



FIRESCOPE COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST GROUP

December 4, 2008
Conference Call
MINUTES

Meeting Time

The conference call started at 0900 and concluded at 1200 on Thursday December 4th.

1. Welcome and Introductions – (Lawrence)

The conference call started at 0900 and concluded at 1200. Roll call was performed several times throughout the call to ensure all participants were captured. The following members were present for all or part of the conference call:

Peter Lawrence, Vice-Chair, Acting Chair/Secretary, Oceanside Fire – City Fire Departments South

Dave Stone – FIRESCOPE Task Force

Fred Buhr - USDA Forest Service

Paul Clay – California Dept. of General Services Telecom. (alternate)

Tim Henry, Fresno FD - Metro Fire Departments North

Kevin Harper, Kern County FD – Fire Districts South

Charles Dahlen, Shasta Lake FPD – Volunteer Departments

Richard Gonzales – Ventura County Fire

Steve Hobbs - Santa Barbara County FD

Frank McCarthy – Los Angeles County FD

David Paschke – Orange County Fire Authority

Glen Savage – CALFIRE Telecommunications

Don Stabler - California Fire Chiefs Association

Ian Wallace, Santa Clara County FPD – Fire Districts North

Chris Baker, Roseville FD – City Fire Departments North

John Moulder – National Interagency Fire Center NIICD

Gary Stewart - National Interagency Fire Center NIICD

Rick Smith – Santa Maria FD (alternate)

Hampton Stewart – CAL FIRE Telecommunications (alternate)

Kody Kerwin, Contra Costa County FPD – County Departments North (alternate)

Ben Green. CA-OES Telecommunications (alternate)

Geoff Pemberton, Riverside County Fire (alternate)

2. New Business

a. Group Discussion of Communications Issues from 2008 Fire Season (Lawrence)

Cal Fire felt pretty good with the frequency coordination that took place with the USFS and NIFC. The frequency coordination phone number worked well. Cal Fire's CDO was getting good up front contact as State teams were mobilized, allowing for comm plans to be developed enroute. There were still issues with agencies using home frequencies outside their area. Some agencies failed to move from 400 or 800 MHz to the assigned VHF frequencies, creating safety issues. The Juliett Fire at MCP was cited as an example where the failure to migrate off the local systems caused issues during IA. The goal is still to get incidents moving into extended attack to move off the IA frequencies and make them available for new incidents. We need to get over onto NIFC frequencies as soon as practical if they are assigned to the incident. When some teams were pre-staged, they were able to develop a 205 in advance of being deployed.

NIFC felt that their coordination with Cal Fire was good. There was an early meeting in Redding with Cal Fire to talk about communications issues and it was felt that helped when the fires started in June. NIFC is still having difficulty with having to go to the FAA on the AM side for authorization for every frequency. NIFC suggests you contact them early when looking for AM frequencies so they can get the orders started with the FAA. COML's need to get the requests for AM frequencies early.

A discussion ensued on "Medical net" on incidents. NIFC is not able to support a "medical net" with a command repeater on fires. They do not have enough frequencies or equipment. The suggestion is to use a local EMS or tac channel. NIFC may be able to assist with a tac channel if needed.

NIFC had some requests for putting repeaters up during the fall in So Cal in anticipation of fires, but NIFC would like to deal with fires as they occur. They do not normally preposition repeaters on

mountaintops in advance of fires and like to remain flexible. LAC would like to explore the use of Cal Fire repeater pairs instead. Cal Fire would only allow for use in portable repeaters (no fixed installation).

NIFC is trying to work out some patterns of freq assignments so that you can get some programming set up in advance if you need additional frequencies. NIFC does not want to send you the equipment unless it is absolutely necessary, but they can give you the frequencies.

Frank McCarthy spent 6 weeks at the CDO. One of the issues was that teams would get a starter system that was not a BK and some would set the radios aside and then order another kit so that they could try and get BK's. NIFC has technicians available to walk COML's through the non BK starter kits if they need assistance with programming, etc. It is not acceptable to set radios aside simply because they are not what you are used to working with.

NIFC is interested in the multi-band radios, primarily a VHF/UHF combo, but there will need to be some thorough testing. The concept has their interest, but probably not 700 or 800 MHz. We need to add the multi-band radio as a new business issue.

SHU fires had interference from adjacent teams. Many were out of state and Cal Fire COML's are asking for the non-CA teams to post the 205's to the FTP. NIFC would like to get all 205's so they can assist with tracking down communications interference issues. NIFC is still trying to get the repeaters encoded to reduce the interference. NIFC needs to ensure the 205's are password protected if they are available online.

