



State Interoperability Executive Council Listening Session
SIEC session 1 - Clarion Suites, Madison
June 20, 2005 - 1:00 PM to 2:50 PM

At 1:00 PM the listening sessions begins with opening remarks from Dave Steingraber.

- Primary focus of the listening sessions is to hear the needs and concerns of stakeholders and those most directly affect by interoperability
- Operational concerns are especially of great interest to the council
- While technical and financial issues are an important component of achieving interoperability they are not the focus of the listening session

Members of the Executive Council present at the session include: Dave Steingraber, Johnnie Smith, Tom Czaja, Melinda Allen, Major General Al Wilkening

PowerPoint presentation by Tom Lobe (OJA)

- Federal Engineering conducted a statewide study resulting in recommendations from needs assessments
- The recommendations detailed three components of interoperability
 - o These included Governance, technical, and funding aspects
- Governance
 - o The FE study recommends authorization of a State Interoperability Committee by either legislation or executive order from the Governor.
 - o FE interviews found that 93% of stakeholders indicated the need for an oversight board
 - o FE recommends that SIEC include representative stakeholders from both local and state government
 - o Executive order #87 and subsequent appointment of members to the SIEC by Governor Doyle
- Technical
 - o FE recommends Wisconsin adopt the methodology set forth by SAFECOM, a national program from the Department of Homeland Security
 - o FE also recommends adoption of the P25 suite of standards
- Funding
 - o A majority of stakeholders have indicated that funding is a significant issue in achieving interoperability
 - o Approximately \$14 million has been allocated for radio interoperability projects in Wisconsin
 - o Funding is directed towards voice system interoperability projects

- Funding and grant details are available in Homeland Security Bulletin 05-4 at <http://oja.state.wi.us>
- Executive order # 87
 - On February 2, 2005 Governor Jim Doyle signed executive order # 87 relating to Wisconsin radio communication interoperability
 - Wisconsin formally
 - Recognized the importance of public safety
 - Recognized the fact that public safety interoperability has not yet been achieved in Wisconsin
 - Recognized the significance of interoperable technology to enhance public safety and homeland security
 - Distinguished the need for interoperability between and within jurisdictions
 - Acknowledges that interoperable communications requires statewide coordination and leadership
 - Establishes the State Interoperable Executive Council (SIEC)
- The SIEC Council consists of members appointed by the Governor and include
 - OJA Executive Director, Adjutant General, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, Secretary of the Department of Transportation, State's Chief Information Officer, a Chief of Police, a Sheriff, a Fire Chief, a local Emergency Management official, a Tribal Official
- SIEC committees
 - Outreach Committee
 - Technical Committee
 - Operations Committee
- Mission of SIEC
 - To set goals and objectives
 - To develop a review strategy
 - Set technical and operational standards
 - Develop short and long term recommendations for local government action
- Interoperability Standards (SAFECOM methodology)
 - APCO Project 25 standards adopted
 - Portable and radio hardware defined as P25 compliant, must be upgradeable for cost not to exceed the cost of purchase in a P25 compliant state
 - New or replacement radio equipment operating below 700 MHz must meet FCC narrowband requirements
 - Repeater system site hardware designed to allow for upgrade to increased capability with minimum amount of hardware replacement
 - Power and cooling must be sized to accommodate the installation of hardware above the initial site complement. Planning should include requirements that account for expansion capabilities up to 3 times the initial installation

- Tower loading calculations for antenna and feed line should include future installation of microwave backbone infrastructure
- Infrastructure upgrades that involve linking control points to repeaters or tower to towers, must include planning for expansion to carry both voice and data traffic

Listening session begins:

Question: Excluding funding, what are the immediate and most pressing needs of local, regional, and state jurisdictions with regard to interoperability?

(David Janda of Dane County Emergency Management):

- This is a funding issue
- There is mention of \$14 million available.
 - What is the grant period and how will it be allocated?
 - This raises a question of commitment.

