

INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE  
JANUARY 3, 2012  
COMMAND READINESS CENTER  
MEETING MINUTES

**ATTENDEES**

**J. David Smith-Chair**  
**Frank Floor-DEM**  
**Joe McGarry-Providence Communications**  
**Ron Provost-Motorola Solutions**  
**Gina Caruolo-Dept of Corrections**  
**Tony Lupinacci-DOIT**  
**Scott Lessard-North Kingstown Fire**  
**Peter Popko-USCG**  
**Chris Mahoney-NFD**  
**Kevin Clapp-RIEMA**  
**Robbie Lopez-RIEMA**  
**Capt Verne Gifford-USCG**  
**Chief Jonathan Montey-Narragansett Tribal Police Chief**  
**Brian Glancy-RISP-Retired**  
**David Schnell-Lifespan**  
**Lt. Karen Pinch-RISP**  
**Chief Sid Wordell-Little Compton Police**  
**Mike Wren-RIDOT/Traffic**  
**Jeff Stevens-RI DOH**  
**Mike Walsh-RIEMA**  
**Paul Budzenski-RIEMA**

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**Meeting was called to order by J. David Smith @9:07am.**

- 1. Review and Approval of the minutes of the last meeting-** I would like to entertain a motion to approve the minutes as written. Motion was made by Chief Wordell and seconded by Chief Montey was passed unanimously.
  
- 2. Presentation by Dr. Verne Gifford-**Just to give you a little bit of introduction. I am the Commander of the US Coast Guard Southeast New England. After the 911 event the Coast Guard merged into sectors. The sector for Southeast New England covers the Cape and the islands, Southeastern MA and all of RI. We are headquartered out of Woods Hole and the sector has a presence everywhere. Pete Popko and his staff work predominantly out of East Providence and we have about 50 people who are there. We have a pretty good presence in both areas. That speaks to why we try to go through exercises pretty regularly in order to make sure we mutually know for what each of us has responsibility. The different touch points with the Coast Guard and the exercise that we always try to run. If there is a big spill we have what is called an area committee who works to try to make sure that we have a unified response and

that we all know what to do when that happens. If there is a security event that is out on the water way we have a committee and they likewise work together.

With regards to 800 MHz and how we use the radio. Unfortunately the Coast Guard has a policy that does not support the 800 MHz system. The rationale is that there is not a part of the 800 spectrum that is given to the federal government and so I know Peter and others have worked very hard to make sure that we can communicate on the system. There are 3 base stations – one in East Providence, one in Woods Hole and one in Point Judith and they allow us the capability to reach out and communicate rapidly with boats. On one of the exercises we are running which is called a mass rescue operation, we have the ferries that operate especially the one that operates between Pt Judith and Block Island. That ferry can carry literally hundreds of people at any one time and if there were ever an incident to try to get all those people off that ferry to a central landing point and move them to hospitals it would indeed be very challenging.

Our Command Center which is in Woods Hole finds it very challenging whenever there is new information to pump out to everybody. You may have a half dozen agencies involved. As anyone knows trying to make a phone call to six agencies is ridiculous. We are looking for ways to try to improve our ability to communicate with those groups. One of the things we have been working on is trying to see what opportunities the 800 system provides. The air station is it's own unit and they are out of what was Otis Air Force Base. It is now Coast Guard Air Station Cape Cod. I get info from them on Jay Hawk helicopters.

Capt. Gifford stated that what they have been doing in terms of exercises internally is to try to involve different stakeholders. We have tried to schedule about one a month over the last 2 – 3 months. We try to bring in different players each and every time. We try to keep the exercises reasonably short – no more than 2 hours. We try to emphasize those things that have been brought up as deficiencies. Certainly the ICS 205 that goes through that scenario would be a perfect thing that we could use. We find that those very short but intense exercises show a continuous improvement. If you wait like on a cycle of once a year and you go back you will find what you did and realize that you have not made as much progress on those lessons learned because you are not getting challenged on a regular basis. I think we can make the development of an ICS 205 a focus over the course of 2 or 3 months and make sure that everyone agrees.

