



FIRESCOPE COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST GROUP

JANUARY 19-20, 2006
SAN DIEGO COUNTY EOC
MINUTES (Approved)

Welcome and Introductions

San Diego County RCS Manager Chris Hinshaw welcomed the group to the San Diego County Emergency Operations Center. Outgoing Vice-Chair Craig Kinoshita called the meeting to order for purposes of the annual election. After the election, the new Vice-Chair Peter Lawrence facilitated the first day's meeting. Chair Tim McClelland facilitated the second day's meeting. Chief Drayer was present starting at noon on the first day. Chief Stone was in attendance the second day representing the FIRESCOPE Task Force. Chief Drake was absent both days.

Members In Attendance:

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Chet Ashbaugh | Telecom. Manager | Riverside County Fire |
| Michael Dickerson | Comm. Supervisor | Ventura County Fire (<i>Alternate to Sidlinger</i>) |
| Frank Ealand | Radio Program Mgr. | United States Forest Service |
| Brent Finster | Telecom. Manager | Contra Costa County Fire Chiefs Association |
| Kevin Harper | Captain | Kern County Fire |
| Chris Hinshaw | Manager | San Diego Co. Sheriff/Imperial Valley Fire Chiefs Assoc. |
| John Hudson | Asst. Chief | State of CA – OES Telecom. (<i>alt. to Root</i>) (<i>1st day only</i>) |
| Craig Kinoshita | Battalion Chief | Orange County Fire (<i>1st hour of 1st day only</i>) |
| Peter Lawrence | Battalion Chief | Oceanside Fire |
| Frank McCarthy | Captain | Los Angeles County Fire |
| Tim McClelland | Assistant Chief | State of CA – CDF San Bernardino |
| John Moulder | CDO Coordinator | National Interagency Fire Center – Boise |
| Denny Neville | Deputy Chief | Elfin Forest Volunteer Fire |
| Matt Nilsen | Captain | San Diego Fire-Rescue |
| Geoff Pemberton | Engineer/COML | Riverside County Fire (<i>alternate to Ashbaugh</i>) |
| Sal Santangelo | Sergeant Major | State of CA - Army National Guard |
| Glen Savage | Telecom. Manager | State of CA – CDF Telecommunications |
| Don Stabler | Sr. Dispatcher/Chair | CA Fire Chiefs Assoc. Communications - North Section |
| Hampton Stewart | Frequency Coordinator | State of CA – CDF (<i>alternate to Savage</i>) |
| Donald Turos | Deputy Director | State of CA – Military Department |

Guests in Attendance:

| | | |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Paul Clay | Technical Trainer | State of CA – DGS Telecommunications |
| John Finnerty | Pilot | Los Angeles County Fire |
| Lisa Stabler | Dispatcher | San Jose Fire |

Members Absent:

| | | |
|---------------|---------------------|---|
| David Bail | Telecom. Mtce. Sup. | State of CA–DGS Telecom (<i>alternate present</i>) |
| Tim Henry | Battalion Chief | Fresno City Fire (<i>alternate absent</i>) |
| Steve Hobbs | Captain | Santa Barbara County Fire (<i>alternate absent</i>) |
| Kody Kerwin | Telecom. Spec, | Contra Costa County Fire Chiefs Assoc. (<i>alt. to Finster</i>) |
| Lee Kraft | Captain | Clovis Fire (<i>alternate absent</i>) |
| Eric Martinez | SA Lead | United States Forest Service (<i>alternate to Ealand</i>) |
| Rick McClung | Comm. Liaison | Fresno Fire (<i>alternate to Henry</i>) |

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------|--|
| Kevin Nida | Battalion Chief | Los Angeles City Fire (<i>no alternate designated</i>) |
| Mark Rau | Comm. Manager | Clovis Fire (<i>alternate to Kraft</i>) |
| Rick Robinson | Battalion Chief | Orange County Fire (<i>alternate to Kinoshita</i>) |
| Mike Sidlinger | Battalion Chief | Ventura County Fire (<i>alternate present</i>) |
| Rick Smith | Captain | Santa Maria Fire (<i>alternate to Hobbs</i>) |
| Randy Terich | Battalion Chief | Vista Fire (<i>alternate to Fisher</i>) |

