

**Joint Meeting of the Nebraska Council of Regions (NCOR) and  
Nebraska Wireless Interoperability Network Council (N-WIN Council)**

Friday, December 9, 2011, 8:30 AM (CDT)  
Center for People in Need, 3901 N. 27t Street #1, Lincoln, NE 68521-4177

**Minutes**

**Introductions & Overview**

NCOR Members

First	Last	Organization (NCOR)	Attendance
Mark	Conrey	Tri-County Region	x
Patrick	Foust	Northeast Region	
Pat	Gerdes	Southwest Region	
Jim	Gerweck	Southeast Region	x
Tim	Hofbauer	East Central Region	x
Pete	Peterson	North Central Region	x
Ray	Richards	Panhandle Region	
Larry	Thoren	South Central Region	x
Thomas	Schwarten	Nebraska State Patrol	x
Dave	Webb	Nebraska Public Power District	x

NWIN Council Members

First	Last	Org (NWIN)	Attendance
Al	Berndt	Nebraska Emergency Management Agency	x
Ted	Blume	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	
Mark	Conrey	Tri-County Region	x
Jim	Gerweck	South East Region/NCOR Rep.	x
Adam	Matzner	State Fire Marshal's Office	x
Tom	Schwarten	Nebraska State Patrol	x
Jayne	Scofield	Office of the Chief Information Officer	x
Dave	Webb	Nebraska Public Power District	x

**Other Attendees:** Mark DeKraai, Public Policy Center; Denise Bulling, Public Policy Center; Janell Walther, Public Policy Center; Matt Schnell, NPPD; Brenda Decker, OCIO; Lt. Governor Rick Sheehy; Dan Hiller, NEMA; Levi Krause, Nebraska Game & Parks; Bob Malmquist, Dept. of Roads; Ray Ryan, Dept. of Roads; Nikki Weber, NEMA; Bob Willhelm, NEMA; Pam Kemper, OCIO; Mike Jeffres, OCIO; Mike Clayborn, NPPD; Sgt. Cofer, Nebraska State Patrol

This meeting was held to discuss next steps in the statewide interoperability system. The committees discussed the progress on the projects as they are today and proposed strategies for making progress in public safety interoperability across Nebraska.

## Interoperable Communications in Nebraska: Where we have been and where we are now

**State Radio System: Dave Webb, NPPD:** Nebraska has been a model for the country through its cooperative partnerships and network sharing to create a cost-effective system. The initial partners for developing the State Radio System included OCIO, NPPD, Nebraska State Patrol, State Fire Marshal, Game & Parks, NEMA, Dept. of Roads, and the US Dept. of the Interior. It was important to the group to establish interoperable communications for voice with the idea of adding data at a future date. Funding from Homeland Security Grants was used to move the project forward. , The Statewide Communications Strategy was developed in Nov. 2004. A proposal for the state radio system followed in October 2005 with additional funding approved for the project by the state legislature in Nov. 2006. A contract was awarded to Motorola and Phase 1 build out of the project began in Spring 2009. The state radio system is largely operational with areas on the Eastern side of Nebraska (Elgin, Jones Creek, Plattsmouth, and Cedar Bluffs) projected to go live the week of January 9, 2012. Coverage studies by Motorola will begin by Fall 2012.

**Paraclete – Sue Krogman, NEMA:** A group in Central Nebraska piloted the Paraclete system© in 2007 to connect radio frequencies together so there would be no disruptions when an event moved county to county. It was received so well that homeland security grant program funds were used to hire *Interop Solutions* to install their Paraclete system statewide as a way to further mutual aid communications. This system uses the internet to patch radio frequencies together so users can talk to each other. This year NEMA has been training dispatchers across the state on the uses and capabilities of the Paraclete system. NEMA has plans to train Emergency Managers and other local communications personnel in the future. NEMA has added three more persons to the training cadre and two more to the planning cadre, so six teams are now conducting training across the state. There is currently an internet connection fee associated with Paraclete use that is borne by local entities which could be eased when the NRIN data ring is complete.

