



Nebraska Council of Regions (NCOR) 2012 Annual Report

February 2013

2012 NCOR Members

Harold "Pete" Peterson – North Central (Chair)

Mark Conrey – Tri-County

Patrick Foust – Northeast

Pat Gerdes – Southwest

Jim Gerweck – Southeast

Tim Hofbauer – East Central

Dan Lynch – South Central

Ray Richards – Panhandle

Thomas Schwarten – N-WIN (NSP)

Dave Webb – N-WIN (NPPD)

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Executive Order No. 08-04 (December 17, 2008) established the Nebraska Council of Regions (NCOR), its membership, and key activities. NCOR was created to provide oversight and integration for the eight local public safety communications regions of Nebraska and to coordinate with the Nebraska Wireless Interoperable Network (N-WIN) Council. The Executive Order charged NCOR with providing an annual report containing a current assessment of the Nebraska regional wireless communication network that includes recommendations for further development and operation of the system. This report fulfills that requirement and will be the last report issued by the group as Executive Order No. 08-04 was rescinded October 18, 2012 by Executive Order No. 12-01 which established the Nebraska Public Safety Communications Council. This new council combines responsibilities and membership of the N-WIN Council and Nebraska Council of Regions with new local stakeholder representatives.

Background

The 10-member NCOR board consisted of one appointee each from the eight local communications regions, the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD), and the N-WIN Council. Meetings were regularly attended by representatives of the state agencies charged with providing support to the group – Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, Nebraska State Patrol, and the Office of the Chief Information Officer. The primary purpose of NCOR was to complete the charges listed in Executive Order No. 08-04. Accordingly, the Nebraska Council of Regions will:

- Provide policy-level direction and coordination related to the planning and decisions regarding regional integration with the Nebraska Wireless Interoperable Network (N-WIN).
- Adopt bylaws for the operation of the NCOR.
- Develop strategies and recommendations to improve operations of the Nebraska wireless communication network, including the use of new technology as it becomes available.
- Promote interoperability for public safety communications within Nebraska.
- Provide for the development of protocols, standard operating procedures, and guidelines for use of the local Nebraska wireless communication network.
- Establish the terms of agreements and enter into agreements for public safety entities to operate with the Nebraska Wireless Interoperability Network (N-WIN), in conjunction with the Office of Chief Information Officer (OCIO), when such arrangements are practical and in the best interests of the State and the regions.

The NCOR Board held 6 meetings in 2012 with meeting minutes archived at: <http://www.homelandplanning.nebraska.edu/>

Three state groups provided support to NCOR in 2012:

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) provided administrative support to NCOR as needed and served the logistical needs of the group including: 1) arranging meeting logistics and 2) providing copies of meeting materials and sign in sheets. NEMA provides substantial resources for development of the Nebraska Regional Interoperable Network, the Paraclete[®] system, and the Nebraska Common Usage Channels Project.

The Office of the State Information Officer (OCIO) provided updates on the development of interoperable communication infrastructure and implementation of the statewide radio system in coordination with the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD). The OCIO provided technical assistance on the Nebraska Regional Interoperability Network, the common usage channels, and the development of regional Tactical Interoperable Communications Plans (TICPs). The OCIO was also responsible for coordinating the statewide interoperability strategy with NEMA, NCOR and regional leadership groups.

The University of Nebraska Public Policy Center provided planning assistance to NCOR through agenda development, meeting facilitation, developing draft documents, note-taking, and maintaining a website to centralize communication related to NCOR and regional activities (<http://www.homelandplanning.nebraska.edu>).

2012 Milestones

Nebraska Regional Interoperability Network (NRIN). NRIN is an Internet Protocol (IP) high-speed microwave system to be carried on over 200 towers across Nebraska. It is the backbone that ties all of the other systems together. The network provides data connectivity for public safety voice and data interoperability using the towers, and state and regional network. Public safety data will be disseminated to dispatch centers (also referred to as Public Safety Answer Points, or PSAP's) located in counties and cities throughout the state. The NRIN system consists of eight regional networks that join to make up the statewide ring. The system will carry data linking all aspects of emergency communications, including statewide voice, data, wireless and video data, and will be governed by standard operating procedures put together by local and regional representatives.

Communications Services, Inc. (CSI) is the company assessing coverage and installing microwave dishes and other equipment on towers. In 2012 installation was completed in the Panhandle and North Central regions. Work began in the other regions to identify and assess towers for NRIN. NCOR and NEMA also began work to identify potential uses/users of NRIN and to identify governance, management, monitoring, and maintenance structures for the successful operation of NRIN. An inter-local agreement

has been drafted that will ultimately define governance and include costs for management of the network.

Common Usage Channels. The common usage channels project will allow public safety responders to communicate regionally and statewide on an as-needed/on-demand basis using common protocols and radio frequencies. This system is a planned network of analog radio base stations using common, nationally accepted frequencies to provide radio coverage across the state controlled by local/regional system operators. This initiative involves installation of equipment and connections that will require maintenance and upkeep support from local governments. Nebraska Emergency Management Agency is working closely with the Nebraska OCIO and Nebraska's eight planning, exercise and training (PET) regions to implement this initiative.

Three pilot programs testing common usage channels (Tri-County Region, South Central Region and North Central) continued in 2012.

Paraclete®. This system enables local, regional, and state emergency responders to communicate with one another using disparate radio systems in the event of a local emergency. Emergency responders aiding a neighboring community during a local incident may use different radio frequencies. Paraclete provides a mechanism for users of different radio frequencies to communicate as though everyone were on the same frequency. In addition, the Paraclete system contains a sophisticated database that can be customized by local officials with area resources that are needed to handle the various emergency scenarios that may face local and regional public safety agencies. Local officials can pre-determine which frequencies to place in the Paraclete system so dispatchers using it can quickly connect them. The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency purchased the license for Paraclete software for the entire state of Nebraska.

NEMA designed a process for resolving technical issues with Paraclete, developing a user manual and providing training for dispatchers, supervisors, and emergency managers across the state. NEMA added additional training and technical assistance staff to provide support to the PET Regions. As the use of Paraclete expands, the ability to share information will be important in ensuring success of mutual aid.

State Emergency Communication Commission (SECC). In 2011, the SECC was formed as a subcommittee of NCOR. The FCC calls for every state to have a subcommittee for State Emergency Communications. The SECC brings broadcasters and cable together to create an effective system for emergency personnel to access communications systems in times of emergency. The SECC submitted the Emergency Alert System State Plan to the FCC in 2012.