State Interoperability Executive Council Listening Session
SIEC session 3 – Stoney Creek Inn, Mosinee
June 22, 2005 - 1:00 PM to 2:30 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 effected 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, Neil Cameron, Johnnie Smith, Ben Schliesman, Ann Hraychuck

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

- o Funding and grant details are available in Homeland Security Bulletin 05-4 at *http://oja.state.wi.us*
- Executive order # 87
    - o On February 2, 2005 Governor Jim Doyle signed executive order # 87 relating to Wisconsin radio communication interoperability
    - o 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
    - o 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
    - o Outreach Committee
    - o Technical Committee
    - o Operations Committee
- Mission of SIEC
    - o To set goals and objectives
    - o To develop a review strategy
    - o Set technical and operational standards
    - o Develop short and long term recommendations for local government action
- Interoperability Standards (SAFECOM methodology)
    - o APCO Project 25 standards adopted
    - o 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
    - o New or replacement radio equipment operating below 700 MHz must meet FCC narrowband requirements
    - o Repeater system site hardware designed to allow for upgrade to increased capability with minimum amount of hardware replacement
    - o 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?

(General comment):
- Communication and mutual aid issues need to be addressed and has been by WISPERN for years
- We need to look at what we can do now for little cost while avoiding 'band aid approaches'
- Studies and interviews of fire departments indicate that they do not have the correct frequencies to communicate
- We should establish at least four mutual aid channels
- We should promote agencies to coordinate frequency sharing to eliminate confusion with dispatchers and channels
- Can we look at federal interoperability channels to be licensed and allocated to us?
- We need to set standards for a statewide approach
- Public safety funding should be filtered through SIEC
- Volunteer organizations and fire departments should also be considered
- Find long term solutions and be deliberate before implementing any decisions

(Paul Wittkamp of State EMS communications):
- What about EMS communications and aircraft?
- Massive event operations and day to day operations need better coordinating
- Fire service volunteers will need better training

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

(General comment):
- It is a matter of everyone having different visions so inherently cost becomes a major factor
- From a 'Northern' perspective in the state we cross county lines more here than others on a day to day basis so acceptable levels include a level at which we can trust our neighbors
    - We must be able to cover each others weaknesses and gaps
- A minimum level at this point would include having agencies and counties working collectively

(General comment):
- How were you (northern counties) able to achieve your current level of interoperability?

(General comment):
- We have had many of the counties initiate the contact with one another on the same frequency from the beginning
    o We are all in tune with how to operate within each others systems

(Gary Heschke of Waupaca Co. Sheriff's office):
- These issues need to be addressed on a daily basis
- Dispatch methods should be uniform so there is no confusion

(David Steingraber - Council):
- What about cross-state interoperability?

(General comment):
- We work routinely with Michigan
- Our 800 systems are actually hooked together

(Johnnie Smith - Council):
- Let us the website as a resource in collecting information on how you made those connections with Michigan

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

(General comment):
- Mental attitude and avoiding the politics involved with turf wars
    o No one wants to share resources or frequencies
- Law enforcement is not trained well on incident command
- Bridging the gaps in communication should be seen on an everyday basis

(David Steingraber - Council):
- What about ten codes? What have you done with them?
- Are all ten codes standard for you?

(General comment):
- We use common language so that all agencies involved are included

(Neil Cameron - Council):
- What don't you do well now? Where are the shortfalls?
- What kinds of things are you not willing to give up? Control? Frequencies?
- Is there a cost-benefit analysis?

(John Sweeney of Oneida Co. Sheriff's Department):
- We have our interests in policy making
    o We need a policy for cost-benefit analysis for all involved
    o We should identify the weaknesses, help those areas first, and identify priorities
- We effectively use park rangers, troopers, etc. Interoperability happens all the time here
- The issue is how to best prepare our region
    o Some regions have much better levels of interoperability than others
- We should search out the new technologies and get there together

(General comment):
- This issue is largely about turf wars and it is a valid consideration
- A bigger issue lies in more metropolitan areas

(Neil Cameron - Council):
- How standardized are things on your end?
(General comment):
- We use county frequencies when we need to talk to them
- Regional approaches would be effective
- Needs assessments and economical issues should be considered
(General comment):
- A large hurdle is getting over the mindset
- Constructing towers to share is a possibility
- We have been interoperable for a while already
(Marathon fire service):
- Many fire departments have a one county operating field but beyond that there is relatively little communication
- Fire service needs less training than police departments
  o Their radios are used much less frequently
  o A lot of departments have short range communication but ultimately its an educational issue

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

(General comment):
- It seems like a good incident command training is needed

(Johnnie Smith - Council):
- Would this help general interoperability?
(General comment):
- Yes

(General comment):
- We need simplistic radio training 101
  o Introductory courses to radios with standardized information and concepts uniform across the state
(Johnnie Smith - Council):
- Isnt that a component of standard training?
(General comment):
- There was a brief lesson on radios
  o Basic concepts need reinforcing
(David Steingraber - Council):
- Sometimes these issues are overcomplicated and hard to manage during an incident

- Its too distracting and complicated to worry about radios and switching channels during an incident
- Training may help alleviate some of the worry and pressure in these situations

(General comment):
- 'Hands on' training is a very important approach
- From a fire service standpoint, we were only offered a half hour of radio training at most.

