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ALMR Expands Training Access with YouTube Integration

The Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) system is working to make training easier for all of its members. We are pleased to roll out one of our latest changes, ALMR training is now on YouTube! You can find videos on our new YouTube channel, as well as on the ALMR website. Some people prefer YouTube because it is easy to search for videos, create playlists, and subscribe to channels. Others may need to use the ALMR website instead. By offering both options, ALMR makes sure that everyone can still access the same helpful information.

For users who cannot access YouTube due to job rules, internet limits, or other reasons, the ALMR website remains a complete and reliable source. Each video on the website includes a direct link, so it can be used without searching elsewhere.

To make training easier to navigate, ALMR has organized its videos into clear categories helping users quickly find the information they need. The **Administrative** category includes topics such as system rules, roles, and membership details. The **Subscriber Units** category focuses on radios. It teaches users how to operate them and explains how they are programmed. This is useful for people who work directly with communication equipment in the field.

Another section is the **System** category. These videos explain how the ALMR system works as a whole and helps users better understand the technology behind the network. The **Interoperability** category focuses on one of ALMR's main goals—helping different agencies communicate with each other. These videos show how teams can work together during emergencies or daily operations. Finally, the **Other Topics** category includes training that does not fit into the main groups but is still valuable for users.

The ALMR Operations Management Office, also known as OMO, is responsible for creating and sharing these training materials. In addition to recorded videos, they offer live online classes where users can ask questions in real time. They also provide written articles and in-person workshops when possible. This mix of training styles helps meet different learning needs.

ALMR also wants members to take part in improving the training program. If someone has an idea for a new training topic, they can submit a request through the ALMR website. There is a simple "Request Training" link that allows users to share their ideas. After a request is sent, the OMO team may follow up to ask questions or provide updates. This process helps make sure that training stays useful, current, and focused on real needs.

Adding YouTube as a training platform is a simple but important step forward. It gives members more flexibility and makes learning more convenient. By offering different ways to access training and by listening to feedback, ALMR continues to support strong communication and teamwork across Alaska.

As technology and user needs continue to evolve, ALMR remains committed to improving how training is delivered and accessed. We continuously try to improve and listen to the feedback of our members. This ensures that the ALMR training program stays effective and ready to support communication needs across the system well into the future.

(Article prepared by Mr. Dan Nelson, ALMR training manager)

ALMR and PTT Technology.

Mission-critical Push-to-Talk (PTT) communications form the operational backbone of public safety, utilities, transportation, energy, and other high-risk industries where communication failure is not an option. Unlike consumer voice applications, mission-critical PTT is engineered for immediate call setup, high reliability, secure transmission, and performance under extreme conditions.

At the core of mission-critical PTT is instant group communication. With a single button press, users can connect to a talkgroup without dialing numbers or waiting for network negotiation. Call setup times are typically measured in milliseconds, ensuring responders and field personnel can exchange information without delay.

Most mission-critical PTT systems operate over Land Mobile Radio networks built on digital standards such as Project 25 (P25). These standards are specifically designed to support public safety and critical infrastructure operations. They offer enhanced audio quality, advanced error correction, and secure encryption to protect sensitive communications. Interoperability is a key feature, allowing agencies from different jurisdictions or departments to communicate seamlessly during mutual aid responses or large-scale emergencies.

Reliability is what distinguishes mission-critical PTT from commercial communication platforms. LMR systems operate on dedicated, licensed spectrum and are supported by hardened infrastructure with backup power, redundant network paths, and geographically diverse sites. This ensures continued operation during natural disasters, severe weather events, or widespread power outages when commercial cellular networks may be congested or unavailable.

Security and control are equally vital. Encryption safeguards law enforcement operations and protects sensitive infrastructure communications. Network administrators maintain strict control over talkgroup access, radio provisioning, and system monitoring to ensure compliance with operational policies and regulatory standards.

As technology evolves, mission-critical PTT is increasingly integrating with broadband LTE and 5G networks to expand coverage and enhance data capabilities. Hybrid solutions combine the resilience of traditional radio systems with the flexibility of IP-based networks, supporting multimedia messaging, GPS tracking, and real-time situational awareness.

(Article prepared by Mr. Paul Fussey, ALMR Operations Manager)

Alaska Mobile ID

Officials in Alaska have introduced the Alaska Mobile ID, a mobile license and identity credential — to increase convenience for residents, but also security.

