

RADIO NARROWBAND ADVISORY GROUP

National Wildfire Coordinating Group

Boise, Idaho

January 28th and 29th, 2003

MEETING MINUTES

Advisory Group Members Present:

Stephen M. Jenkins - Advisory Group Chair, USDA/FS, NIFC, Incident Communications Chief
Roger Spaulding - USDI/USFWS, NIFC, Fire Management
Stephen Morris - USDA/FS IRM, R1, Telecommunications Manager
Ron Strong - USDI/BLM/DSC, National Telecommunications Manager
Mike Warren and Dale Miracle - USDI/NPS/NIFC for Bob Panko
Dave Dalrymple - Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands
Mike Wallace - USDI/BIA, NIFC, Fire Operations

Advisory Group Members Absent:

Clare Wren - Oregon Dept. of Forestry

Other Attendees:

Steve German – USDA/FS, NIFC Incident Communications, Boise, ID

The meeting was held to develop the recommendations for incident communications mode of operations for FY2003 and to discuss other related issues.

Advisory Group Recommendation

The group was in agreement that the FY2003 recommendation should not change from the FY2002 recommendation, except for adding GMRS to list of radios not to be used on incidents.

Incident Communications Mode of Operations - FY2002

- *All fire communications activity (interagency), including initial attack, will be performed in analog* mode. The group will annually revisit this decision and consider progress in digital technology and increases in the number of digital sites.*
- *Any federal, state or local entity that does convert their system to digital must keep it in the multi-mode configuration during fire activity. Multi-mode permits both analog and digital transmission and reception.*
- *All emergency radio equipment issued by the National Incident Radio Support Cache, for Type I and Type II teams, will be configured in analog mode.*
- *All FM aviation communications (federal and contracted) will be in analog mode.*
- *Family Radio Service (FRS) and General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS) to include Rhino and other similar model radios are not to be used on incidents - this includes federal, state, and contracted.*

** Wideband analog and narrowband analog are fully interoperable.*

Additional Recommendations to NWCG

~ Unit ID - The advisory group agreed to recommend to that a National Standard be adopted for the use of Unit ID s. The proposal was to use the current plan that was developed by an interagency working group in 1997 and has been adopted by the BLM as IM-2002-027.

~ Talk Groups - The proposal was to re-convene a committee under the Radio Advisory Group to develop a National Interagency Plan for Talk Groups.

~NAC - The advisory group recommended that Land Management Agencies adopt the plan presently established in California that standardizes CTCSS tones and NAC codes on a national level.

Other Items Discussed

DOI Contract Review and Status

A brief overview the status of the DOI Narrowband Digital Radio Contracts was given. DOI Contract #1 was awarded in August of 1997 and will be concluded in the next few months. A copy of Contract #1 can be found at www.blm.gov/natacq/IDIQ/.

Contract #2 was awarded in November of 2002. This contract includes 10 vendors with an emphasis on compliance with P25. Of the 10 vendors Motorola is the only vendor that is still pending. Some of the new additions to the contract are: enhanced encryption (DES), over the air rekeying (OTAR), and data TX/RX. Due to some problems on the first contract involving deficiency resolution, contract #2 has a stipulation that the vendor must have their deficiencies resolved within one year. A website for Contract #2 is not yet available but any questions can be answered by Charlie at 303-236-9452.

NAC Codes

The standardization of Network Access Codes (NAC) was put forward as one of the main concerns for this year. As it stands now many departments/organizations are randomly picking NAC codes for their use. This causes problems with interoperability between the different agencies. The advisory group agreed that we need national standards for NAC codes, user IDs and Talk Groups. It was suggested that until a national standard is developed fire should use either the 16 NAC codes California has developed or BLM IM-2002-027.

Flight Following

A subgroup to the Radio Narrowband Advisory Group has been formed to coordinate the interests of agencies and dispatch centers for the National Flight Following system design. The group is chaired by John Moulder, NIFC, NIICD and consists of the following members:
Kent Saxton - BLM, Idaho State Office
Ken Brown - USFS, Wasatch-Cache National Forest

Incident Communications Issues Panel

Group members include: Mark Hilton - FS (Group Chair), Rhonda Toronto - BLM, Mike Wingate - FS, Kathy Cullings - BLM, and Dave Grace - FS.

During the Interagency Fire & Aviation Information Systems Workshop held last December a panel was formed to identify issues and concerns related to the Incident Communications Unit. The panel is in the process of identifying qualification/training/performance issues relating to Communications Unit Leaders (COML), Communications Technicians (COMT) and Incident Communications Managers. One of the ideas brought up was that the NIFC Radio Cache investigate the possibility of putting kits together containing all the equipment necessary to program any radios that a COMT could run into on a fire. To include cables, laptop etc.

They are also looking at structural issues as they pertain to the Communication Unit. As a way to improve safety, decrease costs and provide faster service it was suggested that the Communications Unit be restructured into something like the following:

