



State Interoperability Executive Council Listening Session
SIEC session 2 – Marriott West, Waukesha
June 21, 2005 - 1:00 PM to 3:15 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 affected 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, Matt Miszewski, Neil Cameron, Ben Schliesman, David Collins

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?

(Dean Redman of Wauwatosa Fire Dept.):

- The state licensed eight different band used VHF
 - Some departments are switching to 800
 - When the switched, they bridged communications
 - Worked well when VHF and 800 can communicate using the same frequency
- Statewide licensing is good
- Look into field cross band repeater systems

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- What state agencies hold licenses?

(General comments):

- DOT

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

(Jay Maritz of Walworth county Sheriff's office)

- We can share short term (cross band repeaters) and long term (statewide solutions) using equipment that is compatible in every place
 - There are some good short term and long term solutions
- We should have mutual aid channels

(General comment):

- Is interoperability just radios? What about data?

(Tom Lobe of OJA):

- For now the primary focus is on voice communication and not data

(Dave Steingraber – Council)

- Data sharing interoperability would be part of a second initiative (justice sharing initiative)
 - It would be more data orientated but we are not intending to blend the data and voice interoperability issues

(Michael Enstrom of Wisconsin PHIN)

- In terms of data sharing - it is important for bio terrorism
- Will there be further data sharing meetings in the future?

(Shirley Connors of Rock County emergency management):

- Statewide interoperability is good but what about border jurisdictions such as borders with Illinois, Michigan, Iowa, and Minnesota?
- FDs from Illinois mean a problem with communication between neighboring states

(Phil Rebersburg of Amateur Radio Emergency Service):

- We need to set the bar high
- Technology is an important aspect but it is key to break down the borders between cities and towns and work at every level, towns, counties, etc.
- WTMJ did an analysis/study on Fire response which shows how bad it is and the inefficiency is something that must be addressed

(Johnnie Smith - Council):

- What can we do?

(Phil Rebersburg of Amateur Radio Emergency Service):

- Lets get everyone talking to others on a state level
 - o Communication must happen if we want improved responses
- Technological issues will fall into place once people start talking

(Pat O'Connor of Wisconsin Emergency Management):

- Are you looking at communication of squads or man posts?

(Mark Meyer of Milwaukee police):

- Communication must happen on many levels, day to day, coordination, notifications, critical short term communication, critical large incidents, etc.
 - o Everyone needs to have the ability for all levels to communicate

General comment (Richard Tuma of Waukesha County Communications):

- We must cooperate, but it only will happen if we are forced
- We need money or wont be able to move forward

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- What about unfunded mandates?

(Richard Tuma of Waukesha County Communication):

- Lets encourage and reward agencies with money for cooperating
- We see the problem but who will do it?
 - o Nothing has been done

(Jeff Johnson of City of Brookfield Fire):

- What is the point?
- Is this about day to day or big disaster operations? That makes a difference
- What is the vision for preparing the state and how long will this take?

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- We are building this for you and that is the purpose of these listening sessions
- Agencies know their local situations need help
- We need to find where the holes are and the best way to do that is by gaining input from you before we move forward

(Jeff Johnson of City of Brookfield Fire):

- Every jurisdiction is different
 - o Our county has enough worked out
 - o Brookfield and Milwaukee work well
- It boils down to cost and our system is not perfect but it works for us

(Matt Miszewski - Council):

- Ok. We need to know what you need
- We are talking to you before we start building

(David Reid of Chenequa police):

- I see building to meet the needs of a large disaster and I don't know how you will accomplish it

(David Collins - Council):

- Regional lines can help when resources are thin
 - o Counties can look to one another to help and pool resources
 - o Look to the three levels of interoperability as outlined by FE and the possibilities of assigning responsibilities

(General comment):

- Look regionally. The southeast part of Wisconsin is good
- We have done studies and have looked at systems
- Money comes before technological aspect though

(Michael Martens of the City of Franklin Police Department)

- UASI shows many can communicate on the 800
- We need regional areas to have basic funding before moving forward

(Roland Poppy of the Greenfield Fire Department):

- There is a need for a system that must communicate on a daily basis so that agencies are familiar with it
 - o Once a major disaster hits everyone will be ready and comfortable with the technology

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

(Carl Stenbol of the Milwaukee Co. Sheriff's EM):

- At EM we work with many disciplines
 - o The problem is that different groups have different plans and there are too many plans to coordinate (federal, state, and local)
 - o EM deals with so many plans so putting information on the website would help agencies coordinate and serve as a reference

(General comment):

- Another issue is governance. Who owns the system?

(Paul Wittkamp of State Department EMS Communications):

- EMS and other service providers use analog VHF so it needs to be there
- Another stakeholder includes hospitals and medical facilities
 - o They also require the use of radios and are an important component in the communication operations
- Paramedics need to be included also

(Mark Meyer of Milwaukee Police):

- There should be standards for talk groups

- Urban areas operate with a higher degree of interoperability but there needs to be uniformity throughout the state
- This also should be extended to the state and cross state boundaries
- We need to integrate national plans with state and local plans on a daily basis
- A constant state of understanding should be necessary

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- Do you use 10 codes?

