The Crisis in Public Safety Communications

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International Assoc. of Fire Chiefs Communications Committee

SAFECOM Executive Committee
Interoperability Defined

- The ability of public safety agencies to talk to one another via radio communication systems – to exchange voice, data and/or video with one another on demand, in real time, when needed and WHEN AUTHORIZED.

- Must be implemented into seamless day-to-day operations to be effective.

- It does NOT mean the ability for everyone at an incident to be able to talk at will to everyone else.
Achieving Interoperability

IT'S ALL ABOUT SPECTRUM!
Achieving Interoperability

ITS ALL ABOUT TECHNOLOGY!
Achieving Interoperability

Needs / Challenges

- Funding
- Radio Spectrum
- Standards (not technical specifications)
- Cultural Collaboration/Cooperation
- Regionalizing Interoperability
- New Technology – Training & Support
- Practical/Realistic Drills or Exercises
- Changing the Way We Communicate (mindset)
Achieving Interoperability

Human vs. Technology Factors

- Human Factors: 70%
- Technology Factors: 30%
Achieving Interoperability

Interoperability Continuum
Achieving Interoperability

The Present Paradigm

IS DYSFUNCTIONAL!
Achieving Interoperability

A Parallel Path

- Addressing present needs of mission critical voice

- Research and development of new technologies (Living Laboratories, proof of concept)

- Public-Private Network (combining the two)
Achieving Interoperability

Technology Ingredients
Achieving Interoperability

- There is no “Silver Bullet”

- No single technology can solve every interoperability problem

- More often than not, more than one technology solution will be required to achieve effective interoperability

- Technology alone cannot achieve interoperability
Achieving Interoperability

*It’s all about Relationships*

- Everything is influenced by relationships
- Effective Leadership is achieved through effective interdependent relationships
- Effective Governance can only be achieved by developing relationships at all levels – this is critically necessary and time consuming
Achiving Interoperability
Govt. Efforts – What Works?

SAFECOM Program

• Public Safety Practitioner Driven
• Interoperability Guidance for the Nation
• Interoperable Communications Grant Guidance
• Statewide Communications Interoperability Planning (SCIP)
• Development of Interoperability Tools/Products (Baseline)
• ICTAP (Interoperable Communications Technology Assistance Program)
• NIST Research, Testing and Reporting
• COPS Interoperability Grant Training Programs
Achieving Interoperability
Statewide Communications Interoperability Planning (SCIP)

PLANNING FOR STATEWIDE INTEROPERABILITY IN VIRGINIA

IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS TO SAVE LIVES

FOCUS GROUPS
- Wytheville
- Newport News
- Harrisonburg
- Richmond
- Manassas
- Lynchburg

OUTCOMES FOR FOCUS GROUPS
- Capture of local emergency responder perspectives on interoperable communications
- Shared understanding of interoperability issues specific to this region of VA
- Education and shared awareness of interoperability issues across stakeholder groups
- Attention paid to our commonalities as opposed to our differences

OUTPUTS
- Local Perspective on Interoperability
- Current State
- Case for Change
- Future State
- Strategies
- Barriers

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION
- Richmond

OUTCOMES
- Defined mission and vision
- Recommended key initiatives

STRATEGIC PLAN
KEY GOALS
- Establish communications interoperability as a high priority.
- Expand the statewide use of a common language & coordinated communication protocols.
- Increase interoperability capabilities and coordination by using existing communications resources & by planning for future purchases.
- Enhance the knowledge & proper use of existing & future communications equipment & resources, through frequent & routine training.

Shared Principle
Locally-driven strategic planning
Achieving Interoperability

What Needs Improvement?

• Additional funding to support SAFECOM Efforts
• Additional radio spectrum/a new paradigm
• Grant money for public safety interoperability
• Long term development of performance standards
• Addressing legacy radio issues
• Establish “Living Laboratories/Pilot Programs”
Achieving Interoperability

How to get there?

Interdependence
- Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood
- Synergize

Public Victory
- Think Win/Win

Independence
- 1: Be Proactive
- 2: Begin with the End in Mind
- 3: Put First Things First

Private Victory
- 4: Be Proactive

Dependence
Achieving Interoperability

Bringing it all Together
Questions?