<Secretary’s note: Due to schedule conflicts of certain FCSG members, the following items will follow the published agenda however the items were not discussed in chronological order.>

FIREScope Communications Specialist Group (FCSG) Logistics

Approval of October FCSG minutes – The Vice-Chair asked for any comments or corrections on the October meeting minutes. There was a typographical error noted. The motion to approve the minutes, with the correction, passed unanimously.

FCSG Roster – The Secretary distributed the current roster ([copy is distributed separately.](#)) Any changes should be emailed to bfinster@cccfd.org

FCSG Membership Status – Chief Drayer and Chief Stone discussed the current status of FCSG membership:

NIFC – John Moulder, Communications Duty Officer (CDO) Coordinator, at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) National Interagency Incident Communications Division (NIICD) in Boise, Idaho will now be a FCSG member.

Tribal Fire Departments – OES will continue to recruit a representative of Tribal fire departments.

BLM – Dexter Dirth is still being recruited to represent BLM or DOI.

Gary Fisher and Tom Tornell submitted their resignation from FCSG.

Don Root has resigned his position with OES Telecommunications and will become the Assistant Manager of the San Diego County Sheriff Communications System. Pending replacement, OES Telecommunications Chief Jake McHatton will receive FCSG information.

Chief Stone and Chief Drayer will clarify the process for appointment of primary members and alternate members with Chief Praytor.

FCSG Email List Server – There was no report as Don Root has resigned his position with OES. Root will be contacted for information on accessing the list server.

Agency Reports

FIREScope Operations/Task Force/Board of Directors – Chief Stone gave a brief status report on FIREScope activities. At the last Board of Directors meeting, Chief Freeman (Los Angeles County) made the request that the FCSG create a summary document as to the status of fire service communications and interoperability in California. This issue was taken up under new business.

OES Fire & Rescue – Chief Drayer gave a brief status report on OES Fire & Rescue Branch activities.

OES Telecommunications – There was no report.

CDF COMPLAG – Glen Savage advised of CDF’s proposal to minimize interference by tone protecting all CDF tactical channels. The impacts of this proposal on federal and local government were discussed.

The FCSG recommendation was that CDF wait until other changes occur in 2008 and to use Standard CTCSS Tone 15 or 16 as a statewide tone.

Savage advised that CDF had abandoned the concept of immediately narrowbanding some Command 1 and 2 systems while keeping other systems in the wideband mode. CDF local net systems in the central State area around the Fresno-Kings and San Mateo-Santa Cruz units, including all Command 4 systems, will be narrowbanded this spring. It is planned to narrowband Command 1 and 2 at the time the WHITE channels and other CDF channels are narrowbanded in 2008.

The CDF channel plan for Fire Season 2006 will be finalized by February 1st and will be distributed by the Secretary.

A reminder that Communications Unit Leaders (COML's) should fax a copy of the ICS205 Comm Plan to South Ops or North Ops to assist the CDF Frequency Coordinators. COML's on incidents using NIFC channels or on federal jurisdiction, should fax the ICS205 Comm Plan to the NIFC CDO, in addition to the appropriate GACC (South Ops or North Ops).

CALSIEC – Don Root had provided information via email that OES has contracted with the Center for Collaborative Policy at CSU Sacramento to facilitate the efforts of CALSIEC as well as the State department radio planning initiative called Public Safety Radio Strategic Planning (PSRSPC). A CALSIEC meeting is scheduled for February 28th and a joint PSRSPC and CALSIEC meeting on March 29th.

There was no additional information available on the finalization or approval of the adhoc rules for the V-CALL/V-TAC and U-CALL/U-TAC developed at the April 2005 FCSG meeting.