“Unlike a traditional card, which can be lost, stolen or easily copied, a digital ID is protected by multiple layers of security, including your phone’s biometric authentication like face ID or fingerprint and encryption,” Kate Sheehan, policy adviser with the Office of the Commissioner in the Alaska Department of Administration.

“Plus, when you use it, only the necessary information is shared,” Sheehan said. “So you don’t have to hand over your full ID with all your details like you would with a physical card. This helps protect against identity theft and fraud.”

To access a mobile ID, users download the Alaska Mobile ID app. Alaska’s mobile ID is registered with the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) Digital Trust Service, a system supporting states with mobile credentials. The app was released in March 2025, and now has nearly 5,100 downloaded mobile credentials, according to Sheehan. Alaska charges no additional fee to get a digital driver’s license.

As adoption and usage increase, TSA will begin expanding CAT-II reader availability to additional airports across the state; however, during this initial phase, acceptance is limited to the Anchorage and Juneau airports. Alaska’s mID is designed to complement, not replace, the physical credential.

(Article prepared by Mr. Paul Fussey, ALMR Operations Manager with excerpts from the Alaska DMV website and the March 2026 Government Technology article)

Daily System Status Report

The ALMR helpdesk issues a daily report by email called the Daily System Status. This report is meant to give the agencies and dispatch centers that have signed up a general idea of the work that is going to be performed in their area.

The report covers five areas, upcoming scheduled maintenance, sites off-line, channels off-line, open system issues, and closed system issues. The main area that is update the most is the upcoming scheduled maintenance section. The ALMR help desk will let areas know which tower or towers in their area are projected to be worked on, depending on the weather.
Before the work is scheduled to begin, the ALMR helpdesk will call the affected dispatch centers and agencies in the area to let them know how long the site is going to be down and for what reason. After the work has been completed the ALMR helpdesk will contact the agencies to let them know the tower work is completed. If an agency would like to be added to the reports distro list they can send an email to ALMR-Helpdesk@beringstraits.com.
(Article prepared by Mr. Paul Fussey, ALMR Operations Manager)

International Wireless Communications Expo (IWCE) 2026

This year we were once again able to attend the valuable IWCE conference to talk to and hear from vendors and peers about technologies, use cases, and lessons learned that directly relate to the shared telecommunications infrastructure and public safety services provided on and through our State of Alaska Telecommunications System (SATS) and partners' infrastructure. ALMR is the most widely known public safety service riding the shared infrastructure. ALMR provides much of the police, fire, and emergency medical services radio and 911 dispatch services throughout Alaska. Several 911 dispatch centers rely on ALMR to serve the population and get them the critical help when they are most in need. There were other attendees this year beyond state of Alaska employees and it is always good to see our partners there.

We attended many sessions covering topics ranging from policies and procedures, governance, technologies, consultant services, etc. Attending this event and learning from others continues to reinforce my confidence that we in Alaska are doing the right thing. Due to early involvement with federal, state, and local partners, we are in a position that much of the nation wishes they were in. There are over 1,261 land mobile radio (LMR) systems in the USA and most states have several systems that may or may not be able to talk to one another. In Alaska, we only have two systems. One is unique to the North Slope Borough and the other is ALMR. Anyone on ALMR can talk to anyone else on ALMR by using common talkgroups when they need to or they stay on their local talkgroups to conduct their day-to-day business. Having one shared system available for most of Alaska's government agencies not only ensures interoperability, it greatly reduces infrastructure and equipment costs, lifecycle refresh costs, and the number of staff needed to operate and maintain the system. As an example, Alabama has around eighteen (18) LMR systems and Arizona has around thirty (30) LMR systems. Each of those would require funding, governance, and staff to support whereas Alaska has mostly avoided that challenge by designing, developing, and sharing ALMR from the beginning. ALMR is a consolidated, enterprise service that works perfectly for our widely disbursed population. There is little duplication of effort or redundant funding on ALMR, a model other states and services would benefit from obtaining.

