Tac 1	VTAC11	151.1375	-	151.1375	156.7
12	National Tac 2	VTAC12	154.4525	-	154.4525	156.7
13	National Tac 3	VTAC13	158.7375	-	158.7375	156.7
14	National Tac 4	VTAC14	159.4725	-	159.4725	156.7
15	IOP Repeater	VTAC36	151.1375	-	159.4725	136.5
16	State Conventional	State 1	155.2500	-	155.2500	156.7

Current — Central Interop 700/800

CH	Description	Display	Rx Freq	Rx CG	Tx Freq	Tx CG
1	Regional Hail	B Hail	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
2	Regional IC	B IC 2	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
3	Regional IC	B IC 3	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
4	Regional IC	B IC 4	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
5	Regional IC	B IC 5	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
6	Regional IC	B IC 6	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
16	Regional IC Multigroup	B MG	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-

New — Central Interop 700/800

CH	Description	Display	Rx Freq	Rx CG	Tx Freq	Tx CG
1	Central Dispatch Hail/All Call	Central CALL	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
2	Central Command 2	C CMD 2	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
3	Central Command 3	C CMD 3	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
4	Central Command 4	C CMD 4	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
5	Central Command 5	C CMD 5	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
6	Central Command 6	C CMD 6	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
7	Central Multigroup	C Multi	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
8	NiFog Calling	8CALL90	851.0125	-	806.0125	156.7
9	Calling-Direct	8CALL90D	851.0125	-	851.0125	156.7
10	Tactical	8TAC91	851.5125	-	806.5125	156.7
11	Tactical-Direct	8TAC91D	851.5125	-	851.5125	156.7
12	Tactical	8TAC92	852.0125	-	807.0125	156.7
13	Tactical-Direct	8TAC92D	852.0125	-	852.0125	156.7
14	Tactical	8TAC93	852.5125	-	807.5125	156.7
15	Tactical-Direct	8TAC93D	852.5125	-	852.5125	156.7
16	Tactical	8TAC94	853.0125	-	808.0125	156.7

Current — SE Region A and IOP

CH	Description	Display	Rx Freq	Rx Tone	Tx Freq	Tx Tone
1	Regional Hail	A Hail	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
2	Regional IC	A IC 2	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
3	Regional IC	A IC 3	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
4	Regional IC	A IC 4	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
5	Regional IC	A IC 5	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
6	Regional IC	A IC 6	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
16	Regional IC Multigroup	A MG	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
IOP 3	National Search&Rescue	NSAR	155.1600	-	155.1600	156.7
IOP 2	State Conventional	EMS 5	159.2100	-	159.2100	156.7
IOP 8	National Calling	VCALL10	155.7525	-	155.7525	156.7
IOP 9	National Tac 1	VTAC11	151.1375	-	151.1375	156.7
IOP 10	National Tac 2	VTAC12	154.4525	-	154.4525	156.7
IOP 11	National Tac 3	VTAC13	158.7375	-	158.7375	156.7
IOP 12	National Tac 4	VTAC14	159.4725	-	159.4725	156.7
-	IOP Repeater	VTAC36	151.1375	-	159.4725	136.5
IOP 1	State Conventional	LE SX	155.2500	-	155.2500	156.7

New — SouthEast Interop

CH	Description	Display	Rx Freq	Rx Tone	Tx Freq	Tx Tone
1	SE Dispatch Hail/All Call	SE CALL	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
2	SE Command 2	SE CMD 2	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
3	SE Command 3	SE CMD 3	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
4	SE Command 4	SE CMD 4	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
5	SE Command 5	SE CMD 5	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
6	SE Command 6	SE CMD 6	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
7	SE Multigroup	SE Multi	(ALMR Talkgroup)		-	-
8	National Search&Rescue	NSAR	155.1600	-	155.1600	156.7
9	State Conventional	State 2	159.2100	-	159.2100	156.7
10	National Calling	VCALL10	155.7525	-	155.7525	156.7
11	National Tac 1	VTAC11	151.1375	-	151.1375	156.7
12	National Tac 2	VTAC12	154.4525	-	154.4525	156.7
13	National Tac 3	VTAC13	158.7375	-	158.7375	156.7
14	National Tac 4	VTAC14	159.4725	-	159.4725	156.7
15	IOP Repeater	VTAC36	151.1375	-	159.4725	136.5
16	State Conventional	State 1	155.2500	-	155.2500	156.7

FCC Approves Allowing States to Lease 4.9 GHz Spectrum to Commercial Entities

The FCC approved a report and order that would allow states to lease 4.9 GHz spectrum to commercial entities despite strong opposition from public safety during its Sept. 30 meeting.

The FCC first granted the spectrum to public safety in 2002. In recent years, the FCC has been looking at ways to increase use of the band, arguing that it is currently underused. Public safety has strongly opposed the proposal, arguing that it has presented reasonable proposals for increasing public-safety use of the band to the FCC in the past, but the FCC rejected those proposals. Additionally, public-safety entities have argued that the underuse of the band is because of a poor regulatory framework.