NIFC/NIICD – John Moulder provided an update of recent activities occurring with incident communications at the national level. The NIICD staff has been busy with last year's Fire and Aviation Safety Team (FAST) report and its recommendations. There will be Train-the-Trainer seminars provided to national incident communications personnel on January 31st and February 14th in Boise on narrowband issues ([see Annex A](#)). The end result will be a one hour face-to-face training session for federal agency line personnel prior to the 2006 fire season.

Moulder also updated the group on the status of communications equipment in the ROSS system. It has been decided to use Equipment ("E") numbers for all communications equipment rather than Supply ("S") numbers. This should expedite the ordering and delivery process for communications equipment on incidents.

A NFES 4253 link will now be added to all 4390 starter kits.

Moulder reminded the group that ROSS will only process and track the use of aviation (Air-to-air and Air-to-Ground) frequencies as they must be provided upon initial dispatch of aircraft. Command and Tactical frequencies will be manually tracked by the Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACC's) and by the Communications Duty Officer (CDO) at NIFC.

There were questions as to why the NIFC cache continues to add new models of radios instead of staying with the "accepted" standard (the Bendix-King.) Moulder stated that it was a federal government procurement code issue, as all of the radios being purchased for the cache met the required P25 standards for federal wildland fire portable radios. In addition to the Bendix-King, Racal/Thales, Motorola, Datron, Vertex and EF Johnson radios already in the cache, Icom radios will soon be appearing. The ordering system will attempt to standardize, as possible, on the types of portable radios being shipped to one incident. Because it is unlikely that COML's and Incident Communications Technicians will have PC programming software and cables for all the different types of radios, each cache box of radios will include a cloning cable and the radios will be capable of being programmed from the front panel.

FCSG Sub-committee Reports

FCSG Technical Advisory Group (CTAG) – Chris Hinshaw advised that there had been no requests for technical assistance since the last meeting.

FCSG Training Group (COMMTRAIN) – Matt Nilsen asked for clarification and direction regarding the work product that his sub-committee was responsible for creating. It was mentioned that the NIFC website has met the need concerning basic radio-model specific training (see <http://radios.nifc.gov/>). After discussion, it was decided that the primary task of the COMMTRAIN group should be to develop a training program including PowerPoint and .pdf document that would support the FIREScope recommendation that every line firefighter/end radio user receive 4 hours of basic communications training each year. This basic training would include generic topics and concepts such as the NIFC narrowband training mentioned above, plus information on Command vs. Tactical Nets, simplex vs. repeaters, tone selection, use of AIR GUARD, use of mutual aid/interoperability channels, and Bendix-King familiarization. The training would be modular and include a template of agency- or radio system-specific topics to be taught such as channel use, coverage, portable and mobile radios operation, etc. Nilsen again reiterated that anyone with training materials related to basic communications training should be sent to him electronically so that he could compile it as a draft by the next FCSG meeting.

Channel Advisory Group (CAG) – Pete Lawrence advised that he and Steve Hobbs had been working on the “Priority 4” channel project. As envisioned, there would be a database of radio channels, their usage, and agency contact information that would be available for mutual aid/interoperability and major events. The information would be organized by Operational Area and would be maintained and accessible in the password protected side of the FIREScope web site, for which approval has now been granted by OES. Agencies could then download either a neighboring Op Area’s channels or the whole state depending on their channel capacity and anticipated need. It was reiterated that channels in the database would only be used with concurrence from the agency holding the FCC license, within the licensed area of operation, during an incident.

The next CAG action is to complete the compilation of the information received in the survey done by FCSG about a year ago and to send out the information to Op Area Coordinators for verification. Op Areas with missing information would need to be contacted.

ICS Form 205 Revision Group (FCSG205) – John Moulder advised that this same issue is being addressed on the national level. He envisions the FCSG205 sub-committee could assist with the national effort to revise and standardize on an ICS Form 205 that includes information of emission (P25 digital vs. analog), channel bandwidth (narrowband vs. wideband), tone protection (including P25 Network Access Codes (NAC), etc. Moulder will be in contact with FCSG205 Chair Chet Ashbaugh to discuss the project. Geoff Pemberton will be taking Matt Nilsen’s position on this sub-committee.

