

Nebraska Interoperable Communications Newsletter

Connecting Nebraska

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Upcoming Events

[June 20, 2011](#)
12:00 PM: Narrow
Banding Webinar

[June 22, 2011](#)
8:00 AM: SCIP
Workshop

[June 23, 2011](#)
8:00 AM: Goal 2
Workshop

[June 24, 2011](#)
10:00 AM: NCOR
Meeting

1:30 PM: N-WIN
Council Meeting

[July 26, 2011](#)
12:00 PM:
Nebraska
Interoperability
Webinar for
Emergency
Responders

Check the
Regional Calendar
for More Dates!

Planning for Nebraska | Homeland Security and Interoperable Communications

Welcome to another edition the Nebraska Interoperable Communications Newsletter! This newsletter shares upcoming events and progress related to interoperability projects across Nebraska.

You can access all previous newsletters at the [website](#). Also on our newsletter is information on past webinars, archived newsletters, and news from the Office of Emergency Communications.



Mutual Aid Pilots Improve Communications Among First Responders

Two regions in the state are piloting mutual aid interoperable communications systems. The following are summaries of interviews with Pat Gerdes (South Central) and Mark Conrey (Tri-County) about their pilot projects:

What was your motivation for developing your mutual aid pilot?

Pat Gerdes: Several years ago, there was a wildfire in Buffalo County. Multiple responders using different communications systems were called in. UHF responders like Buffalo County and Kearney County were easily connected. With the addition of Paraclete, the Holdrege Fire Department, who is VHF, was brought in using a patch. However, this



Homeland Planning
Website



For more information about N-WIN, NCOR, PET Regions, or the Interoperability Project, please check out our [website!](#)

patch took one of the Phelps County Fire radio systems out of service. If there had been another incident such as a building fire in Phelps County, they would not have been able to communicate about it. It was then they realized the need to connect responders without interrupting regular response efforts. Thus, the South Central Region began pursuing Mutual Aid Radio Systems.



Mark Conrey: In the **Tri-County Region**, one of the motivators was the Von Maur incident. When the mall shooting occurred, many different agencies - the FBI, Nebraska State Patrol, Douglas County Sheriff's Department, Omaha Police Department, Sarpy County, Washington County Deputies, etc. - were all dispatched to assist at the shooting. In addition, the shooting occurred when President Bush was in Omaha, so multiple agencies were involved on multiple tasks. Unfortunately, many of these agencies could not talk to one another initially, so communications control of the incident took longer than desired. This occurrence helped set the momentum to pursue a Mutual Aid Radio System. After a review of needs and wants for a new system, we realized we needed an as-needed, on-demand system to allow multiple groups to talk to one another in the least disruptive way.

So, what did you do?

Pat Gerdes: The **South Central Region** worked with the Nebraska Council of Regions, before and after they were officially appointed by the Lt. Governor. We worked with representatives from the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, and the Emergency Managers. Later, we brought together local law enforcement, local radio shops, and local emergency managers with the state agencies. In looking into Mutual Aid Radio Systems, we realized the benefit of a simplex frequency where the dispatch could make a patch to local responders as needed. A simplex frequency was also easier to use and less expensive. The region opted to have a designated Mutual Aid Radio rather than Paraclete to being with, although some areas do have Paraclete. The 15-County region first focused on the counties along the Interstate 80 corridor and the Kansas border. These counties along I-80 will utilize UHF and VHF frequencies. The other counties will have VHF, and the UHF will be optional. Eventually, this Mutual Aid Radio System will allow first responders to have their own mutual aid channel for each incident location in a multi-location incident.

Each emergency responder can then talk to the command center, which can also monitor each location.

Mark Conrey: The **Tri-County Region** conducted a gap analysis using vital end users of the potential system including law enforcement, fire departments, emergency medical services, emergency managers, and dispatchers from the three Nebraska counties and Pottawattamie County in Iowa. The focus initially was to gather the first responders who would be using the system at an operational level and to find out who needs to talk to whom in a particular event and who could not talk to whom. Later we included the Nebraska State Patrol, communications directors, and the primary vendor (Motorola). The Region developed a concept of operation and decided that they needed a system that 1) initial communication would be on the channel of the agency who had primary jurisdiction; 2) would allow for instantaneous coordination across dispatch centers when multiple dispatch centers are involved; and 3) would allow the initial response to be moved off the primary dispatch channel of the jurisdiction without disruption. The region used a fiber-link to connect



voice and data. Raven provided boxes that were compatible with a wireless network in the region. A tie-line was created that counties can put their channel on. Thus a tie line can be dedicated to law enforcement while another id dedicated to fire departments and another for incident

management. The microwave system allows for this connectivity. In addition, the Microwave system allows for the benefit of faster transmission of data with increased bandwidth. The capabilities are still being discovered.

What are the next steps?

Pat Gerdes: In the **South Central Region**, all of the equipment and systems on the I-80 and Kansas border project were submitted to the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency for Environmental and Historical Preservation (EHP) Review. Once that is complete, the project will be entered in to the grant management system and the procurement process will begin. All equipment is expected in between June 1 and August 31, 2011 as all county projects will be funded by the 2010 State Homeland Security Grant Program. The goal is to have all equipment installed and operational in the entire region by December 31, 2011. After that, policies will need to be developed, and training will be conducted to teach dispatchers about the new system. By Spring 2012, we hope

to conduct exercises to see how the system works.

Mark Conrey: In the **Tri-County Region**, we are verifying the technology solution. The complete program will have to be reviewed by the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency before moving ahead with implementation. After review, the region will procure the equipment, and we hope to install the equipment by late summer. Then we will need to develop Standard Operating Procedures, hold training and exercise events, and make sure procedures are ingrained in daily operations.

What did you learn from this process?

Pat Gerdes: It's important to have all the right players at the table, first the people who use the system the most - dispatchers and first responders. They need to drive the design of the system to make sure the solution works for them. It's also important to include public officials from both counties and cities since they will be involved in sustaining the system. It's also important to be clear about the objectives - what do we want the system to do? Then the tech people can help form a solution.

Mark Conrey: The key is identifying the need and articulating this need to all the agencies involved. It's critical to have user agencies involved up front to develop the concept of operation. Then it's important to include the communications directors and the primary vendors such as Motorola and Raven to help develop the solutions.

2011 State Homeland Security Grant Investment Justifications

The Guidance for the 2011 State Homeland Security Grant Investment Justifications has been released! Examples can be found on the [website](#). Please provide any feedback as soon as possible as Investment Justifications are due June 20, 2011.

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