Alaska Land Mobile Radio Communications System

Interoperability Procedure 300-3

Version V10

July 6, 2023

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Document Revision History

Date	Reason for Changes	Version
7/18/2013	Initial draft. Approved by the User Council – final	1
7/7/2014	Annual review/update. Approved by the Operations Management Office – final.	2
7/8/2015	Annual review/update. Approved by the Operations Management Office – final.	3
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Acronyms and Definitions

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

Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) Communications System: the ALMR Communications System, as established in the Cooperative and Mutual Aid Agreement.

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

Alaska Public Safety Communication Services (APSCS): a State of Alaska (SOA) office in the Department of Public Safety (DPS) that operates and maintains the SOA Telecommunications System (SATS) supporting ALMR and provides public safety communication services and 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.

Department of Public Safety (DPS): a State of Alaska (SOA) department where the SOA Telecommunications System (SATS) and ALMR programs reside.

Executive Council: governing body 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).

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, tribal, or federal), its authorized employees and personnel (paid or volunteer), and its service provider, participating in and using the system under a Membership Agreement.

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: 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 SATS (the State's microwave system), and shared owner of the system.

State of Alaska Telecommunications Systems (SATS): the State of Alaska statewide telecommunications system microwave network.

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.

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

User Council: governing body 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 to define the importance of maintaining and encouraging interoperable communications on the Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) Communications System, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the supporting ALMR staff and member agencies and the available tools to accomplish this goal.

The Department of Homeland Security/CISA Wireless Communications Interoperability awareness guide definition of interoperability reads as follows:

> Interoperability is the ability of emergency response agencies to talk to one another via communication systems-to exchange voice and/or data with one another on demand, in real time, when needed, and as authorized.

Interoperability between public safety-first responders should be promoted and encouraged at all times and should be refined through regular training and exercises.

2.0   Roles and Responsibilities

2.1   User Council

The User Council (UC) plays a pivotal role in the continual improvement of interoperable communications throughout Alaska. Composed of the appointed representatives for agencies operating on ALMR, the UC shall be responsible for:

- Promoting the expansion of the system into uncovered areas of the State, after coverage issues within the current footprint are addressed,
- Encouraging stakeholders continued support for keeping the system at the most current software/hardware versions,
- Promoting interoperable communications among their constituents, and
- Providing formal approval of the Interoperability Procedure and any substantive revisions, thereafter.

2.2   Operations Management Office

The Operations Management Office (OMO) shall be responsible for:

- Outreach and education to address the benefits of interoperability to member agencies,
- Promoting member agency development of Communications Leader (COML) capabilities,
- Facilitating and promoting the use of Incident Command System (ICS) protocols, ALMR Interoperability Zone talkgroups/channels, and the national interoperability channels,
- Encouraging talkgroup sharing, whenever appropriate,

- Encouraging agencies to conduct regular communications exercises and assist with coordination, whenever possible, and
- Understanding and promoting technical solutions, where cost effective and feasible (gateways, mobile repeaters, etc.).

2.3   System Management Office

The System Management Office (SMO) shall be responsible for:

- Assistance with exercises/training scenarios, which focus on interagency coordination and refining interoperability, as requested, and
- Recommending and supporting technical solutions to interoperability barriers.

2.4   Member Agencies

Member agencies shall be responsible for:

- Having and maintaining viable interoperable communications equipment that meets their technical and operational requirements,
- Ensuring their personnel are trained on radio use to include, but not limited to, day-to-day operations, emergency button use, and multi-agency/multi-jurisdictional responses,
- Ensuring their radios are programmed with the appropriate interoperability zones and performing regular radio maintenance to ensure optimum performance, and
- Reviewing and understanding their responsibilities as outlined in the Alaska Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP).

3.0   Procedures

Successful interoperable communications depend on utilizing the system in a manner which day-to-day, multi-jurisdictional, inter-agency, and task force situations all are conducted in the same manner. Events/contingencies easily become hectic if responders are not fully cognizant of how to utilize their subscriber radios, as well as the Interoperability Zone channels/talkgroups/frequencies, and other gateway tools in place on the system.

Therefore, the Executive Council endorsed the User Council effort in 2019 to redesign the Incident Command Zones.

Descriptions of the redesign effort are listed in the ALMR Concept of Operation (CONOP). Agencies should regularly practice utilizing the interoperability channels to maintain proficiency. Smaller exercises are easily coordinated and provide valuable insight into areas of interoperable communications use in which an agency may not be operationally proficient.

There are many facets to interoperable communications, but one of the most important is radio discipline. If it is not maintained, chaos ensues and ultimately property and lives could be lost. Common language protocols should always be observed in multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional responses.

Likewise, unit leaders, radio operators, and dispatchers will defer to emergency traffic, when identified as such, and observe minimize operations when dictated by the System Manager or COML, until normal traffic can be resumed.

4.0   Compliance

Compliance with the Interoperability Procedure is outlined in ALMR Interoperability Policy Memorandum 300-3.