ALASKA LAND MOBILE RADIO

Alaska Land Mobile Radio Communications System

Radio Usage and Transmission Protocols Procedure 300-6

Version V17

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Document Revision History

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Acronyms and Definitions

Abuse of User Privileges: repeated violations 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 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: a voluntary non-profit organization in Alaska that represents 165 cities, boroughs, and unified municipalities.

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 providing public safety communication services and support to state agencies.

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

Department of Defense (DoD) – 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).

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

Local Governments: those Alaska political subdivisions defined as municipalities in AS 29.71.800(14).

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.

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: 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 operational or repair decisions; establishes policies, procedures, contracts, organizations, and agreements that provide the service levels as defined in the ALMR Service Level Agreement in coordination with the User Council.

Operations Management Office (OMO): develops recommendations for policies, procedures, and guidelines; identifies 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 infrastructure system, and shared owner of the system. The State of Alaska sponsors local/municipal agencies onto the system.

System: the ALMR Communications System, as established in the Cooperative and Mutual Aid 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.

Talkgroup: 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 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. All terms and conditions of the Cooperative and Mutual Aid agreement defined apply to local/municipal government agencies that are sponsored/represented by the State of Alaska.

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 operation of the system. The User Council oversees the development of system operations plans, procedures, and policies.

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, tribal, federal government, or public safety organizations), or task force operations. Successful interoperable communications are 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 are highly encouraged to hold regular, in-house training sessions on radio use and radio etiquette. This training should include, but not be limited to, day-to-day operations, emergency button use (where/when applicable), and multi-agency/multi-jurisdictional responses. Agencies who train regularly will be prepared 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 were 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 but must contain the Interoperability Zone in which they are located at a minimum. The Statewide Admin Zone should be programmed into ALMR radios for use by agencies that provide support functions, especially with the DoD, such as logistics, finance, and administration during incidents.

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

4.3   Encryption

Encryption will not be used on any of the three regional Interoperability Zones, Southeast, Central, or North, on interoperability talkgroups, or conventional channels. These are for interagency cooperation, coordination, and use, adding encryption makes them less accessible to all users. If encryption is needed there are Law Enforcement (LE) established channels for that, including the regional LE tactical (TACs). Use of encryption on the Statewide Admin Zone is allowed but 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.

4.5 Minimize Procedures

Minimizing 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 minimized 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 any unauthorized use, including, but not limited to 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, etc.).
- 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 violations 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 2.5.

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.