Hampton asked if there was any way that when the order is filled by NIFC for a command repeater, that the frequency be listed in Ross. NIFC is trying to ensure that the command pair number is on the Ross order. Others asked that the teams get lat and longs for repeater locations from the teams so that they can be plotted. That will reduce some of the interference issues.

Rick Smith said that they could not transmit anywhere near the com van at the Chalk. It was determined that a desk fan was causing interference with the command net. DGS responded a tech out to the incident and found the interference. Kudos to DGS from Rick Smith.

Steve Hobbs reported that the Tea Fire was very short-lived but required the level of communications necessary on a Type 1 incident, from its inception. During the initial stages of the incident, there probably could have been better notifications made to jurisdictions with statutory or contractual responsibility and/or were going to be affected. With limited notifications in the form of a report on conditions and marginal communications management, the eventual Unified Command ended up having difficulty maintaining command and control. The agency receiving the initial call attempted to use their dispatch channel as the Command Net. When this failed the next agency being affected attempted to use their dispatch channel as the Command Net. When this failed the second agency's secondary repeater pair was ultimately used as the Command Net. The problem with this was, resources arriving from Southern and Central California don't typically have this frequency pair and there wasn't time to provide them with this communications information. Although the Operational Area has a predefined Communications Plan it was not used effectively. This incident makes a good case for the Priority 4 addition to Appendix A and the CALFIRE Group 3 statewide load. Both SBC Command Nets are in the CALFIRE statewide load and would be included in a Priority 4 addition to Appendix A. This could have provided a reliable command channel throughout the incident. There were also other options, such as CDF Command 1 on Santa Ynez Peak, as well as the Los Padres Forest Nets.

The comment was made that people still do not know about CESRS and are still using the old travel net and their own frequencies while traveling. This is causing interference issues.

We need to issue a reminder training PPT for next season on important issues (CESRS, use of Local Freqs., using the radios, simplex v. repeat etc.). Need to work on this during the winter and COMMTRAIN will handle. We need to get the OES bulletin on CESRS onto the FIRESCOPE site. Email whatever info is wanted on the site to Dave Stone. Ben Green will get the CESRS info back out via OES. Paul Clay also asked to include the narrow banding info for Cal Fire out again so agencies can be prepared. Glen Savage will get the info to OES and Dave Stone on narrow banding.

b. S258 and S358 Course Presentations (McCarthy)

LA County is not doing any courses this year. Reason is that Boise was not able to support the classes. New coordinator is Susan Bleeg. BLM is changing the way it charges for the equipment and classes. Non-federal agencies must come up with a \$300,000 in deposit in case the cache gets stolen or lost or damaged. It may be possible to get a ROSS order done to get it past the deposit requirement. John Molder and Frank McCarthy (lead) will coordinate on getting an update for the next meeting. The

class fee issue needs to be handled way in advance so it can be processed by BLM. Susan Bleeg is working with the GACC's on the payment issues.

- c. Other/Good of the Order
None

3. Schedule Next Meeting

- a. January – DGS Sac Headquarters January 28/29. Paul Clay will get lodging and meeting info to Pete for dissemination via the group hub.

4. Agency Reports

- a. FIREScope Operations/Task Force/Board of Directors (Drake/Stone)

Conf call last week. Nov meeting was cancelled due to fires. Other than fire activity it was a benign meeting. Main issues they are working on are: MACS 410-1 rewrite; Reflective vests for fire service; Private fire protection (BOD put out a guideline on FIREScope website. Nutshell says FIREScope allows access up until an area is evacuated. Once evacuated, they must leave as well and have no access). Looking again at engine typing. FOG update will start the rewrite in January for 2010. Appendix A will need to be redone. Task Force needs the revised Appendix A from the CSG by October 1, 2009. Need to add Appendix A rewrite to agenda. The Task Force is trying to finalize the fireline EMT-P position and qualifications.

- b. OES Fire & Rescue (Johnston)
No report

- c. OES Telecommunications (Ben Green)

Sam Williams is no longer with OES. Not sure who the primary OES T-Comm member will be. All will support the group. George Lowrey is the Cal SEIC rep. On ROSS for OASIS requests, it is a fast attack deployment use and really not expected to be used for more than a week. They have a staffing issue with longer than a week. ROSS needs to request overhead (COMC + 2 other) with the OASIS unit. Cal Trans is the back-up and is staffed with paid staff as opposed to the OES volunteers. The biggest issues is working with the COML to ensure that they can solve the comm. (landline, cell, internet) issues, but need to know long term needs early. Also, if there is a problem with comm. Vendors, OES can be a point of contact for trying to solve issues/look for solutions. Brent had the OES OASIS info at Roseville. Ben will send it to Pete for posting/dissemination.