(Mark Meyer of Milwaukee Police):

- Yes but we use clear voice
 - o This issue is being addressed
 - o People need to know who they are talking to
 - o Time is definitely needed for switching over

General comment (Pat O'Connor of Wisconsin Emergency Management):

- There are non technology issues
- Who are the players (including private industry)? And how should we communicate with them?

(General comment):

- Lets define a platform for interoperability
- Lets look into VHF high band system
- The ability to 'talk to everyone' may be a lot harder than it seems
- What about the possibility of having a special band for interoperability but keep day to day systems as they are?
- The capability of interoperability may work better than forced communication

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- What about two systems?

(General comment):

- It may be beneficial to have a mutual aid/incident channel but retain our independent systems
- If we can avoid a dispatch center that may bridge some communications issues
- Some systems already have three bands in the same system (UHF, VHF, 800)

(Tim O'Neill of the City of Delavan Police/ MABAS Wisconsin):

- Look at the MABAS system
 - o It already works in 4 states and may work well for fire departments including Illinois
 - o We may be able to do something similar to that
 - o Look MABAS compatibility

(Council):

- Are you willing to accept those maintenance costs?

(Tim O'Neill of the City of Delavan Police/ MABAS Wisconsin):

- Its simply a matter of switching over for mutual aid responses

(Matt Miszewski - Council):

- Besides technological issues, what are the needs of this group in this area?

- We can fit technology to a problem but what is the problem on a basic level?
(Tim O'Neill of the City of Delavan Police/ MABAS Wisconsin):

- In Illinois it worked well and we can learn from their mistakes

(General comment):

- MABAS worked well because all were forced on VHF systems
- People have different radios, dispatch centers, etc. so it wouldn't be wise to force people to give up their equipment
- 700,800, VHF, and UHF gaps need to be bridged so no one is forced to give up their equipment and direct communication can be achieved

(General comment):

- Cross band repeaters work but are only a temporary solution to a larger problem

(Paul Wittkamp of State EMS communications):

- Public health is important and they are working on communications right now
 - o 80% technology and 20% relationships
- It is necessary to think out side of the box and get to know partners in neighboring counties

(Jeffrey Johnson of City of Brookfield Fire Department):

- What do we want to accomplish?
 - o Small or long term responses?
- We need a flexible solution to all problems
- Standardized units for counties should expand how far?
- At some point flexibility in connections will be needed
- It is not practical or realistic to have Milwaukee-Superior connections since there are a limited number of frequencies
- We could look at the possibility of constructing a Lego type connection of channels
- Regional entities are needed for control

(General comment):

- Its important to identify local and day to day communication issues and then build out to bigger areas
 - o Focus on basic needs before worrying about extension

General comment (Jim Heinz of UW Milwaukee Police):

- Do we know who talks to who? Is there some sort of database?
 - o Would it be possible to keep a log of instances when interoperability is needed to examine patterns of mutual aid
 - o These documents could help aid discussion and legitimize/sell the idea to locals
 - o Was this mentioned in the FE study

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- No. It wasn't part of the study but not a bad idea

(Varla Bishop of Wisconsin State Patrol – Waukesha post):

- There are so many groups that would need to communicate
- Many, many surveys have already been done and its time to compile that information and move forward now
- The question of day to day operations and 'big event' issues are not relevant

- Everyone needs to be coordinated and aware of one another
- The website may be an effective tool for this
- The counties in southeast Wisconsin already took the lead in a needs assessment
- Different groups could be patched together

(Carl Stenbol of Milwaukee Co. Sheriff EM):

- Homeland Security recording exercise is good and while communications shows deficiencies in exercises we can learn from shortcomings and use the data

(Lyndel Smith Waukesha Sheriff):

- Everyone has a different definition and needs
- There are many factions and so many paths to the same goal

(General comment):

- We should think about having an initial contact channel
 - o First objective is where to start
 - o Initial contact is very important

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- What do you mean?

(General comment):

- It may be a good idea to have an initial contact channel for the duration of an incident

(Matt Miszewski - Council):

- This may be a first step
- We need to know what we want to see how to get there

(Lyndel Smith Waukesha Sheriff):

- The southeast region of Wisconsin is doing well with interoperability
- There is a concern now about video and data sharing
- We may start with voice communication but ultimately voice and data could run parallel

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

(General comment):

- Inter-agency exercise/command system helps most
- There is no need for everyone to always be able to communicate with everyone else
 - o It should not be the policy that we must communicate all of the time with everyone just because the possibility exists
- It would be better to merge message sharing when communication is necessary through command centers

(Dave Collins - Council):

- Yes this would be on a 'need to' basis

(General comment):

- What are we aiming for?
- Like most public problems the question is how to get there
- Standardization may be a good first step
 - o Using the same codes and languages would be instrumental in keeping uniform standards and understanding which aids overall communication

(Jay Maritz of Walworth County Sheriff):

- Interoperability is part of a bigger problem
- When will it be used? When appropriate?
- How would training work in that case?