Many sessions of interest covered topics related to being able to execute public safety communications in places where service options were limited, this defines most of Alaska. It would be cost prohibitive to expand the current ALMR infrastructure to cover all of Alaska; however, there continues to be alternative technologies that could provide 911 dispatch connected services with ALMR to areas where cellular, satellite, or broadband technologies are available. Some of those technologies are currently in use today and provide connectivity to ALMR through radios capable of connecting through cellular or Wi-Fi networks, through satellite connectivity, or through applications running on cell phones.

During disaster operations where services, including power and communications may be down, there are options to use satellite connectivity directly or as backhaul to continue to serve the first responders communications needs. Some of that capability is available to us today and if you have a use case or want to know more about what is available or possible, please reach out to me to discuss.

There is an agency that has presented over the past few years about their journey to replace their end-of-life LMR system. They are a small town and were not able to raise the needed funds to replace their old LMR system with a modern LMR system. They opted to be an early adopter of broadband push to talk to meet their communication needs. They started with a ruggedized cell phone, then they moved to a dedicated cell radio like device, and today they have switched to a handheld LMR radio that also can communicate through the cell networks. They said having a rugged radio back in their hands allows for direct robust radio-to-radio communications and could allow them to operate on neighboring LMR systems that have since become available to them. Hearing from this presenter over the past few years again, provides confidence we are doing the right thing by looking at cellular to augment coverage to ALMR where it makes sense from a cost and operational perspective. We have added the SmartConnect feature to ALMR which allows properly configured, compatible radios to communicate on ALMR through Wi-Fi and LTE broadband connectivity when they are outside of ALMR radio coverage. There are also agencies successfully using approved and authorized gateways to connect cellular push-to-talk apps into ALMR talkgroups.

There was once again a large exhibit hall with vendors covering most of what comprises our infrastructure. We met with vendors whose products we currently use as well as several potential new equipment vendors. Meeting with current vendors has always proved beneficial as they often have senior representatives on the floor who are interested in hearing our feedback. That has helped in the past resolve challenges and appears to have done so again this trip. Meeting with potential new vendors ensures we are always looking at options to improve existing services or possibly even change technology when the opportunity and lifecycle window is right.

In our modern, remotely connected world, there are still a lot things that can best be accomplished through honest and open face-to-face discussion rather than a phone or online sales presentation where interaction and non-verbal communication is more limited. I strongly encourage others to attend some of these national public safety infrastructure, technology, and services conferences. The opportunity to learn from others and to gain awareness of the technology space these conferences provide cannot be obtained elsewhere no matter how many "newsletter" emails you subscribe to or industry articles you read.

(Article prepared by Mr. Scott Stormo, Alaska Public Safety Communication Services (APSCS) Manager)

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A FOND FAREWELL

I am not one to speak about myself, so writing a farewell article is something that is very difficult for me, and I find it hard to know what to say. I will be heading back to the lower 48 for new adventures, and my last day with ALMR will be May 29th.

Before working at ALMR, I had a limited understanding of what ALMR was. What I learned was that it was a radio communication system that provided Alaskan public safety first responders with an interoperable communication system, including critical infrastructure, radio communications, and 9-1-1 support. The system connects not only federal entities and state responders, but local municipalities/organizations as well, which makes everyone safer. I once was a volunteer dispatcher for a small volunteer fire department in Vermont. When an emergency happened, we needed mutual aid assistance, I would have to have different radios in order to relay important information back and forth. With talkgroups established through ALMR that is not necessary today, which makes it easier to communicate with other responders. ALMR is a very important part of keeping communications open during times of disasters, emergencies, public safety, and rescue operations.

I am proud that I was able to work with the amazing people that are a part of ALMR, especially APSCS, the System Management Office, and all the member agencies on the ALMR system. I have learned a lot in my two years.

Will I miss ALMR? Yes! I hope I was able to make a difference, and I want to thank everyone, especially Mr. Paul Fussey, Ms. Sherry Shafer, and Mr. Sander Schijvens, of Wostmann & Associates. I wish you all the best.

(Ms. Mary Burnham, ALMR Document Specialist)

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YouTube: www.youtube.com/

Dispatchers

The ALMR team would like to thank all of the dispatchers that work tirelessly taking 911 calls and dispatching police, fire, and EMS units to emergencies.

The National Telecommunicators Week is April 12-18, make every day a celebration to say thank you to a dispatcher. Their calming voice amidst chaos is the link between a crisis and the assurance that help is on the way.