**Nebraska Regional Interoperable Network (NRIN) – Sue Krogman, NEMA:** The first phase of the NRIN microwave system is being implemented in the Panhandle. Microwaves placed on local towers have required negotiation of lease agreements or Memorandums of Understanding with tower owners, including NPPD. The first testing phase for the Panhandle area is expected to be complete by the end of December. Structural analysis is being done in the South West region, and they are awaiting the delivery of materials from the contractor.

**Mutual Aid –** Mutual Aid is made up of many different components. NEMA approves grant funds for development of local mutual aid systems. Regions and State are developing Tactical Interoperable Communications Plans (TICPs), which should reflect mutual aid. NEMA completes the Environmental and Historical Preservation forms (EHPs) and provides the formats for the MOUs. OCIO approves passwords and IDs for CASM, owns the frequencies, and helps with coverage studies. OCIO has a checklist for tower assessments and provides guidelines for radio programs. OCIO assists in the regional mutual aid planning. At the regional level, people are updating TICPs, developing formats for setting up base stations, looking at how base stations should connect, and deciding who needs to connect to whom in Mutual Aid.

### Regional Updates

- *Ray Richards, Panhandle Region:* The Panhandle is moving forward NRIN system and housing the equipment needed.
- *Pete Peterson, North Central Region:* the North Central Region is waiting on the completion of tower lease agreements for the NRIN project. Local officials are renegotiating some lease agreements, specifically examining electricity sources to the towers. The region is waiting for EHP studies to be returned on seven tower sites for VHF Mutual Aid Base Stations. The county communications center with the consolette for the region was approved and has been tested at the North Platte site. The Raven Switch © was tested in Ogallalla, and will

require some additional buffering but does allow the region to directly connect with the State Radio System. Prices for this technology differ based on location and equipment requirements. The North Central Region is also sponsoring radio communications training on February 7, 2012 for local elected officials and for operational personnel on February 8, 2012.

- *Pat Gerdes, Southwest Region:* The Southwest Region is awaiting Paraclete training. The region has ordered base stations for VHF and UHF Mutual Aid Channels for Perkins County. The region is looking at mutual aid equipment and assessing needs for the new McCook PSAP and hoping to use 2011 funding for the McCook build out.
- *Larry Thoren, South Central Region:* The South Central and Southwest Regions were part of the original Centrak Nebraska Project. Emergency Managers in the area created a grant request with the desire to provide users with interoperable communications equipment. Inter-local agreements were established to allow frequency sharing, and equipment was purchased. The contract with Interop Solutions allowed the area to implement the Paraclete system. The statewide mutual aid system should include shared protocols to facilitate communication during moving incidents (e.g., police pursuits), incidents in a controlled area (e.g., disasters) and time sensitive incidents (e.g., Amber alerts or bank robberies).
- *Tim Hofbauer, East Central Region:* The East Central Communications Alliance was formed in 2004 to move from low band to high band radio systems within the VHF System. There are agreements in place for frequency sharing on radios under the UHF system. Many people are trained on usage of the Paraclete system in the East Central Region. For NRIN, the tower surveys are complete and a rough plan was established. The Region is completing agreements with tower owners. Sustainability for the NRIN Project is very important, and the Sustainability Summit will be held to discuss future costs and sustainability needs in terms of maintenance, system monitoring, and system management.
- *Jim Gerweck, Southeast Region:* The Southeast Region is the last region in the build out. Installation should be complete in mid-summer 2012. Not all counties in the Region have IP dispatching consoles. The region is working with Lincoln Lancaster County Purchasing to move forward with additional equipment purchases. The hardware for the Paraclete system is in place, but is not connected in the Region. One of the challenges was getting MOUs in place to allow inter-state frequencies to be placed in the Paraclete system. The Southeast Region has met with Kansas to discuss this issue and will also be working to communications will function with the Nuclear Power Plant. Training and sustainability will be important discussions in the future.
- *Mark Conrey, Tri-County Region:* The Tri-County Region uses a shared system that is successful. The Region's portion of NRIN is complete, and has connected the four counties -- Douglas, Sarpy, Washington, and Pottawatomie (IA) -- with an end point that connects to Nebraska State Patrol Troop A. Sarpy and Douglas counties recently passed an agreement to examine the idea of resource sharing between the counties. There will be an announcement to buy a new computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system with cost sharing among all participants.
- The Region 7 Regional Executive Communications Committee Work Group will meet Feb. 8-9 to discuss interoperable communications between Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, and Iowa.

