



Nebraska Public Safety Communications Council (NPSCC)

2013-2014 Annual Report

June 2014

2013-2014 NPSCC Council Members

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Homeland Security Director

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Municipalities

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Tom Nutt, Nebraska Association of County
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Thomas Schwarten, Nebraska State Patrol

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Officer

Craig Stover, Nebraska Game & Parks
Commission

Dave Webb, Nebraska Public Power District

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On October 18, 2012, Executive Order No. 12-01 established the Nebraska Public Safety Communications Council (NPSCC). The Executive Order created the membership of the Council, and identified the responsibilities of the Council related to public safety communications in Nebraska. The Executive Order charged the NPSCC with providing an annual report containing a current assessment of the status of interoperability of public safety in Nebraska that included recommendations for improvements and enhancements to the system.

Background

The NPSCC combines responsibilities and membership of the two groups established in 2008 by Executive Order – the Nebraska Wireless Interoperability Council (NWIN) and the Nebraska Council of Regions (NCOR). The NPSCC expanded membership to include representatives from the League of Nebraska Municipalities and Nebraska Association of County Officials along with representatives from the Nebraska State Patrol, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Nebraska State Fire Marshal, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, Nebraska Public Power District, and one representative of each Nebraska Planning, Exercise and Training (PET) Communication Region.

The NPSCC was made an official subcommittee of the Nebraska Homeland Security Policy Group on January 27, 2014. The NPSCC operates under the direction of the State Homeland Security Director/State Wireless Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) (the Lt. Governor) and is charged with the following:

1. Provide for the policy level direction related to the planning and decisions regarding development, operation and sustainability of interoperability in the State of Nebraska
2. Provide leadership regarding the development of public safety communications within Nebraska
3. Adopt bylaws for the operation of the Council
4. Promote interoperability for public safety communications within Nebraska, and with border states
5. Provide recommendations for the development of protocols, standard operating procedures and guidelines for use of public safety communications systems in Nebraska

6. Coordinate and provide planning, training and exercise opportunities related to communications interoperability for all necessary and authorized public safety practitioners
7. Establish working groups, as required, to meet the needs of providing interoperability within Nebraska. NPSCC will provide guidance on recommendations that come from these working groups.
8. Develop recommendations and strategies for best utilization of public funds, including grants, to improve public safety communications in Nebraska.

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is charged in the Executive Order with providing support to the NPSCC. NEMA contracts for planning support with the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center to carry out this duty along with provision of general planning support for communications activities across the state, including maintaining a website to centralize communication related to public safety communications and related activities across the state (<http://www.homelandplanning.nebraska.edu>).

2013-2014 Milestones

Implementation of the Statewide Radio System (SRS). The SRS, a VHF P25 digital trunked land mobile radio system, is a partnership between the State and Nebraska Public Power District through an interlocal agreement which established three SRS groups: the System Administrative Group, the System Operations Group, and the System Users Group. The SRS was installed in four phases. The system became operational when state agencies were able to move their daily operational traffic to the system. The State Administrative Group is now working with local public safety agencies who want to join the system. The System Users Group (SUG) met monthly throughout the project's development and implementation to discuss SRS status, enhancements, and recommend operational policies and procedures for SRS use.

Public Safety Broadband Network Working Group. The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) received a federal planning grant to begin assessing and planning for an expanded nationwide broadband network for public safety entities. This national initiative is referred to as FirstNet. The Nebraska Public Safety Broadband Network Working Group was chartered as a working group of the NPSCC on January 17, 2014. The first meeting of this working group was held in May 2014. More information about this project is available at <http://www.cio.nebraska.gov/ps-broadband-network-planning-project.html>.

Nebraska State Emergency Communications Committee (SECC). This working group was established as a working group under the NPSCC on December 12, 2012. The group had been operating since 2011 as a subcommittee of the Nebraska

Council of Regions (NCOR) which was subsumed by the NPSCC. The purposes of the SECC are set out by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The SECC includes representatives from state agencies, local emergency management, radio, television, cable systems and the National Weather Service. This group writes and maintains the state Emergency Alert System (EAS) plan.

Coordination with Components for Interoperable Communications. The NPSCC monitors the implementation of other components of public safety communications in Nebraska. These components include:

- 1) The *Nebraska Regional Interoperability Network (NRIN)* – NRIN is an Internet Protocol (IP) high-speed microwave network connecting over 200 towers across Nebraska organized in eight regional, ringed networks that will carry wireless data relating to all aspects of emergency communications statewide, including voice, video and data. A group of local representatives from the PET Regions is working on a governance structure for the network once completed. This project was scheduled to be completed in August 2014. However a delay in the installation of system components due to cancellation of a contract has the potential to delay implementation.
- 2) The *Nebraska Common Usage Channels project* – Common Use Channels are 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. A major focus of these efforts has been to achieve interoperability between local first responders and the Nebraska State Patrol.
- 3) *Paraclete* © - Paraclete is a computer software system that enables local, regional, and state emergency responders to communicate with one another using disparate radio systems in the event of a local emergency. The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency provides training and technical assistance to local areas implementing the Paraclete system to achieve interoperability. This system is in the approval process for use to implement messages through the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS).

Accomplishments and Recommendations

The following system accomplishments and recommendations have been discussed at the NPSCC meetings in 2013-2014:

- The Panhandle Area of NRIN was completed and tested. Portions of the region are operational and being used for mutual aid base station connections, environmental monitoring and remote security. Equipment has been installed at several sites across the state awaiting connectivity.

- A Public Safety Broadband Network Working Group was created under the NPSCC to plan for an expanded nationwide broadband network for public safety entities. Nebraska secured a 3 year federal grant totaling \$1,510,750 for this work.
- 55 consolettes have been installed and are operating in local dispatch centers, providing local interoperability with the SRS users.
- The Nebraska Association of County Officials is developing operational standards for dispatch centers that NPSCC will consider for adoption statewide.
- Completion of the NRIN system is a local priority in 2014-1015. This would include the completion of the physical build-out of the system and establishing governance for its use.
 - Costs for participation in the NRIN system must be calculated and provided to local governments as soon as possible.
 - Potential uses of the NRIN system must be provided to local governments along with cost estimates.
- Interoperability with the Statewide Radio System should continue to be encouraged between the SRS user agencies and local public safety entities.
- Recommendations from the L.R. Kimball report related to the SRS should continue to be implemented and reported to the NPSCC.