(Carl Stenbol of Milwaukee Co. EM):

- We should develop short term and long term goals
- Education is a major issue with regards to equipment, protocol usage, and know-how

(Johnnie Smith - Council):

- So the long term goal would be to remove Fire Department and Police Department barriers
 - o What would be a strategy for that?
- Would it be enough to say that we need to talk when we must be able to?

General comment (Carl Stenbol of Milwaukee Co. EM):

- ACU 1000 at 'Harley Fest' was an example when frequencies were bridged
- We need to educate on how patches are all we have but it is a good resource for the state
- 2002 grant funds – MOU set up
- It is important to set up standards for lead times and look at capabilities

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

(General comment):

- Get rid of proprietary control!

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

(General comment):

- There need to be paybacks
- Why should I, as one county, pay for the interoperability of others?
- Do we want government agencies involved
 - o Power plants, Prisons, etc.
 - o We will need to list their communications systems
- It seems to be a political balancing act
- Wisconsin has a history of 'home rule' mentality
 - o "Big Brother" approach may backfire
- On parallel local levels there is lots of coordination
 - o The larger problems are seen on upper level echelons
- Basically: what is in it for us?

(Johnnie Smith - Council):

- What are you not willing to give up?

(Craig Rivers of Waukesha Police):

- The county told us what interoperability is and drove us into the right direction but the downside is that the dispatch centers are consolidated
- Now county governments can be threatened and punished for not jumping aboard
 - o We don't want to be punished for not being aboard
 - If you cannot prove that your way is best, we will not accept it
 - We will ultimately do what is best for the people of our jurisdiction because that is our job

(Richard Tuma of Waukesha County Communications):

- It is not really an issue about communication centers

(Johnnie Smith - Council):

- Would you be willing to give up some channels for better interoperability?

(General comment):

- We should be looking at the federal government to guide us
- What about re-banding? What is going on with that?

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- I would think not
 - o The FCC has not prioritized it
- Homeland Security has taken the lead with SAFECOM and that is a good initiative

(General comment):

- The 800 was sold to us and it was not the way to go
 - o Lets not make decisions only to be mistaken again
- Maybe a federal solution is the way to go with this

(Matt Miszewski - Council):

- The federal government right now is disorganized but working on a solution
- Constant re-training is important
- We need to make sure others know how important the issue is to the State of Wisconsin

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- Virginia spent their Homeland Security money on frequencies and not equipment
 - o It was expensive, but ultimately their solution and we may be able to learn from their decisions

(General comment):

- The focus here should be on local, day to day operations which need to be improved first
- We should not be asked to give anything up if its our best resource

(Council):

- Are you willing to give up oversight for usage? Policies?

(General comment):

- Yes. Locals need to give it up

- Do not demand one frequency
- Maybe the state should own the frequency and give them out or redistribute them

(General comment):

- I don't want to give up how we do service internally
 - o We have a quality of service and we do not want to compromise our responsibility to the people of our jurisdiction

(General comment):

- It is necessary to set standards and in such a way that they are flexible
- We would rather not have the state control the radios. We would prefer to control our own level of service

(Dave Steingraber – Council):

- Keep talking to us and keep the lines of communication open
- The website is a great primary tool
- A session for vendors may also be a valuable step
- After a draft proposal we will come back for another round of sessions

(General comment):

- What time frame are we looking at for this?

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- At this point, we are looking at having a plan together by the end of the year on how to best move forward

(General comment):

- It seems like a waste of money to distribute the interoperability grant money now
- Its not smart to appropriate funds when we don't know where we are going

(Dave Steingraber - Council):

- We are trying to stay in sync with grant proposal timelines
- Some systems need money for minor tweaking
- It is possible to make some effective cost effective solutions now

Meeting Ends at 3:15pm

Attendance at listening session:

Ryan Jurgens, Thom Moerman, Steve Milner, Chris Petterson, Richard Tuma, Kent Bieganski, Dean Redman, Steven Hook, Lyndel Smith, Matt Jolly, Jeffrey Johnson, Michael Martens, Randy Pruss, Mat Wolters, Steve LaDue, Shannon Rawson, Marilyn Meldahl, Leon Ruder, Michael Enstrom, Mark Owen, Steve Fronk, Sam Steffan, Mark Meyer, Dan Schmerse, Roland Poppy, George Stoner, Carl Stenbol, Jim Malueg, Shirley Connors, Jeriane Feiten, Daniel Tushaus, Joseph Amode, David Reid, Varla Bishop, Connie Catterall, Pat O'Connor, Ann Wellens, Craig Rivers, James Heinz, James Learman, Jay Maritz, Tim O'Neill, Paul Wittkamp, Bob Goldstein, Phil Reensburg, Carl Guse.