OES trying to upgrade CESRS network (some repeaters are 1970's). CESRS is moving towards NB in 2010, but trying to dredge up the funding to replace the 27 mountaintops that are WB. The goal is to also go to a CTCSS/PL repeated system. CESRS is still simplex for 2009 fire season. OES has four Daniels VHF-H repeaters with CESRS on them and they are available for mutual aid. T-Com has new cache equipment. Trying to phase out the LPH and has 170 new DPH's. Still has many EPH's in the cache. Also have 800 cache radios.

- d. CAL FIRE Telecommunications (Savage)

Next week is the ECC workshop so all ECC chiefs or designee will be at lone. Week long training course on ECC responsibility. Will be planning a reprogramming for this year. All of the Units have to submit frequency agreements to DGS for any non-Cal Fire frequency. Agencies that have VHF frequencies that will be used for incidents can get them into the Statewide load if they notify Cal Fire by December. With the NB issue, Cal Fire is looking at delaying their switch until 2011 due to cooperators and some DGS equipment that are/is not yet ready. Cal Fire would like to ensure OES and other state agencies are ready. The decision needs to be made in January as to the deadline. Right now it is not looking like 2010 will occur. In the statewide comm. plan, because NIFC has created 12 standardized command nets, they will all be added in. The Fed tacs added in 2008 all became command channels and will be CMD 9-12 plus a new command pair identified as CMD 8. Will be removing OES Tac 1 and a few others to make space. New statewide load could be out as early as February.

- e. NIFC/NIICD (Moulder)

C8-C12 additions are part of the scheme to standardize the C1-C5 starter systems paired with C-8-C12 as a secondary. Multiple repeaters would be standardized. C19 will be a temporary pair for

the fire season. C6 and C7 will be floater or tertiary repeaters. First kits out will still be C1-C5. Glenn will provide a frequency list. They are NTIA frequencies and can be used by any federal agency. There is an issue with local governments preloading these frequencies. However, NIFC is going to be looking at this and there is no issue with agencies loading the FIREScope recommended frequencies as long as they are following the FIREScope use guidelines (205, use agreement, etc.). Gary Stewart will be the primary rep for NIFC to FIREScope. John will be around for awhile.

f. DGS

Just had a meeting in Visalia and is looking to coordinate with OES on supporting the OASIS equipment. DGS has 48 certified DGS-Technicians and 44 were assigned to fires this past year. The DGS rotation is trying to mirror the Cal Fire rotation of 14 day assignments. They will look at incident by incident reconsiderations. SD County RCS may participate in the DSG-T training program. Contact Paul Clay or Scott Wallace or Dave Bail or Sam Lafferty to get info.

5. FCSG Sub-committee Reports

a. CTAG-Communications Technical Advisory Group (Pemberton)

No requests to CTAG. Need to ensure previous info is disseminated.

b. COMMTRAIN-Communications Training Group (Stabler)

Tim Henry is looking at possibly having some classes in Central CA.

c. CAG-Priority 4 Channel Advisory Group (Hobbs or Lawrence)

There still has not been any dissemination of the requested Bulletin by OES to the Op Areas. Steve Hobbs will send the info to Chief Stone to discuss at the next BOD meeting.

d. FCSG205-ICS Form 205 Revision Group (??)

No report. Kody will look to ensure the Excel version of the 205 is posted on the FIREScope website. We will be looking at the IT based version of the 205 at the January meeting. DHS is apparently now managing the changes to this form in an all hazards environment (Kevin Malloy).

6. CALSIEC Fire Working Group

a. CALSIEC/CalSCIP update (Lawrence)

Chief Penido provided the following summary in an earlier email to the Vice Chair. It was read to the group. "Those present at the CalSIEC meeting yesterday (12-2) voted to adopt the Charter proposed by the 9/08 Governance Workshop (11/12/08 version with amendments added yesterday). Among other things, the Charter reorganizes CalSIEC and changes the representative membership.

The fire service retained one seat for each represented organization (CDF, CFCA, FIREScope, OES F&R). Other seats are: Sheriff's, Police Chiefs, CHP, OES Law, CalTrans, OES Exec (non-voting), League of Cities, CSAC (Counties), EMSAAC (EMS Admin'rs), Tribes, PSRSPC (state agency coordination), and the chair of each of the 4 regional planning areas.