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

(General comment):
- There should be a minimum in standards to vendors for us
  - They need to offer us correct specifications
- We need something in writing from vendors to guarantee any claims of a compatibility element in their products

(Dave Steingraber - Council):
- How important is it to purchase from one vendor versus purchasing from multiple vendors?

(General comment):
- It's much easier one to purchase from one vendor
  - If multiple vendors are involved it would result in finger pointing and blaming
  - Open architecture systems breed incompatibility issues
- But if only one vendor is involved we are stuck within the capabilities of one system and that could be a dead end approach
  - One vendor purchasing would be difficult in regards to limitations of needs such as encryption
- We should force vendors into a state contract
  - It would keep the cost uniform
  - It would keep the state uniform in its development
  - It's an effective, cost efficient approach

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

(General comment):
- It seems that there would need to be an agency attitude adjustment
- Would WEM be able to help with mediation and settling disputes as a neutral mediator?

(General comment):
- There is a significant role for municipal, county, and tribal governments in interoperability
  - The problem is that the local boards and councils do not understand the interoperability issue

- There needs to be standardization of training and understanding in tribal and municipal governments
- There is still stumbling on a local level

(Johnnie Smith - Council):
- What about composing an informal piece to educate locals as part of an outreach program?
- Comments and questions regarding this issue could be relayed using email or the website

(General comment):
- A lot of the issues depend on intra-county relationships, mutual respect
- Good working, outward relationships are needed

(General comment):
- The role of SIEC should be to set standards as absolutes
- Adjacent cities should build communications
- Mutual cooperation and response is vital

(Dave Steingraber - Council):
- Besides initial funds, what will keep others investing into interoperability?

General response:
- Funding is the biggest issue
- P25 mandate does not fit everybody's needs
  - Expensive
  - Fancy overcomplicated radios
- Most locals do not need the same capabilities as those in larger cities

(Dave Steingraber - Council):
- Wisconsin has a strong history of 'home-rule'
- We definitely need funding incentives too

(General comment):
- It would be cheaper and more feasible if other radios could be used too. The same type of radio and technologies are not practical for everyone
- It would be best to keep the plan simple because budgets are not huge
  - Radios alone could consume years of money
  - Needs assessments should be considered

(Ellen Sorensen Director of Administration of Fond du Lac Co):
- We would like to take an active role in this process
- We have consolidated dispatching system
- Finance is still the key component
  - 14 million dollars and 72 counties mean the money wont go far
  - Our hands are tied here

(Council):
- In terms of multi-county planning, how do votes and decisions work?

(General comment):
- There really is not much voting
  - Others voting different solutions
- Mutual agreements are necessary

(Mark Meyers):
- We have worked with 17 counties on planning
- Education is important and there are many associations to communicate with
  - Public safety is lacking in solutions to solve interoperability issues
- County lines are just lines. This is a mental boundary more than anything
- Cost is one of the biggest issues
  - Each county will be allocated a very small amount when divided out
- There are opportunities to share resources (Badgernet)
- WEM can help with frequencies that are underutilized
- There should be a greater degree of shared resources
- Mobile data should be considered almost as important as voice communication
  - Cost effective solutions are available
  - A planning initiative is needed
- Education on trunking and other alternatives is necessary

(Johnnie Smith - Council):
- Send us an email about these issues
- We will be looking at outreach and invite comments to help guide the process

Meeting Ends at 2:30 PM

Attendance at listening session:

Awon DeClute, Ellen Sorensen, Brian Kudronowicz, John Keener, Owayne Wierzba, Sandra Curtis, Bob Pound, Steve Beiz, John Reed, Alan Wisler, Erik Lowman, Paul Wittkamp, Tom Tuttle, Carol Kersten, Melissa Gilgenbach, Jason Leu, Joe Fath, Gerald Thorpe, John Sweeney, Brad Henricks, Cheryl Giggetts, Mike Dye, Christ Brogaard, Gary Heschke, Mike Milas, Dave Kaun, Rob Rude, David Mason