### **Interoperable Communications in Nebraska: Where we want to be and how are we going to get there**

*Lt Governor Rick Sheehy presented the opening to this discussion. Notes reflect general discussion of the entire group.*

It is important to examine the responsibility, authority, and ability to accomplish the strategies needed for each part of the interoperable communications system. Local governments, regions, state agencies, NCOR, and the N-WIN Council

all have a stake in the success of interoperable communications. Five dimensions must be considered for each aspect of the system: governance, standard operating procedures, technology, training and exercise, and usage.

### **Governance:**

A new executive order is being crafted that will merge the functions of the Nebraska Council of Regions (NCOR) and the Nebraska Wireless Interoperable Network (NWIN) Council. The new group will likely include representatives of local elected officials (potentially from the League of Municipalities and/or the Nebraska Association of County Officials). It will be important to clearly identify the roles of this new group. Committees associated with the new group should handle the detail work allowing the larger group to focus on the shared vision for the statewide system. The vision can direct the formation of a strategic, long term plan for statewide interoperable communications. The role of the new governance group will be to monitor progress of groups working on various aspects of the plan.

A separate governance structure for NRIN could provide regular reports to the new group as they relate to the role of NRIN in the overall statewide interoperable communications plan.

It is also important to identify who owns whole parts of the project since each local or region or state agency owns a different piece of the project. This will aid in development of strategies for sustainability and management of systems.

### **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):**

SOPs for the end user should be tailored for their use. A committee focusing on SOP's should provide guidance and interoperable ability to the counties and regions. The state cannot mandate standard operating procedures for local mutual aid; the state is a peer to the regions. The TICPs can serve as guidance since they are completed at the state and regional level. This committee can provide guidance on how the four systems operate together and help guide how each local area will use the system. The committee may provide templates or overarching principles to share with regional and local areas. At the State level, we might form the milestones, metrics, or measurements to determine how we will know if interoperability is achieved. CASM is a good reporting tool for interoperability, defining who can talk to whom. The committee can incentivize the reporting and development of interoperability. The State Radio System Users Group identified a good process for SOPs: decide who needs to talk to whom, when parties need to talk, the capabilities of each, where the necessary parties are compatible, and then decide the best option for communication among all parties who need to be involved for the incident or mutual aid event.

SOPs need to address three situations: 1) stable incidents in one location, 2) moving incidents that pass through multiple jurisdictions, and 3) communication across the state about incidents. The SOPs need to be brief (3 pages) and easy for the user to understand.

The radio goal is to get as many users on the system possible. The network goal is to tie the radios all together in the best way possible. The committee should guide without making mandates. It is important to identify what the goals or strategies are. The committee should also identify barriers preventing interoperability.

### **Training**

Training is a continuous issue for sustainability. Local, regional, and state agencies should provide training. The standards for training should be set by a joint group that can also monitor the progress of the training and compliance with standards.

## **Usage**

The System must reflect the needs of the end users. It is important to keep track of timelines and follow the project through sound project management. However, it is difficult to muster and sustain the resources needed for project management.

The users must understand the goal of the interoperable system to see how they are involved. The goals and visions may be identified from the investment justifications used for the project.

Locals should be encouraged to use CASM (e.g., grant dollars tied to keeping CASM current). CASM identifies who can talk to whom and who can't talk. This could be used to measure interoperability.

## **Other**

There is a desire to coordinate information sharing throughout the state of Nebraska on interoperability projects. Outreach should increase understanding about all of the components and how they work together.

## **Next Steps**

The executive order will identify the new parameters for the Joint Committee. It is anticipated that specific work groups operating under that joint committee will be formed to address the issues identified today. The discussion today will be captured in notes format and in a matrix.

The Joint Committee will meet again on January 27, 2012 at 10:00 AM in Lincoln, NE – Location TBD.