The seats on CalSIEC are now 19 (18 voting) rather than the 48 previously. The new mix should increase efficiency and effectiveness without reducing representation from the public safety community. Several generous and far-sighted individuals willingly gave up their seats to accomplish this, including EMSA (advocated for EMSAAC to provide more local input) and DGS (though they operate the state comm. infrastructure).

The new emphasis is on the local "regional planning areas." The real work of comm. interop will be accomplished by the RPA's, then reviewed and approved by CalSIEC. Action should be more rapid and responsive to regional need. WE NEED FIRE SERVICE PARTICIPATION IN EVERY REGIONAL PLANNING AREA MEETING! At the meeting yesterday, THERE WAS WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR FCSG to represent the fire service! Sign up for meeting announcements at <http://lists.oes.ca.gov/mailman/listinfo/calsiec-announce>"

7. Old Business

a. FCSG Plan of Work

- Review FCSG content on FIREScope website (Lawrence)
No issues noted
- Continued development of CESRS as a Travel Net (Savage & Lowry)
See above
- ICS Communications Unit Resource Typing & Database (Lawrence)
 1. Mobile EOC Document from DHS (Pemberton/Ashbaugh)

Geoff had the opportunity to attend the All Hazards Type 3 COML workshop. DHS has disseminated a document on mobile EOC's that typed what appeared to be Mobile Comm Centers. Rick Smith is on the Business Working group and is looking at Comm units for Best Value under the Logistics ordering process.

- Incident Communications Conference (Stabler & Baker)
 1. December 18th in San Ramon. Bruce Schumacher from MRN will answer questions about ROSS. Kody will talk about the different commo groups like the CSG, Cal SEIC, etc. Chris Baker will do a presentation on All Risk COML.
- Narrowband Migration Plan (CTAG)
 1. We need to dust the document off, change dates and re-disseminate if Cal Fire changes their deadline.
- Review of Mexican border communication issues (Savage)
 1. The last meeting that took place was in NM. No report available. Glen Savage will get the update for the next meeting.
- b. S-358 Communications Unit Leader Re-Write (Gary Stewart-NIFC)

No update available for this meeting.
- c. NIMS All-Hazard Communications Unit Leader (Chris Baker)

Chris will be the new liaison on this issue. Kody will assist
- d. National Logistics Workshop (Smith)

No logistics workshop this year. It will be every two years now (2010). There will be a commo breakout at the California IMT meeting in Reno in April.
- e. Air Operations Issues (John Finnerty)

An issue has come up with the P25 compliance for aircraft radios. Cal Fire will not be P25 compliant in their aircraft for several years. The US ICE/CBP is purely digital P25 (possibly encrypted) on their radio system, so the only way the other aircraft can communicate with them is on a P25 radio. This is potentially an issue with sharing airspace.

New Items

There was a discussion on the CTSP movement from Plans to Logistics. It was felt there was a need to have that person handling communications issues with the computer's role in incidents these days.

There was a further discussion on the movement of Communications to a new section, to Ops or forge a new understanding of the role of the Com Unit. NIFC has talked about the complexity of the larger fires. There is a need to increase the position of COML in the org chart, but where do we go with it? Is it a training and education problem where we need to ensure the COML comes through the 310-1 process or is it a position description problem. Is there any expectation of creating a Communications Section in ICS? Along the same lines we need standards for all of the equipment that is being ordered to support communications (sat, internet, PTSN, etc.). Maybe we need to change the currency for the COML and COMT to be only 3 years, like aviation. If the CSG wants to take a position on this, we will need to run it through the BOD (they have a NWCG liaison). OHS/DHS is possibly already working on a similar issue. Ben Green will make contact with OHS/DHS to see if we can get tied into the work already in process. This will be assigned to the COMMTRAIN group (Ben Green, Kody Kerwin, Paul Clay, Rick Smith, Chris Baker, Geoff Pemberton and Don Stabler).

Question.

How do we change out the membership (e.g. Kody for Brent with the same organization)? Chief Stone identified that the Task Force would be the final decision. There needs to be a decision document sent to Chief Stone. He needs that sent to him with names and background. Kody will send it to Pete and Pete will send it to Dan and Dave.

The meeting was adjourned at 1200 on December 4th. All were wished a safe holiday season.

The next meeting is January 28 and 29, 2009 in Sacramento at DGS headquarters.