(Dave Steingraber – Council):

- A funding strategy is definitely needed

(Greg Engle of OJA):

- That money is out of 2004 and about \$10 million is 2005
 - \$10 million is set aside to give SIEC and the state the ability to set up a strategy
 - The remaining \$4 million needs to get sent out in accordance with tight federal timelines
 - \$2 million was spent on the study

(Tim Krueger of Maple Bluff PD):

- From the perspective of a small agency there is a pressing need to get the process moving
- We have been working on this for about three years
- Lets not set ourselves back by creating temporary solutions to a long term problem but a solution is needed in the very near future
- Usable equipment and technology is needed within the not so distant future. We cannot be expected to wait much longer
- What are the P25 standards?
 - Answer: Check SIEC website for additional information
 - It will be APCO standard
 - It is ok to purchase radios but they will need to be P25 and it is recommended that the vendor is made to guarantee this

(Joe Balles of Madison PD):

- It is understood that Madison and Milwaukee are invited to submit funding for special grants
- How should [we] go about getting all of the details from local departments? It would be difficult to include all of the details that the grant writers need. With

new state commitments, etc how should we already know what direction to take with writing these grants?

(Council):

- FE findings provide a realistic way to move forward but those findings only provide some of the many possible solutions.
 - o FE is not definitive or the only way we will go about trying to solve the interoperability problem
 - o The council will consider the FE findings
- There are already VHF system operations and all VHF frequencies are being used so its evident that sharing needs to happen and this will require lots of cooperation with locals since there is a limited number of state frequencies
- If we want advanced systems, like trunking, it will require more cooperation of frequencies
- It has been made clear that there is a sense of urgency but we need to be deliberate in our decisions

(General comment):

- Growing metropolitan areas have problems with VHF/800 issues
- Madison has used existing infrastructure to help but there is frustration in the sense that the next step is unclear and not defined

(Council):

-In looking at other states with regards to their successes and failures, we find that the states that have had the most successes are the ones that took their time

(General comment):

- SIEC is a good step but it has already been about a year long and there is a pressing sense of urgency
- These communications problems have been around for a long time and we need to start making decisions.

(Keith Lippert of the City of Madison):

- A major technical issue is the trunking systems (VHF)
- Has there been a definitive report on this system? There seem to be many conflicting opinions
- Concern: When will people go narrow band? The system is already saturated. What is the feasibility of VHF?

(Johnnie Smith - Council):

- If there is a specific question about issues such as these it would be beneficial to write it out and we will post it on the website to help get this sort of information out
- First it is important that we find out, as a council and stakeholders, what we want before discussing solutions
- We should view this issue of interoperability not only from a Madison perspective but statewide
- There was obviously a poor plan in place during the Sept. 11 attacks and we can learn from that

- This is an issue not only about individual localities, but how they can work together with other counties, regions, a statewide level and ultimately achieve national interoperability
- We should be deliberate and careful not to spend money hastily
- It is important to focus on the fact that a statewide strategy/initiative is necessary
- We are hoping to have a statewide plan together by the end of the year

(General comment):

- It seems most essential that agencies have their own basic operational needs met before looking toward full statewide interoperability
- How will final decisions be made and who will design a vision?

(Johnnie Smith - Council):

- The state does not want to restrict local developments
- This is the group that has been assigned the task of developing visions and helping formulate a plan
- What is important here is that everyone gets engaged and gives us information
- Let us know of your ideas, directions, and what does or does not work for you
- One of our goals is to disseminate this information via the website and we would like to post concerns so that requires input from you

(General comment):

- 99% of what we do is local which means there needs to be support for the local, basic operations
 - o It seems that less than 1% of what we would need to do is on a statewide level so it is really only a secondary concern for us at this point

(Doug Meier of Wisconsin DNR):

- There are issues with part time/volunteer departments and stakeholders so communications continues to be a major issue

(General comment):

- So it will be required that we are P25 compliant
 - o This is a very expensive requirement

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- It will be required as a part of funding
 - o Since we cannot fund all local systems we will provide incentives to unite systems and not totally fund the basic ones
- This P25 requirement is necessary for development and knitting together local systems
- The money applied in these circumstances must support interoperability whatever priority is needed

(Joe Norwick of Dane Co. Sheriff's office):

- There seem to be a wide range of interests here

- It is difficult to simply select one solution because a “one size fits all” approach will not and cannot work

(Council):

- This is why the council is so diverse in its make up
 - o We would like to represent the interests of the different types of stakeholders

(Major General Al Wilkening - Council):

- We need people connected and communicating on every level
- The money needs to be spent in effective ways and not simply spent on patching a problem
- Homeland Security is ultimately a states issue
- It is important to see that money may not flow as well in the future so it is essential to use current equipment not to do a gap analysis
 - o We need to identify our shortfalls
 - o It is imperative to use the federal funds wisely while they still are flowing in