Old Business

Recommendation-800 MHz. radios for Fire Service – Chief Drayer will ensure that the Operations Team discuss the previous recommendation at the meeting next week and will see that this item is put on the agenda for the Board of Directors meeting in April.

Communications Response Teams – The concept of Communications Response Teams was discussed favorably at the last Task Force meeting. The concept now goes before the Board of Directors for their consideration. Key considerations for the development of the CRT’s includes: 1) building the teams as necessary, as opposed to having them organized with pre-identified personnel, 2) realization that they will be deployed for a specific interval between the time an incident progresses past the Initial Attack stage until the time an Incident Management Team is able to support the communications needs of the incident, 3) that they should be developed at the Operational Area level whenever possible, and 4) that they should be centered on individuals with local area-specific knowledge.

CDF ICT COML & CIIMT COML & COMC Summit – A discussion ensued as to whether the summit could be put together by this Spring. Based on input from CDF and NIFC/USFS representatives, it was

decided that the value of having a summit is significant. Both Contra Costa County and Los Angeles County are sponsoring S-258 Incident Communications Technician courses this Spring. It was decided to piggyback on those courses and use NIRSC cache equipment already on site (northern and southern California) as a refresher opportunity for COML's. In addition, the FAST Train-the-Trainer training on narrowbanding could be provided to attendees.

It was decided that two Communications Unit Leader Refresher-Workshops will be held. The first will be on Monday, April 10th in Concord and the second will be Monday, May 15th in Pasadena. Frank McCarthy and Brent Finster will work out the details to ensure that both sessions are identical in content. The workshop will consist of the NIFC/FAST Train-the-Trainer information, hands-on refresher of the NIFC cache equipment as well as classroom training and a round table on other pertinent topics. CDF will ensure that a Frequency Coordinator attend NIFC/USFS agreed to have a Communications Duty Officer/Communications Coordinator attend each Refresher-Workshop.

Incident Communications Conference – Fall/Winter 2006-2007 – This item was tabled until the next meeting.

Marine channels programmed in Part 90 radios – There is still confusion about who can authorize a public safety agency to program Marine channels into their radios. Frank Ealand will research the possibility that a document may exist between the FCC and the NTIA. Frank McCarthy will research how their lifeguard units have been approved by the U.S. Coast Guard to do the same thing.

CALSIEC EMS request to use Fire Service Channels – This is believed to be an OES issue and not FCSG's. As no new information has been received on this agenda item, it will be dropped from the next meeting's agenda.

WHITE channels narrowbanding – The recommendation to narrowband the WHITE channels by January 1, 2008 has been made to OES, however, due to the hiatus of the CALSIEC, no action has been taken.

Travel Net – Frank Ealand stated that the federal government has given a deferment for one year regarding the demise of Travel Net. He advised that it is imperative that a replacement system or channel is found within 12 months so that the Travel Net frequencies can revert to another federal government agency as of January 1, 2007. There are no alternative federal frequencies available. The Secretary was directed to draft a letter for the Chair to sign, addressed to the OES Fire and Rescue Chief, advising of the seriousness of this issue and suggesting that perhaps OES 1 or OES 2 might be considered for use as a simplex travel channel.

Comm Unit Personnel Ordering-MIRPS/ROSS – Chief Drayer advised that the ROSS ordering system is being implemented in 2006. CDF, OES and local government agency personnel will be trained on the system and have equal access. Perhaps ordering issues will improve as all agency types will be using one system.

Incident Communications Positions/310-1/CICCS/NIMS – At their last meeting, the Task Force did not discuss the draft letter to fire chiefs and agency heads as recommended by FCSG. Chief Drayer was brought up to speed on the issue and will ensure that it is discussed at the next Task Force meeting. CDF has not adopted the CICCS standard so the potential for differences of Communications Unit personnel's training and experience will continue to exist until this is resolved.

