



FIRESCOPE



FIRESCOPE COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST GROUP

Roseville, CA

Minutes of Meeting
January 16-17, 2008

Committee Members Present:

Tim McClelland, Chair - CALFIRE

Peter Lawrence, Vice-Chair, Oceanside Fire – City Fire Departments South

Brent Finster, Secretary, Contra Costa County FPD – County Fire Departments North

Dan Drake – FIRESCOPE Task Force

Dave Stone – FIRESCOPE Task Force

Steve Hobbs - Santa Barbara County FD

Fred Buhr - USDA Forest Service

Chris Baker, Roseville FD – City Fire Departments North

Tim Henry, Fresno FD - Metro Fire Departments North

Geoff Pemberton for Chet Ashbaugh, Riverside County FD - County Fire Depts. South

Kevin Harper, Kern County FD – Fire Districts South

Ian Wallace, Santa Clara County FPD – Fire Districts North

Glen Savage – CALFIRE Telecommunications (1/17/08 a.m. only)

Ben Green for Samuel Williams – California OES Telecommunications

David Bail – California Dept. of General Services Telecommunications

Chris Hinshaw, San Diego RCS – Large Regional Radio System

Don Stabler - California Fire Chiefs Association

Committee Members Absent:

Frank McCarthy – Los Angeles County FD

Kevin Nida – Los Angeles FD

David Paschke – Orange County Fire Authority

Mike Sidlinger – Ventura County FPD

Matt Nilsen, San Diego FD – Metro Fire Departments South

Denny Neville, Elfin Forest VFD – Volunteer Fire Departments

Salvatore Santangelo, California National Guard – California Military Department

John Moulder – National Interagency Fire Center NIICD

Others Present:

Paul Clay – California Dept. of General Services Telecommunications (alternate)

Kody Kerwin – Contra Costa County FPD (alternate)

Hampton Stewart – CAL FIRE Telecommunications (alternate)

John Lim – California National Guard – California Military Department

Eric Oliveri – Tracy FD

Chris Suter – San Ramon Valley FPD

Chuck Dahlen – Shasta Lake FPD

Sue Dizmang – California Fire Chiefs Association

Welcome and Introductions

Tim McClelland introduced Roseville Fire Department Captain Chris Baker and together they welcomed the group to the Woodcreek Golf Club. Later, Roseville Fire Chief Ken Wagner was able to join the meeting and formally welcomed the group (see FIRESCOPE agency report below for more).

Secretary's note: Since some attendees were only available during certain periods of time, these notes do not necessarily reflect the chronological order in which the topics were discussed.

FIRESCOPE Communications Specialist Group (FCSG) Logistics

Approval of FCSG Minutes – The minutes of the October 2007 meeting were previously approved via the email process and have been distributed via the FIRESCOPE website.

Membership Representation – The Task Force liaisons reiterated that they were satisfied with the membership representation as decided at the last meeting and no revisions were necessary. Chief Neville had communicated that he was willing to relinquish his representation for volunteer fire departments if someone else was interested, due to his temporary appointment to the Heartland Fire Communications Center.

Membership Roster – Brent Finster reviewed the difference between the roster that is publicly available on the FIRESCOPE website versus the confidential roster with contact information that will only be available to the FIRESCOPE Communications Specialist Group members, FIRESCOPE leadership, and OES staff.

Agency Reports

FIRESCOPE Operations/Task Force/Board of Directors – Chiefs Drake and Stone updated the group on the recent activities of FIRESCOPE. Upon his arrival, Chief Wagner, who is also a member of the FIRESCOPE Board of Directors, provided a summary of the BOD activities including the proposed insurance levy proposed by the Governor, the California Fire Assistance Agreement (CFAA) re-negotiation, the proposed change to the number of resources that an Op Area could order from an adjacent Op Area without going to the Region, the “Mayday” vs. Emergency Traffic issue, and the recent GIS presentation to the BOD by the State Fire Marshal.

OES Fire & Rescue – There was no report.

OES Telecommunications – Ben Green provided an overview of OES Telecommunications. Sam Walker has been hired as the Interoperability Coordinator for OES Telecommunications and will be the primary FCSG member representing OES Telecommunications. Each of the four OES Telecommunications Assistant Chiefs (Ben Green, George Lowry, John Hudson, and Bill Pennington) will serve as alternates for Walker and should be included in FCSG activities. Those five individuals along with Jeff Howell and Richard Osborne will serve as OES Communications Coordinators. Green's activities as the Assistant Chief assigned to OES Headquarters at Mather includes work on

ACS/RACES resource typing and deployment of the Law Enforcement radio cache (175 Bendix-King DPH portable radios).