(Johnnie Smith - Council):

- Information locally means more when it is shared
 - o That results in a higher level of interoperability and ultimately security
 - o It is a parallel analysis that works

(General comment):

- All basic level communications are hard right now
- Statewide interoperability is important but we do not even have the basics for effective communication right now

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- Day to day operations are important
- FE set three levels of interoperability and all of them will need to be addressed in order for us to effectively solve this problem

(General comment):

- The idea of a gap analysis is good but a lot of this is procedural
 - o We lack the resources right now to do detailed exercises
 - o Resources are very tight so this may be difficult to accomplish

Question: What should we consider an acceptable level of interoperability?

(Bob Frank of the Richland County Sheriff's Dept.)

- We are already sharing resources, teams, and equipment between five counties
 - o We need to communicate now to handle with the sharing needs
- The system right now is in shambles and we cannot use an 800 system because it can no longer cover our needs
- An acceptable level is to be able to communicate and get in touch with all agencies

(General comment):

- What is interoperability in Dane County? In 1993 there was an incident in Camp Randall student section. The section collapsed and ambulances had a difficult time coming in from around the area
 - o We are no better today than in 1993
- It just seems that the interoperability 'slipper' depends on where in the state you are located

(General comment):

- The recent local airport drill provides another example
 - o It is further proof that there is trouble with communication and improvement is needed from the bottom upwards
 - o This includes military, interstate, etc
- This also means that jurisdictions on state borders such as La Crosse and Beloit need to have a vision and plan that coordinates with both states

Question: What non-technological issue remains the biggest hurdle to achieving radio interoperability?

(General comment):

- It is not just a frequency issue
- This goes back to training issues especially at the volunteer and part time level
 - o It is necessary to drill, develop plans, and find the holes that we will need to fill
- The hardware issues are only one aspect of the problem

(General comment):

- Lack of communications at the basic level is a major problem
- The communications of locals with counties should be a priority
- An MOU may be needed so that a collection of counties can pool their resources
- Making contacts is essential
- Madison and Dane county have had problems working together and this needs to end

(General comment):

- This ultimately is a control issue
 - o Control of resources, turf wars, etc. People are not willing, for political reasons, to cooperate
 - o In the end, this becomes a training issue and at the root of the problem

(General comment):

- Fire Departments have a harder time with the 800 system than Law Enforcement
- Political cooperation is difficult and the state probably will not buy into it
- The government says one thing but not everyone is anxious to rally behind those decisions

(Johnnie Smith - Council):

- We must look at regionalization and who must interact with whom.
- Train and exercise them accordingly
- A primary focus must be on expanding systems to a regional level

(Council):

- We should educate others on the technical and funding issues and make interoperability a positive political issue for the state
- This seems to be a control issue. Just looking at the recent cross boundary car chase.
- There were many communication challenges and different frequencies came into play further complicating an already complicated situation

(General comment):

- A major hurdle will be finding who will solve the problem
- We need to develop a process and organize a means to the solution
- This is the dirty work and someone must be willing to step up
- We want and need results and improvements. But how?

General comment (Joe Belany of Ashland Police):

- We have utilized a variety of organizations (i.e. from Milwaukee) with regards to regionalization
 - o It is important to be cautious because interoperability means everyone will be involved
 - o Incidents could require many resources
 - o We need more resources here and especially for Milwaukee and SWAT teams to work with us even on simple issues such as traffic, etc.
- Be careful when talking of regionalization because that draws boundaries

(Johnnie Smith - Council):

- We are not limiting
- It is most likely to use regional resources
- It is recommended to practice with the agencies in the surrounding counties or areas you would most likely call upon in order to further the capability to use all resources available
- Ultimately statewide solutions should overtake regionalization

(Melinda Allen - Council):

- Ultimately it is a human issue
- It is advised to look at surveys and use existing knowledge to expand interoperability

Question: What training issues need to be addressed to achieve radio interoperability?

(Council):

- During a situation, changing channels complicates situations and response
- It is essential to work on issues such as training

- One of the major flaws is that not everyone is trained for emergencies
- Familiarize training and work on the gap

(General comment):

- We can train on big issues but also need to focus on normal, practical issues and everyday needs
- Bridging and switching channel issues could be done differently

(Melinda Allen - Council):

- What about the of language that everyone knows?
- How should codes, terms, and acronym usage be handled?
- What about dispatcher training in interoperability?