Brent Finster noted the need for FCSG to stay on top of this issue, especially as it relates to the development of standards for the NIMS Communications Unit Leader position that is now identified as the key to all-risk, all-discipline major events and required to be in place for grant funding by the Department of Homeland Security. Recently, the National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics (also known as "SEARCH") was chosen to develop the training curriculum for the NIMS Communications Unit Leader. In addition, the NWCG S-358 Communications Unit Leader course materials are being re-written this year. Finster stated that there will be many FCSG discussions ahead concerning the future direction

of these two efforts. The group felt it wise to make contact with the OES Law Enforcement branch to determine what information or discussions may be occurring concerning this issue. Chris Hinshaw and Chief Drayer will coordinate contacting Dennis Bean, OES Region 6 Law Enforcement Assistant Chief and Charles Simpson, OES Law Enforcement Branch Chief for information and perhaps to invite one of them to the next FCSG meeting.

Communications Resource Database – Peter Lawrence announced that OES has agreed to establish a place on the password-protected side of the FIREScope website to house the Statewide Communications Resource Database. Lawrence will be working with Don Weiss on creation of the database that will include communications support vehicles, interoperability gateways, portable repeaters, and radio caches. A survey to determine available statewide communications resources will be drafted and Lawrence will ensure that the process will coincide with the development of regional tactical interoperability communications plans (TIC) in some areas.

Incident Dispatcher Program – At the last FIREScope Task Force meeting, Don Stabler did a presentation on the Incident Dispatcher program. The program was well received by the Task Force with the recommendation that it should receive formal endorsement by the CALCHIEF's Board of Directors prior to it moving forward with the FIREScope Decision Process. Stabler gave the same presentation to the CALCHIEF's Board of Directors a week later and received their formal endorsement. Chiefs Stone and Drayer asked Stabler to work State Fire Training on the establishment of the course. Chief Stone will update the FIREScope Board of Directors on the action by CALCHIEF's.

Cache BK Portable Radio Passwords – John Moulder stated that the NIFC cache has over 8,000 portable radios with the majority of them being Bendix-King EPH model radios. Some radios allow for password protection by group/zone and others affect the entire radio. Newer NIFC cache radios will be "locked down" in groups 1 to 4 so that the standard channel plan cannot be altered. CDF's standard is that Group 15 is the designated group available for specific-incident cloning based on a Comm Plan. This is compatible with NIFC's standard for the newer radios that Groups 14, 15, and 16 are available for cloning. COML's and other approved Incident Communications personnel can always contact the CDO or CDF frequency coordinator if they have difficulty with portable radio password protection.

New Business

FCSG Officers Election – The annual election for officers of the FIREScope Communications Specialist Group was held, facilitated by outgoing Vice-Chair Craig Kinoshita. The following officers were elected by acclamation:

Chair – Tim McClelland
Vice-Chair – Peter Lawrence
Secretary – Brent Finster

Narrowbanding Safety Concerns/NMAC Strategic Plan – On December 1, 2005 a conference call was held with FCSG members to discuss each of the 15 action items on NMAC Strategic Plan. Overall it appears that the California Fire Service is in fairly good shape based on the items discussed. A summary will be created that documents the status of the California Fire Service in regards to the NMAC Plan.

National Guard IC4U Communications Vehicle demo – Sergeant Major Santangelo and Deputy Director Tuross presented information on the capabilities of the National Guard's "IC4U" which made its debut last year during the Hurricane Katrina & Rita aftermath. The vehicles are being deployed throughout California and will be accessible through OES as a State resource as soon as ordering process agreements are resolved.