CALFIRE Telecommunications – Glen Savage updated the group on CALFIRE Telecommunications activity. At the last meeting, Savage stated that there will not be re-programming of the CALFIRE radios in 2008. However, due to an error that was discovered on one of the Group 4 channels (LA County Tac 17) as well as numerous changes initiated by local units and cooperators, it will now be necessary to reprogram this Spring. The target for having the channel load finalized is mid-February. Most or all of the National Parks Service channels will be eliminated from Group 3 in order to make room for additional channels that will more likely be used than the NPS channels.

In addition, Savage stated that approximately 40 of the 100 replacement CALFIRE repeaters have been installed by DGS in preparation for narrowbanding in 2010, as well as 40 fire station base stations. This year the Mariposa ECC is being re-worked with new radios/repeaters/ECC consoles and next year South Ops is on the schedule for new equipment.

National Interagency Fire Center/National Interagency Incident Communications Division – No report as John Moulder was absent. The issue about the California-based 7390 starter systems will be discussed as old business.

FCSG Sub-committee Reports

FCSG Technical Advisory Group (CTAG) – CTAG Team Leader Chris Hinshaw advised that there had been no inquiries referred to the group. The CTAG project of creating a Narrowband Migration Plan will be discussed under Old Business.

As this is Hinshaw's last meeting (see Good of the Order), Geoff Pemberton was appointed as the new CTAG Team Leaders by the Chair.

(CTAG team members are Geoff Pemberton, Pete Lawrence, Chet Ashbaugh and Paul Clay.)

FCSG Training Group (COMMTRAIN) – COMMTRAIN Team Leader Matt Nilsen was absent. Brent Finster had received an email from Nilsen answering an inquiry about the status of S258 and S358 classes within the last week. Although it was not a formal report to FCSG, Nilsen stated in the email that there was a S258 COMT class in LA County in May and an S358 COML in San Diego in March.

Fred Buhr mentioned that there was a USFS-sponsored S258 class scheduled in Redding. Contact for that class would be Tony Martinez.

There was no report regarding the status of the training curriculum compilation project from the last meeting.

The Chair appointed Don Stabler as the new COMMTRAIN Team Leader to be assisted by Matt Nilsen and other members of the COMMTRAIN group.

(COMMTRAIN team members are Don Stabler, Matt Nilsen, Pete Lawrence, Rick Smith and Geoff Pemberton.)

Adhoc Channel Advisory Group (CAG) – Chief Drake advised that he had sent the draft OES Transmittal to OES Deputy Chief Tom Drayer and had not received a response. Drake will followup with Drayer.

(CAG team members are Steve Hobbs and Pete Lawrence.)

Adhoc ICS Form 205 Revision Group (FCSG205) – FCSG205 Team Leader Brent Finster advised that they are continuing to monitor progress on formalization of the form by DHS. Kody Kerwin stated that he had still seen the old legacy ICS 205 used on several wildland fires in 2007 and will ensure that there is a reminder to use the new form at the National Logistics Workshop.

(FCSG205 team members are Brent Finster, Chet Ashbaugh, Hampton Stewart and Kody Kerwin.)

CALSIEC Fire Working Group

Interoperability Channel Nomenclature – Brent Finster updated the group on the current status of the common nomenclature issue. Finster advised about a shortened version of the national nomenclature that was recommended for agencies that do not have all eight characters available in the channel display. FCSG discussed how this is not optimal as it will cause confusion (e.g. CAL90 instead of 8CALL90) which is exactly what the agreed upon standardization was intended to cure.

CALSIEC/CALSCIP Update – Brent Finster passed around a copy of the final California Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (CALSCIP) that had been submitted in December to DHS for approval. A second volume which will essentially be a Field Operations Guide for Interoperability has yet to be created, that will address many of the critical details concerning the use and deployment of interoperability spectrum and other resources.

Old Business

Review of FCSG Plan of Work – The FCSG Plan of Work was updated and will be submitted to the Task Force.

FCSG Plan of Work Items:

Review FCSG content on FIRESCOPE website & FCSG work products – Brent Finster went page by page thru the FIRESCOPE website. The Charter was revised and will be submitted to the Task Force for approval. The FCSG Roster was discussed earlier in the meeting. The MACS 441-1 (FOG Appendix A) was revised and will be submitted to the Task Force for approval.