(Paul Wittkamp of Wisconsin DHFS)

- Volunteers are about 15,000 in EMT
 - This raises a question about training mandates and more issues regarding communications
 - People are becoming frustrated
- There are numerous basic issues that people are not trained for including equipment

Question: What role should vendors play in the future of interoperability?

(General comment):

- It is scary to think of the amount of money available
 - Some are resorting to E-Bay for equipment
 - With the vendors it is primarily a trust issue
 - Vendors are sharks
- FE needs to help write RFP

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- Procurement seems to work best in this case if it were competitive

(General comment):

- Have engineers and salesmen work to check one another in a 'checks and balances' type interaction
 - They could attend meetings and coordinate to formulate a plan and effective solutions

(Johnnie Smith - Council):

- Vendors love closed systems because that means more business for them so its clearly to their advantage
 - We should examine the possibility of only purchasing from vendors that allow capabilities for open systems
- Its time to break out of Silos

(General comment):

- The government needs to set standards
 - Good interoperability is a byproduct of efficient standards
 - State should work to develop standards and minimum requirements for the vendors

Question: What is the role of municipal, county, and tribal governments in interoperability?

(General comment):

- The biggest dilemma is the question of whether we wait for the state to influence local solutions or do localities take the initiative?
- Digital versus analog?
- All of the money must be spent well but how long do we need to wait before we know where to go and what direction to take?

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- Make it politically unacceptable not to be interoperable
 - o All forms of interoperability are necessary

(Council):

- Even if there was no funding available we would all still be here because this is a real issue with the benefit of money and funds available.
- We need to build partnerships irregardless of funds

(General comment):

- Interoperability works for anticipated events such as Halloween in Madison but in emergencies, such as highway chases, that is a different story
- In Dane County, there are about 10 dispatch centers and there is a growing issue of routing wireless calls to other centers (PSAPs).
 - o Is this good or bad?
 - o What about designation of PSAPs?
 - o There are many issues that arise with 911 routing

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- That is an issue and there are many impact with the FCC and others

(Johnnie Smith - Council):

- The website can be a tool to disseminate this information.
- What do local officials need to know?

(General comment):

- It is very expensive
- It's a two part situation
 - o Both infrastructure and retooling come into play and that means a lot of money
- Local commitments are needed

(General comment):

- Is there any talk of standards for dispatch centers so that there is uniformity?

(Johnnie Smith - Council):

- EOC discussion, there can be strategies set in place

(Council):

- Dispatch centers need improvement
 - o Some of this has already been seen in the southeastern part of the state

(General comment):

- We may be able to tie together dispatch centers with microwave system
- Dispatch overlap is definitely something to look at

(General comment):

- From a technical aspect, is the 700 system a viable option for central and eastern Wisconsin?
- Frequency is an issue. Its like real estate

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- A viable question then is whether to spend money on frequency or equipment
 - o Here we can look toward other states who have taken different paths to look for direction

(General comment):

- Some major hurdles include TV stations, digital technology, etc
- The issue is the distribution of channels and other technological boundaries

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- FE has one strategy to use 800 in urban areas and connection to VHF
 - o Possibly we may be able to use existing equipment and technology
- Would locals be willing to give up VHF for interoperability on a larger scale?

(General comment):

- 800 may work in Madison but other localities will need to use other systems which are more efficient to improve their interoperability

General comment:

- In the southeast portion of the state there are issues between Motorola and Maycom
 - o They need to work together
- Ultimately we must have open architecture

(Major General Al Wilkening - Council):

- This is a huge project
- We need to look at national response and cooperation of agencies to share
- This committee will keep moving forward to help develop a strategy

Meeting Ends at 2:50 PM

Attendance at listening session:

Bob Wundrock, Stephen Miller, James Soley, Paul Wittkamp, Rick Campbell, Joe Belany, Craig Schuetz, Doug Meier, Jeff Ohnstad, John Verhten, Keith Lippert, Bob Frank, David Janda, Wes Bernhardt, Chuck Foulke, Pat Ninmann, Mark Fritsche, LeAnn Krieg, Duke Ellingson, Joe Norwick, Joe Balles, Tim Krueger, John Verhyen, Frank Fenton, Carolyn Bourie, Ed Hazelwood