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Upcoming Events

February 16, 2012:
COML Committee
Meeting

April 12, 2012: Spring
SIGB Meeting

Black Box Rodeo Tests Communications Equipment

On January 19, 2012, Oklahoma held a “Black Box Rodeo” in Oklahoma City. This communications exercise was conducted by the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management (OEM) and the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS). Various federal, state and local emergency response and law enforcement agencies with mobile command centers and/or mobile communications units participated.

The exercise showcased units equipped with mobile gateways that are available to respond during a public safety incident. It also provided an opportunity for public safety communications practitioners to gain knowledge about the units’ capabilities and to practice using the equipment within the units to communicate with other units across frequency bands. Two Certified State of Oklahoma Communications Unit Leaders (COML) participated in the exercise and developed a communications plan for the agencies to reference.

The exercise included the following objectives:

- Provide training and experience to agency personnel in establishing mobile command units and communications resources.

Photo courtesy of Taran Groom, U.S. Marshals Service.



Aerial view of the January 19, 2012, Black Box Rodeo. Mobile command units from local, state and federal agencies participated in the communications exercise.

- Test interoperability between agencies using VHF/UHF/800MHz resources.
- Identify the contacts, resources, capabilities and limitations of the participating agencies.
- Provide an opportunity for COML trainees to assist with the development of communications plans.

The exercise began with a test of the units’ ability to use the National Interoperability Channels. Agencies were required to use the UCALL, VCALL and 8CALL “Calling Channels” while en route to the exercise in order to receive instructions for staging. Upon arrival, a roll call was conducted using

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Black Box Rodeo (Continued from page 1)

the same channels. Specific units were assigned to lead out each band of the National Interoperability Channels and were hailed one by one. Once all units were on site, time was provided for equipment set up, agency training and introductions.

The next aspect of the exercise involved ad hoc testing between

the units and a demonstration of the equipment. The exercise command post was operated by USMS and personnel were available throughout the day via the established Calling Channels. Agencies were required to utilize the Calling Channels to inform USMS of ad hoc testing being conducted to prevent interference between other

agencies. At the conclusion of the exercise, agencies used the Calling Channels to depart.

For additional information about the January 19 Black Box Rodeo, please contact Taran Groom, USMS (405) 203-6294; Putnam Reiter, OEM (405) 521-2481; or John Comstock, OK County EM (405) 605-8979.

Narrowband-Capable Equipment Grant Assists Oklahoma Agencies

In 2009, the Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security (OKOHS) completed an assessment of Oklahoma public safety agencies to gain a snapshot of the state's interoperability capability. Based on this assessment, OKOHS determined that a number of agencies would not meet the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) narrowbanding mandate by the January 1, 2013, deadline. To assist with the transition, OKOHS offered a one-time opportunity, in 2011, for Oklahoma public safety agencies to

apply for funds to be used toward the purchase of narrowband-capable equipment as a component of the Oklahoma Narrowbanding Plan. OKOHS allocated funds for this project from the Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program (IECGP).

More than 130 applications were submitted to OKOHS, and 48 applicants were selected to receive funding toward the purchase of mobile and portable radios. Funding was very limited, but OKOHS

made every effort to provide assistance to as many applicants as possible. Selected applicants were able to replace existing, obsolete mobile and portable radio equipment with new equipment capable of narrowband operation. Applicants were allowed to choose any manufacturer of equipment, as long as the equipment complied with the *Minimum Standards for Communication Equipment Purchases*.

Applicants that did not receive FY 2010 IECGP funding as part of this project are encouraged to take

immediate action to transition their agency to narrowband operation and regularly check the Interoperable Communications Website at www.ioc.ok.gov should additional funding become available.

Countdown to Mandatory Narrowbanding

Only 10 months remain until the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) narrowband deadline! The FCC has mandated that all non-Federal radio licensees operating 25 kHz (wideband) systems in VHF and UHF bands must migrate to 12.5 kHz (narrowband) channels by January 1, 2013. If your agency still operates in wideband mode, you must take action immediately. Visit www.ioc.ok.gov for additional information. You may also visit www.publicsafetytools.info to check the status of your license.

CIO to Present Report to OK House Gov't Modernization Committee

On February 9, 2012, the Oklahoma Chief Information Officer (CIO), Alex Pettit, will present the findings from the Projected Sustainability Cost Development Report to the Oklahoma House of Representatives Government Modernization Committee. The presentation is a component of the CIO's assessment of the state's information technology as required by the Information Technology Consolidation and Coordination Act.

In 2011, the Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security (OKOHS)

contracted with L.R. Kimball, a consulting firm, to conduct a study on behalf of the CIO to determine the best methods for consolidating and sustaining the radio systems in Oklahoma. The report identifies communications infrastructure that could be leveraged to demonstrate a cost savings for the state of Oklahoma.

Representatives from L.R. Kimball will attend the committee meeting to answer any questions the committee members may have regarding the findings in the report.

OKFOG Requests

The Oklahoma Field Operations Guide (OKFOG) is a pocket-sized communications quick-reference booklet for first responders. All public safety agencies in Oklahoma may request copies of the OKFOG. Send requests to IOC@dps.state.ok.us and include your name, agency, amount needed and mailing address.