Continued development of CESRS as a Travel Net – Ben Green clarified that currently, local, state and federal agencies are authorized to use CESRS, in simplex

mode only, as a travel net. According to Ben Green, there may be some agencies that had a separate authorization from OES for CESRS that allows that agency to use the repeater mode. Until such time as the CESRS-TN memorandum of understanding is approved and signed, repeater use as a travel net is not authorized for agencies that do not have that prior agreement. The CESRS-TN MOU is still be reviewed and modified by OES. After much discussion, FCSG created a recommendation to OES to eliminate the administrative burden of having each agency sign a separate MOU for the use of CESRS as a travel net. The Secretary will create an email for the Chair to send to Chief Drake with this recommendation.

ICS Communications Unit Resource Typing & Database – Pete Lawrence reminded FCSG of the history of this issue going back to May 2006 when a recommendation was made to the Task Force to ICS type Communications Resources and to compile them into a database for use by COML's during incidents. The ICS typing issue was sent to Chief Zagaris who is vice-chair of the NIMS ICS Typing committee with a list of possible resources to be typed and an offer that FCSG could be a Subject Matter Expert to assist with their actual typing determination. Lawrence advised that he does not have a current status from Chief Zagaris. Chief Drake requested that the information be sent to him so that he could assist in moving this issue forward. The database issue is more likely to be a CALSIEC issue as it is bigger than just the fire service. It was suggested that OES could provide an interim catalog of resources available for deployment including the ordering process for each. Ben Green will provide preliminary information of OES Telecommunications to the Secretary for distribution.

Incident Communications Conference – Don Stabler advised that this one-day meeting was held at the San Ramon Marriott Hotel on December 13, 2007 in conjunction with the California Fire Chiefs Association (CalChiefs) and the Northern California Chapter of the Association of Public-safety Communications Officials, Inc. (NAPCO). Stabler advised that there were about 22 attendees. A couple of the highlights were OES Assistant Chief Bill Bondshu's overview of the 2007 fire season and Retired Deputy Chief Chris Suter from San Ramon Valley Fire District who did an overview of the NIMS COML effort. Feedback from the attendees was good and the great relationship with CalChiefs and NAPCO led to discussions about doing this annually. Stabler indicated that he was willing to work on a 2008 Incident Communications summit.

Create Narrowband Migration Plan – CTAG Team Leader Chris Hinshaw stated that the intent of the Plan was to provide justification and a heads up for agencies to consider now the budgeting of equipment replacement in order to meet the target date for California fire service narrowbanding of 2010. It was the understanding of some members that there was to be an OES Transmittal with the 2010 target date. This will be verified. The Plan was reviewed line by line and FCSG unanimously agreed that it should be moved forward to the California Fire Service thru an OES Transmittal as well as posting on the FIRESCOPE website. The Narrowband Migration Plan will be forwarded by the Secretary to Chief Drake for further consideration by the Task Force. It was suggested that grant guidance could be changed to allow for the replacement of non-narrowband capable radios to support the Narrowband Migration Plan.

Compile List of Mexican border issues – Tim McClelland asked that this be tabled until the next meeting.

Region V 7390's Issue – Fred Buhr explained that there had been a White Paper developed by Glen Savage that addressed the issue of the 7390 Starter Systems being transferred to NIFC to become 4390's. After discussion, it was determined that this was a FIRESCOPE issue and not just an internal Forest Service issue. Savage will work with Buhr to finalize the White Paper.

Recommendation – 800 MHz. radios for Fire Service – Chief Drake advised that the recommendation for Strike Team Leaders to have a conventional 800 MHz. radio was not approved in the decision making process above the FCSG.

Incident Dispatcher Program – Don Stabler advised that there still was no progress on the adoption of the Incident Dispatcher (INDI) curriculum by State Fire Training. Stabler advised that there were currently three Incident Dispatcher classes scheduled in 2008, two in Northern California and one in Southern California. He also stated that there were many deployments of INDI's in 2007 from local government agencies and all comments had been positive about the program.

S-358 Communications Unit Leader Re-Write – Brent Finster advised that the Beta class of the new S-358 course was being held at the Phoenix Fire Training Center this week.

NIMS All-Hazard Communications Unit Leader – Brent Finster advised that DHS still had yet to approve the training curriculum but that there will be a meeting to be held the third week of February in Seattle that he and Chris Suter will be attending. The Seattle meeting will discuss and hopefully resolve several of the issues that are preventing the adoption of the curriculum, including identification of the pre-requisites for trainers and students, who will be certifying/qualifying the students and whether there will be a formal task book process. A consortium of states including California (who has \$500,000 designated out of PSIC grant funds for COML training), Florida, Colorado, Arizona, and Iowa are waiting impatiently to see what happens with this subject before they determine how they can use the SEARCH-created curriculum to move forward without DHS approval.