Dave Smith stated that Chief Walsh is the state's Interoperability coordinating officer SWIC. Whoever is your designee with similar responsibilities would be great to have them link up. What happens at times is that when you are dealing with multiple jurisdictions even within agencies it takes the order from the top down to say this is how we want things to work. That is why I was so pleased that the timing was so perfect for us to have you come in and talk about what you have for training. Having exercises planned for the weeks ahead is a perfect opportunity. We can put 800's in the boats and can do anything if we fund it locally. We rely a lot on charity.

What types of things do you anticipate in the late winter early spring? We are focused first on the Cape Cod area with a lot of ferry traffic scheduled for December and January. Starting in February/ March we start focusing in Rhode Island. Process is to mobilize Coast Guard units but also utilize vessels of opportunity, could be another ferry boat, tug boat or a barge and it could be a DEM boat whatever is available. We need to mobilize boats out to the scene – particularly this time of year where survivability in the water is very limited. That is the challenge. Need good linkage with the mass casualty planning on the state side with the hospitals and with the ambulances. There is a coordinated effort there – and the layer on top of that is a terrorism incident involving FBI and law enforcement. It is a real challenge to exercise to get things moving. Good idea to have a plan in place and another thing is special interests. There are some challenges, for example, life flight helicopters and those types of things on the military side. There are some challenges. We understand how some of that works but it really has to funnel back to this table.

Jeff did a great job. There is a plan and then there is culture. A lot of times what happens is that the culture does not always follow the plan. Sometimes people communicate on platforms but the problem with that is that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing because people are just accustomed to doing it that way. In that case forces are sometimes falling back to habit leading to ineffective communication. Maybe it is a good opportunity to review past experiences and see what they have learned. Are we any better?

Motorola technology is coming to link Rhode Island to Massachusetts and Connecticut systems.

Popko – we are planning a full schedule exercise in 2013 which is about a year and half from now in Rhode Island dealing with the ferry boats. We've got an objective in mind and hopefully by that time we can do a functional exercise using the 800. We can learn something. We were talking about ferry boats but we could have a miracle on the Hudson event here and could have a plane taking off from T F Green landing in the bay. If it landed today what do we do? Think about getting assists out to the scene. Where do you bring people? How do we talk to each other and how do we coordinate with the hospitals? We talk about ferries but there are other similar incidents that could be happen that would be calling mass rescue. It is a challenge and it is not going to be perfect no matter what we plan. At least we have a plan and a basic understanding of an expectation of how we interoperate and that is very important. What would an ICS205 look like for an event like that? We have done this once before and we had what the coast guard was using Command Control - north and south sides as justified. As far as mobilizing assets mutual aid is a big part of our operations especially on the fire side. I do not know how your sop's are written to reach out to the dispatch centers because they can mobilize 7 x 24.

Capt Gifford-We appreciate the enthusiasm and willingness of the group to help the Coast Guard tackle the issue. I know we have this larger drill that is coming up in 2013 but for me its lets try to fix this as quickly as possible because I have the excitement here. As we look at the coming months February and March we should try to just involve you to play with us and

make sure that this is how we envision communicating. We have some hurdles to overcome and we have a Command Center in Woods Hole and we've got an office in Providence

You should be aware that during most of our operations we have a cache of radios that are charged and ready to go. Is there a federal restriction that you have to only use your encrypting or would there be interest in using the encrypted so that everybody could talk? There is no detail regarding that. Expectation is that we would always try to use the highest level of security and so initially we would communicate on the VHF radios but understanding that there are going to be some situations where urgency dictates that we talk on 800 MHz. As Joe mentioned I am going to take a look and see where the Woods Hole has any plan for this OSHAN fiber. I have a pretty good handle on the Rhode Island side the Mass side is kind of something OSHAN has not really shared with us but I can find that out and that could be something that everybody could benefit from but is also not free.

Dave Smith- Mike is everything still stable in Middletown? Mike-There are some loose ends but testing was done last week and there was a noticeable difference. It went out to Jai Lai and got about 75% coverage which is a noticeable improvement. How's everything in North Kingstown? No major issues.