IOCSS Working Group Makes Recommendations for Standards Update

On January 5, 2012, the Interoperable Communications State Standards (IOCSS) Working Group convened a special meeting to update the *Minimum Standards for Communication Equipment Purchases*. The Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security (OKOHS) is tasked with establishing the set of standards pursuant to the Oklahoma Homeland Security Act. The IOCSS Working Group is comprised of state and local public safety practitioners who meet annually, and as needed, to make recommendations regarding the standards.

During the January 5 meeting, the working group addressed concerns related to the radio systems capable of operating in both analog and

digital modes. The first issue with these systems is that interference is caused with the use of the National Interoperability Channels and the Oklahoma Interoperability Channels when the radio is programmed to transmit digital on those specific channels. Essentially, agencies should not program these frequencies into radios with a format other than analog narrowband. Further, agencies should use analog narrowband to meet the January 13, 2013, deadline.

The second issue is that non-Project 25 digital systems are proprietary or have limited choices of equipment manufacturers; therefore, the radio systems are incapable of allowing outside users to interoperate during a public safety

incident requiring a multi-jurisdictional response. This inability to properly communicate could jeopardize the safety of public safety practitioners and the community at large. If an agency chooses to operate in digital mode, it should use the P25 format, as there are dozens of manufacturers which make P25-capable radios. Certain digital formats do not promote interoperability, because they allow only a few manufacturers to operate on their systems.

OKOHS will update the *Minimum Standards for Communication Equipment Purchases* to reflect the recommendations from the January 5 meeting. For additional information, or to view the standards, visit www.ioc.ok.gov.



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Announcements

MWC to House “Windtalker” Unit

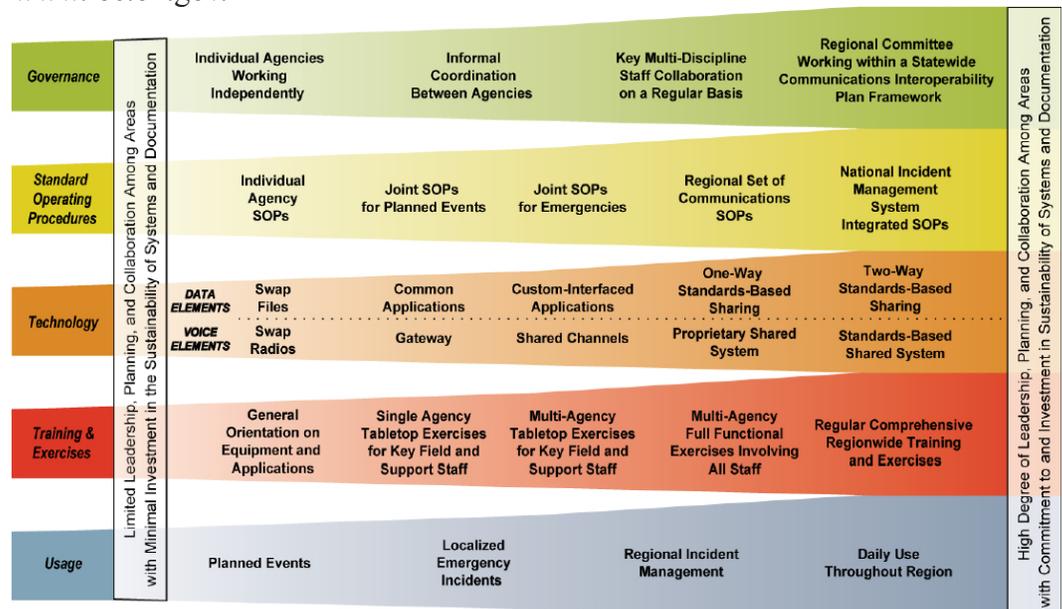
Midwest City will now house the State Fire Marshal’s mobile communications unit, Windtalker. The unit is capable of establishing communications within a short period of time during a public safety incident requiring a multi-agency response. The Primary Point of Contact for Windtalker is David Richardson with the Midwest City Fire Department.

SCIP Update Complete

The 2011 update of the Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) was recently completed and is available on the Interoperable Communications Website at www.ioc.ok.gov.

SIGB Identifies IOC Challenges

During their winter meeting on January 12, members of the Statewide Interoperability Governing Body (SIGB) outlined interoperable communications challenges and priorities for the state of Oklahoma. This assignment was by special request of Oklahoma Homeland Security Director, Kim Edd Carter. The outcome of the meeting was a documented list of eight interoperable communications challenges faced by the state of Oklahoma, the agency or person responsible for the resolution of the challenge and the recommended next steps. The SIGB will address these challenges throughout 2012.



Oklahoma has adopted the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum as a guide and directional goal to gain seamless communications interoperability across the state.

About the Oklahoma Interoperability Newsletter

The *Oklahoma Interoperability Newsletter* is designed to be a source of information, news and updates for stakeholders committed to public safety communications interoperability in the state of Oklahoma. We hope that it will serve as a valuable resource for you. If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, or for comments or suggestions, please contact Nikki Cassingham at ncassing@dps.state.ok.us or Chelsea Grogan at cgrogan@dps.state.ok.us.