VCALL Narrowband Interoperability Channel Limitation - George Lowry was absent so there was no status available on the dissemination of this safety information to fire and law enforcement agencies via the OES process. Ben Green will check with Lowry on the status.

Use of Unauthorized Tactical Nets – There was discussion about the use of FRS & GMRS radios, modified amateur radios, illegal "secret squirrel" frequencies, and authorized channels for the hotshot crews, and the associated legal and safety issues caused by their use. Tim McClelland had been tasked at the October 2007 meeting with drafting some standardized language to be used at incident briefings and to provide that to Chief Drake for consideration by the Task Force regarding direction on this entire issue. This is still in progress. Chief Stone recommended that a note be added to the ICS 205 that says something like "Only frequencies listed on this ICS 205 are to be used on this incident."

This idea and the entire issue will be discussed at the National Logistics Workshop in February and the IMT meetings in April.

National Logistics Workshop – This workshop will be held in Reno, Nevada March 18-20, 2008. There will be two entire days dedicated to a communications breakout session. Details can be found at <http://www.fs.fed.us/logistics/logistics/nlw/index.shtml> Due to the high interest level in discussing incident communications issues; two full days will be set aside for Incident Communications breakouts. All incident communications personnel (COMC's, COML's, COMT's, INCM's, INDI's and RADO's) are encouraged to attend. For additional information, contact Kody Kerwin at kkerw@cccfpd.org or Rick Smith at rsmith779@yahoo.com. A teleconference line is planned for those that cannot travel out of state.

New Business

Annual Elections – On the second day, Chair McClelland was unable to attend the beginning of the meeting. Vice-Chair Pete Lawrence took the opportunity to hold the annual elections. With overwhelming support of the members present (and a previous indication from McClelland of his willingness), the current officers were re-elected for yet one more term:

Chair – Tim McClelland
Vice-Chair – Pete Lawrence
Secretary – Brent Finster

Chris Hinshaw in a futile act of kindness towards McClelland recorded a “nay” vote.

Incident Communications Resource Ordering/Use of RADO's vs. INDI's – There had been several messages during the 2007 fire season on CAINCOMM regarding the issue of Radio Operator (RADO) vs. Incident Dispatcher (INDI) and resource ordering delays for communications unit personnel. OES Assistant Chief Pat O'Bannon had been made aware of some of the issues and had previously provided his insight to those involved in the discussion. The specific issue surrounding RADO vs. INDI had to do with the quality of RADO's and the expectations of their ability to handle fire incidents in California. Due to the increase in large fires, the increasing complexity of those fires, interoperability issues, as well as the overall sophistication of the fire service in California, it appears that RADO's, as currently trained, do not fit well into the system. Chief Drake stated that he could discuss this with Region V Fire & Aviation Director Jim Hollingsworth. It was suggested that COML's assigned to Type 1 and 2 Incident Management Teams should discuss this issue with their Incident Commanders and Safety Officers. It is a cost containment issue that federal fire Expanded Dispatch personnel pass over closer resource INDI's and would prefer to use out-of-state RADO's. There was a reminder to use the incident performance review system to get inadequate RADO's out of the system. If it is essential that an incident must have an INDI and not a RADO, the order should state that on the ROSS order. After much discussion, the consensus of the FCSG was that the general direction for the future was that the RADO position should be eliminated and that the position of Incident Dispatcher should be formalized in California with established training curriculum and qualifications.

Good of the Order

Ben Green proposed that there should be greater coordination in regards to an incident's data needs and that there is the possible need for a data network coordinator within the Communications Unit. He stated that 802.11 WiFi capability is being added to the OASIS trailers and he was having difficulty determining where the coordination of VoIP fits best...as a Computer Technical Specialist in the Plans Sections or in the Communications Unit. No resolution was offered at this time.

Don Stabler expressed his concerns about a lack of competency and consistency of CALFIRE Communications Unit Leaders he experienced on incidents last year. After lengthy discussion, it was decided that the best way in which to deal with this issue was thru the incident performance review process and ensuring that the home unit received a copy of that review.

Hampton Stewart shared his experiences as one of the two CAL FIRE frequency coordinators during the 2007 fire season ([see Exhibit A](#)).

Hampton Stewart stated that he and Glen Savage are working on having a single number (similar to the toll free CDO phone number) in which COML's on California incidents could contact a CALFIRE frequency coordinator directly regardless of who was on-call.