Chief Wordell-in Little Compton you wear a lot of hats. I guess two things that I am seeing here is with everybody meeting to regionalize. I am just wondering what we can offer local communities that are on the water when there is a large- scale? How we can be a part of that filtering information that is coming out of those other departments that are surrounding the area. We have a lot of information and capabilities. Am I missing something or is there a reason why there are things that are not being patched at those local levels? Coast Guard encryption is not patchable understood but that's a small piece of that. I am curious on why extra patching. It is clearly desirable for our command center watch to be able to reach out. Until I talk to the Chief it hasn't been something that is supported by the Coast Guard. In communicating the one liability is that everyone is on that frequency. Sometimes patching cannot be selective on what you are patching. I would love to discuss this. There are many options and exciting solutions.

Last thing is the Middletown tower which had some problems. We were eagerly awaiting the Middletown tower and it is cleaned.

Department of Health – all hospitals have 800 MHz available – Coast Guard to let us know when exercise is to be done for their participation. Dawn Lewis on speaker.

Davis Schnell's concern is RI Hospital helipads which are very active. They have dedicated UHF and it works very well. They all have the frequency but testing with the Jay Hawks out of Cape Cod has been a challenge. We just had a success story last week Because we have been working with Lt Michael and Ben Sloan radio techs who are doing a great job. We finally got chopper 6042 to transmit on our UHF frequency and it was a successful test. If we do 800 MHz capability is our biggest concern. Heavy helicopter traffic is when all need to be on the same frequency. Other concern is that the Jay Hawk is much bigger than the commercial aircraft and let me tell you it rocked the Emergency department. We do not like

them to stay too long. There will be another test done this week. We will have off- line discussion later about more exercises. Discussion about being able to be on same frequencies. There are concerns about HIPPA, patient information etc – restrict who has access to specific frequencies. Chief Montey is the Chief of the tribal police and comes to us originally from Rhode Island and then Connecticut State Police. Very active participant – primarily on the 800 system – good to be able to test the capabilities.

It kindles the excitement to go through an exercise and try to make sure we are addressing the concerns of any group. Reading through the plans I am very impressed on just how connected Rhode Island is in terms of its communications system and state and municipal. We are all challenged, resources are shrinking daily, and we have a lot of work to do.

### 3. Updates on our sites.

North Kingstown – they ordered the steel to beef up the tower. Have to wait for the tower to get an antenna installed. Going fiber North Kingstown to Wickford and we already have a purchase order.

Middletown is up and running. We are still in process of licensing al the sites on the RIPTA channel.

East Providence - the shelter should be delivered on Friday but I still have not heard on generator. I would say within 3 weeks should be up and running and there are– no consequences at Barrington location

Still waiting on pricing on the Burrilville Buck Hill to Harrisville.

Any questions on site updates -

Lt anything happening on 911–everything is working well

**.Frequency updates** – meeting on connecting 3 systems together in the second week of January – during that meeting we will discuss the issues that Region 19 brought up with Buck Hill. We had new contours done that bring the signal within the contours. There were no capability reductions just power. We will discuss this and come to happy medium and then apply for licenses.

**Old Business** – I had made a notation on the charter – had voted to have meetings on 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of month and special meetings as needed. Should we have a special meeting on charter only and make this a priority topic for the February meeting? Please take the time between now and then. This is one of the things I am personally a little nervous about- we only meet once a month. It is important to have attendance and to continue to stay in touch throughout the month

Gina stated that the July meeting might be a problem. At the next meeting we can discuss more and re-evaluate the date.

There is a lot going on in July with the Tall Ships, the sailing race etc. Also the November meeting has to be changed because it is Election Day.

**New Business** – Anybody in Portsmouth tell you they are now simulcast full time on the cell system. Mike – not aware but will be checked out. Department of Health is looking at their NEXTEL system – to do an overview and move forward with a purchase order.

**NEXT MEETING IS TUESDAY,  
FEBRUARY 7, 2012 @ 9:00AM.**

Lynn Gabrault  
Recording Secretary