California National Guard IC4U Vehicle at FIREScope CSG meeting in San Diego

Ventura County Channel Plan and Request – Mike Dickerson distributed copies of his County's proposed channel plan. He requested a review of the plan by FCSG members. The only suggestion was an assurance that CDF tactical and NIFC channels would be programmed at the lowest power setting available. Dickerson also discussed the need to utilize WHITE 1 in the Rincon area, currently an area of poor radio coverage, until a new site/channel is in service. The impact would be about 10 calls per month. It was suggested that Ventura County submit a letter of notification to OES Telecommunications Chief McHatton informing him of this need.

Senator John McCain Floor Speech on Interoperable Communications – The Chair suggested that all FCSG members read the copy of Senator McCain's (R-AZ) recent speech that was forwarded by email. The Chair felt that this information would be helpful in the creation of a summary of the status of communications interoperability in California requested by the FIREScope Board of Directors.

Tactical Repeater Deployment – The initiator of this agenda item, Kevin Nida, was absent so it was not discussed.

Review of FIREScope Communications work products – The FCSG Charter was reviewed and suggestions for improvement were made ([see Annex B](#)). The proposed revised Charter will go to the Task Force for approval.

Fire Service Communications Status Summary – At the last FIREScope Board of Directors meeting, Chief Freeman of Los Angeles County requested that FCSG provide a document summarizing the status of communications and interoperability in California. Detailed work is underway by FCSG members on creating a database of "Priority 4" channels and communications resources. This database will ultimately house information on radio channels and communications resources available within each Operational Area so that incoming resources can be prepared when moving into unfamiliar jurisdictions.

The FCSG created a document ([see Annex C](#)) summarizing the state of Fire Service Communications in California. The draft document will be provided to Chief Drayer for approval prior to distribution to the Board.

Good of the Order

Brent Finster reminded committee members that he has FIREScope Communications polo shirts available for \$30 each. Please contact Brent by email at bfinster@cccfd.org for details.

John Finnerty, Pilot from Los Angeles County Fire Department, and member of the FIREScope Aviation Safety Specialist Group, requested an increase in information flow about changes in communications technical and procedural changes so that interested parties within the aviation community could be notified in a timely manner. Several suggestions including use of the OES Emergency Digital Information System (EDIS) and FAA NOTAM's were made. Moulder stated that this is not specifically a California problem and agreed to discuss it with the FAA.

Matt Nilsen indicated that he had been contacted by Mark Hall, a COML from Jefferson County, Colorado about Hall's company, Communications-Applied Technology, Inc. The company markets an interoperability system. Nilsen will get additional information and, if appropriate, share it with FCSG at a future meeting.

Chris Hinshaw advised that the DHS ICTAP program has contracted with the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR) in San Diego to do an assessment and evaluation of voice gateway interoperability technology and products. Hinshaw will share the results when they are finalized. Hinshaw also informed the group of a planned wireless public safety data network using 4.9 GHz downlinks to public safety facilities (including itinerant Incident Command Posts) from Orange County to San Diego to Arizona that is partially funded by a COPS grant. The system will support streaming video, in addition to audio, and will be on line in about 12 months.

Next meeting

The next FCSG meeting will be in Kern County on Tuesday, May 2, 2006 1300 to 1700 hours and Wednesday, May 3, 2006 0900 to 1500 hours.

ANNEX A



National Interagency Fire Center

3833 S. Development Avenue
Boise, Idaho 83705
208-387-5512

An ever increasing number of reports concerning communications issues through SAFENET and SAFECOM, prompted the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) to charter a Fire and Aviation Safety Team (FAST) in August of 2005. The delegation of authority to the FAST instructed them to more closely examine a variety of emerging issues regarding radio communications, and determine what corrective actions may be appropriate.

The FAST gathered information from over 70 sources including personnel on wildfire incidents, dispatch centers and the National Interagency Incident Communications Division (NIICD) at the National Interagency Fire Center. The findings validated the reports concerning radio communication problems throughout the fire service.

In order to take action on the report findings, the NMAC requested that an Area Command Team create short term recommendations and develop a long term strategic plan for radio communications. The goals established by the Area Command team are as follows:

Goals

- Increase firefighter awareness of the narrowband incompatibility, programming, maintenance and mitigation measures which improves firefighter safety by facilitating a reliable, functional radio system.