Kody Kerwin would like to discuss multiple group programming for incidents at the next FCSG meeting.

Chris Hinshaw stated that anyone interested in additional information on the nationwide broadband network may contact him.

Brent Finster stated that he was about to place another FCSG shirt order. Regular sizes are available for \$30 each and larger sizes (XXL or larger) for \$35 each.

Tim McClelland extended his appreciation to Chris Hinshaw for his active participation and leadership as a charter member of FCSG since it was re-vitalized in 2004. Hinshaw will be retiring his position as Executive Director of the San Diego Regional Communications System in March. Thanks Chris and don't be a stranger!

Adjournment/Next meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m. The next FCSG meeting will be hosted by Fresno Fire Department on April 29th 1300 to 1700 hours and April 30th 0830 to 1500 hours. The following meeting will be held October 15-16 in Oceanside.

Exhibit A

Provided by CALFIRE Frequency Coordinator Hampton Stewart

Communications- October Fires 2007

I became aware of the first fire Sunday October 21, 2007. The news was reporting the fire in Malibu and talking about all the movie stars that could be losing homes. Later in the day news breaks, during the football game, starting talking about a multitude other Southern California fires.

On Monday morning, I received a call from Glen Savage in Sacramento asking if I was doing any frequency coordination for the fires. I told him no and he advised to stay in touch as he was going to call South Ops and get me assigned. There were multiple fires and communication challenges.

Just before noon October 22, 2007, I received a call from So Ops stating that I was being assigned as a frequency coordinator.

I researched ROSS to find the fire locations, incident names and the names of the Comm. Unit Leaders assigned. I then placed calls to the Comm. Unit Leaders that I could reach and verified the frequencies they had assigned, what communications equipment they had requested and what command, tactical and air frequencies they needed.

I compared in ROSS with what was assigned and what they said they had to use. One of the first problems I encountered was a comm. unit leader that started using the R-5 Tacticals without requesting the use of them. This precluded issuing them on other fires where they would have been more useful. As Frequency Coordinator, I would have assigned something else.

Once several fires were under way, I tried to concentrate on each incident moving the incident off initial attack frequencies, as soon as possible, to free them up for initial dispatch on new incidents.

As new incidents were reported, I went through the process with each comm. unit leader. Outside of frequency requests, were calls that I received asking for help in locating requested communications equipment. Through the use of ROSS and various phone calls I was able to locate delivery times, status of shipping and

locations. Several of the incidents had received reports where equipment had been shipped, and I found it at another airport. One of the largest areas of confusion for Comm. Unit Leaders was getting through to Expanded Dispatch. They were overwhelmed with orders and really didn't have the time or personnel to look for communications equipment.

The requests for tactical frequencies were many. Through the use of NIFC, Glen Savage and research, we were able to obtain tactical frequencies. I then ran into a major problem. I had frequencies to assign, but the incidents couldn't use them because much of the local government and cooperators radio equipment was older wide band equipment. The frequencies I had available to assign were narrow band which would not work in their old equipment. In the meantime, South Ops was concerned about the unfilled orders for tactical frequencies. I spoke with the So Ops Duty Officer and explained the problem to him. We agreed to have them marked in ROSS as "UTF".

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I had good contact with all of the Communications Unit Leaders on the fires and we were in constant contact resolving various issues.

Will be making a recommendation that South Ops request a Frequency Coordinator as soon as the first Incident Management Team is ordered.

NIFC assigned a Communications Coordinator to South Ops for the Federal frequencies. I feel that he and I worked well together. We were in constant contact through email or phone. NIFC HQ was very helpful. Having built a relationship with the personnel at NIFC through the years helped expedite things.

At the end of every incident, communications issues are always reported as one of the major problems. Many of these issues could be eliminated by activating a frequency coordinator at the same time an IC Team is activated.

Safety is the bottom line and good communications combined with coordination will assure that any incident has what it needs in a timely manner.

Comments:

CAL FIRE has portable repeaters. If a UHF links were made a part of these repeaters, they would be more useful especially for linking on large incidents.

They would be accessible on a timely basis rather than waiting for NIFC equipment. They could also interface with existing NIFC equipment.

OES needs to continue stressing the need for local government fire departments to upgrade to narrow band equipment. This should be a priority and a serious safety issue.

South Ops needs upgrading of the available working spaces. 3 or 4 people trying to work multiple fires in an office designed for one person can be challenging.

Frequency information should be included in ROSS as a part of a resource order for radio equipment filled by NIFC.