Prior to the release of the report and order, the Public Safety Spectrum Alliance (PSSA) had urged the FCC to give the 4.9 spectrum to the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) to be used for future public-safety spectrum needs.

The Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) International denounced the commission's decision. "Prior to today's order, the FCC's rules hamstrung public safety from making the best use of this important spectrum band," a statement from the association said. "For years, public safety repeatedly offered specific proposals to the FCC to improve these rules so that law enforcement, fire, EMS, and 9-1-1 professionals could benefit from the multitude of broadband applications this band would make possible. Instead of granting these requested rules changes, the majority continued the false narrative that public safety is to blame for any underutilization and ignored public safety's needs in an attempt to benefit commercial users.

"Further the FCC took this action while failing to provide sufficient notice of its actions," APCO's statement said. "With public-safety professionals facing unprecedented national emergencies and natural disasters, the timing of the majority's action is especially unfortunate and misguided."

“From our point of view, our effort is not over,” said Chris Moore, a former police chief who is part of the PSSA leadership team. “Our legal counsel is preparing a list of options for consideration. Once we have reviewed these options, we will quickly move forward and take action to seek reversal of this clearly arbitrary and harmful decision.”

(Excepts taken from article by Danny Ramey, September 30 Mission Critical Communications Weekly e-Newsletter)

State of Alaska GTR Installation Continues

The ALMR System Manager and a two-person team of Motorola Field Service Technicians continued the hard work of installing new GTR site radio repeaters for the State of Alaska since the initial install was completed at the Cottonwood site in early October.

October remained an extremely busy month will 11 total sites being upgraded. Given each site takes upwards of six to eight hours to complete, this was a very aggressive schedule and kept the team on the road for much of the month. Three additional sites were completed in the month of November and five in December.

With the close out of December, the installations are approximately 25 percent complete. The focus will remain on road accessible sites through the remainder of the winter and early the early spring. Once the weather breaks, installation will begin at the mountain top sites.

Completion of the project is estimated for late summer or early fall 2021.

(Article by Ms. Sherry Shafer, ALMR Operations Management Office)

New ALMR Website Launch

The Operations Management Office (OMO) has been diligently working since July 2020 to put together a new, modernized website.

The new ALMR website was launched on December 27 and features current news or articles of interest in a vignette on the main page, as well as a simplified menu system. Another new feature is the ability to sign up for the newsletter directly on the website without having to contact the OMO and also the ability to request training from the available courses or agency-specific training.

Hoke Designs, based in Juneau, was chosen to help design and build the website with input from the OMO and the SOA and DOD Program Managers. The final design and format provides a clean and visually consistent website that should meet the needs of the ALMR user community well into the future.

Additionally, a contest was held in November for a new design for the ALMR logo. Agencies were asked to submit their design incorporating the tenants of the federal, state, and local government partnership and public safety. Submissions will be presented to the Executive Council at their January meeting to chose the winning design, Thank you to all the contributors and good luck!

(Article by Ms. Sherry Shafer, ALMR Operations Management Office)

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ALMR Spotlight - Rural Deltana Volunteer Fire Department

The Rural Deltana Volunteer Fire Department is an all-volunteer, non-profit corporation governed by a board of directors. The department has 42 members - 31 firefighters, 9 support firefighters, and 2 auxiliary personnel. We currently have two fire stations, one in the Big D area and our main station on Clearwater Road. Our fire protection area is one of the largest in the nation and extends approximately 40 miles southeast along the Alaska Highway, 60 miles south toward Valdez along the Richardson Highway, and 30 miles north toward Fairbanks for a total of 5,892 square miles.

We provide emergency fire protection and light rescue to the Deltana Community and to the City of Delta Junction. We also assist State Forestry during fire season and surrounding communities when called upon.

One of the biggest changes that took place when we came on the system on March 30, 2006, was how we were being dispatched. Before ALMR, we used old Motorola GP300 radios and were dispatched and also conducted operations on the same channel and had simplex channels for local use. We are now dispatched out of the Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center, located in the Fairbanks Police Department building.

Over the years our communications have changed for the better. Even though we don't have ALMR coverage in all of our response area, the system has benefitted our department greatly and increased our ability to communicate with other departments in the surrounding area. I feel that our department, with the use of ALMR, has the ability to communicate with any responding agency in an emergency. Communication is the backbone to any emergency and with everyone using the same channel or talkgroup to communicate, it makes the incident much safer for all those on scene.

(Article submitted by Fire Chief Tim Castleberry, Rural Deltana VFD)

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ALMR 2020 End-of-Year Statistics

Member Agencies: 130

Subscribers: 23,057

Group Calls: 12,359,823

Push to Talks: 22,880,140

Busies/Percentage rate of calls: 2,813/.0002

(Totals are cumulative)