Objectives

- Increase the understanding of affected parties regarding narrowband/wideband issues to know capabilities of radios being used, indicators to recognize problems and ways to temporarily mitigate the problems
- Increase understanding and professional development training regarding radio issues to ensure proficiency of radio technicians in all Wildland fire agencies to improve radio communications.

Actions

- Provide field training to fireline personnel prior to end of 2005 fire season
- Develop a system for end user support, reporting problems and technical assistance
- Develop a training outline to improve end user understanding and knowledge of narrowbanding
- Develop a three tiered training program that targets dispatchers, radio users and COML/COMTs

Efforts to meet the goals and objectives established by the Area Command Team have been focused on "increasing firefighter awareness" through three venues:

- Creating a Wildland fire radio communication website that functions as an end user resource for technical assistance, problem reporting, information sharing and training (<http://radios.nifc.gov>).
- Working with the Federal Fire and Aviation Safety Team to make radios and narrowbanding a "hot topic" for 2006 refresher training.
- Developing a training package that will be taken to the field and offered to all fire firefighters prior to the beginning of the 2006 fireseason.

Please take time in your refresher training schedule to get to know the "radio website", and discuss any problems you may be having locally with your communications system. Ask yourselves if you understand narrowbanding and the problems that may be associated with the changeover from wideband. How do you recognize wideband/narrowband interoperability problems? How do you know if your radio is programmed in the narrowband mode? Do you know how to program your radio from wide to narrowband?

Having good, positive communications is one of the most basic tenets of firefighter safety. Take some time during refresher training to make sure you can keep your communications reliable on the fireline.

National Fire and Aviation Executive Board

December 23, 2005

To: Geographic Area Coordination Groups

From: National Fire and Aviation Executive Board

Subject: Radio Narrowband Training

The purpose of this memo is to request assistance from the Geographic Area Coordinating Groups in providing radio/narrowband training to firefighters before the beginning of this fire season.

Over the past five years, a steadily increasing number of reports concerning communications issues have been received through SAFENET and SAFECOM. These reports prompted the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) to charter a Fire and Aviation Safety Team (FAST) in August of 2005.

The FAST gathered information from over 70 sources including personnel on wildfire incidents, dispatch centers and the National Interagency Incident Communications Division (NIICD) at the National Interagency Fire Center. Their findings validated the reports, and gave a much clearer picture of communications problems encountered throughout the fire service.

In response to the Area Command and FAST team findings, work began at NIFC on training to be delivered to firefighters before the beginning of next fire season. The training being developed is a one hour class on radio narrowband basics which will be delivered to all firefighters and dispatchers through face to face training sessions within each geographic area.

Two “train the trainer” sessions will be conducted in Boise, ID, on January 31st and February 14th. We are asking that each geographic area send an appropriate number of training representatives to one of the “train the trainer” sessions. The training representatives will then be asked to coordinate delivery of the training within their geographic areas. Arrangements will also be considered for providing a limited number of the train the trainer sessions at selected locations within Geographic Areas.

Events of the last year have taught us just how important it is for every firefighter to know their radio and how it works. We are hopeful that this effort will bring us closer to that goal.

For questions, please contact John Gould (208)-387-5177 or Steve Jenkins (208) 387-5485.

ANNEX B

FIREScope COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST GROUP CHARTER – DRAFT 1/20/2006

Changes from approved Charter are highlighted in yellow

MISSION STATEMENT

The FIREScope Communications Specialists Group consists of communications technology, operations, and administrative professionals. The Group's mission is to improve communications from an operational, safety, and technical perspective. The group achieves this mission by evaluating and making recommendations regarding existing and future wireless voice and data communications technologies and procedures to the FIREScope Decision Process.

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Evaluate existing and future technologies for application to the California Emergency Services
2. Facilitate communications interoperability
3. Provide periodic reports for the FIREScope Decision Process
4. Develop, review, and recommend plans, procedures, and standards related to Emergency Services communications
5. Develop, review, and recommend cooperative agreements
6. Maintain products developed by the FIREScope Communications Specialist Group
7. Maintain coordination with other organizations and act as a conduit for information exchange
8. Serves as the Fire Service Working Group (CALSIEC-FIRE) for the California Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee
9. Perform other communications-related duties as assigned by the FIREScope Task Force

SUB-GROUPS

1. Sub-groups will be established by the Group when appropriate.
2. Maintain a subgroup known as the Communications Technical Advisory Group (CTAG) to act as a resource for California Emergency Service agencies regarding communications technology issues.
3. Maintain a subgroup known as the Communications Training Group (COMMTRAIN) to act as a resource for California Emergency Service agencies regarding communications training issues.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the FIREScope Communications Specialist Group will be representative of federal, military, tribal, state and local fire service agencies including mutual aid regions, cities and counties within California. Members will be responsible for achieving all elements of the Charter and the tasks contained in the annual Communications Specialist Group Plan of Work. Participants in this category will be voting members and have authority and responsibility to speak for their agency in all matters relating to communications issues. **Primary** members are appointed to the Group by the FIREScope Task Force.

The FIREScope Task Force will provide a Liaison, and an Alternate Liaison, to the Communication Specialist Group. The Task Force Liaison will ensure close coordination with other implementation efforts and the Decision Process.

OFFICERS

Officers of the FIREScope Communications Specialist Group are the positions of Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. Officers must be active members of the Group. Officers **will assume office on a calendar year basis**, January 1 to December 31. Elections will be held in December. **Vacancies will be filled through appointment by the Chair.**

The Chair will be responsible for managing the Group to accomplish the annual plans of work and reports in accordance with the FIREScope Decision Process.

MEETINGS

Meetings will be called by the Chair and will be held as necessary to accomplish the goals and objectives as determined by the annual Communications Specialist Group Plan of Work. Meetings should not conflict with scheduled Task Force meetings.



FIRESCOPE COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST GROUP

FIRE SERVICE COMMUNICATIONS STATUS REPORT – FEBRUARY 2006

The FIRESCOPE Communications Specialist Group (FCSG) was tasked with developing a summary of the status of fire service communications in California.

Status of Fire Communications in California

Operability/Infrastructure Sustainability:

- Most public safety communications systems have built-in redundancy.
- Most public safety communications systems include adequate back-up capabilities.
- California is not dependent on private, commercial systems.

Interoperability (defined by CALSIEC as “the ability for public safety first responders to communicate with whom they need to, when they need to, when authorized”):

- Multiple technological platforms are in use (radio frequency bands, standards).
- Many planning efforts are in progress through the State to improve interoperability.
- VHF Highband is the standard for mutual aid communications in California.
- Many systems that do not use VHF Highband have cross-patch capabilities or audio bridges for public safety resources responding into their area.

Major Events & Recovery from Operability Failures:

- Mutual Aid systems (infrastructure and subscriber equipment).
- Cached radio equipment assets and components (rapidly deployable).
- California Master Mutual Aid Agreement includes communications component.

Coordinated efforts:

- Communications operational and technical training.
- Information sharing on best practices.
- Strategic planning.
- Evaluation of future technologies.

Future Recommendations for Improvement

- Funds to upgrade equipment to narrowband technology (especially smaller, rural agencies)
- Additional spectrum for public safety (DOD/California National Guard frequencies?)
- Encourage the establishment of reasonable replacement life-cycles for communications equipment (similar to PC's and cellular phones)
- Continued coordination of interoperability planning efforts.

Communications Resources for California Fire Service Agencies

- FOG Appendix A
- FIRESCOPE website for updates to FOG
- FCSG has a Technical Advisory Group to answer questions
- Plan for purchase of narrowband capable equipment by 2008
- Other resources (OES Bulletins, SAFENET, email list servers)