



# FIRESCOPE COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST GROUP

OCTOBER 17-18, 2007  
VENTURA COUNTY  
MINUTES (Approved)

## Welcome and Introductions

Chair Tim McClelland convened the meeting. Hosts Mike Sidlinger and Mike Dickerson welcomed the group to Ventura County Fire (Chief Roper added his welcome at the start of the second day). Chief Dan Drake was present both days and Chief Dave Stone was present 10/17 representing the FIRESCOPE Task Force. Chief Tom Drayer (OES Fire & Rescue) was present most of 10/17.

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.

## **Members in Attendance:**

Chet Ashbaugh	Telecom. Manager	Riverside County Fire (audio bridge 1 hour on 10/18)
David Bail	Telecom. Mtce. Sup.	State of CA-DGS Telecommunications
Paul Clay	Sr. Telecom. Trainer	State of CA-DGS Telecommunications ( <i>alt.</i> )
Michael Dickerson	Comm. Supervisor	Ventura County Fire ( <i>alt.</i> )
Brent Finster	Telecom. Manager	Contra Costa County Fire Chiefs Association
Kevin Harper	Captain	Kern County Fire
Tim Henry	Battalion Chief	Fresno City Fire
Chris Hinshaw	Manager	San Diego Sheriff/Imperial Fire Chiefs
Steve Hobbs	Captain	Santa Barbara County Fire
Peter Lawrence	Battalion Chief	Oceanside Fire
Frank McCarthy	Captain	Los Angeles County Fire
Tim McClelland	Assistant Chief	State of CA-CAL FIRE San Bernardino
Matt Nilsen	Captain	San Diego Fire-Rescue
Geoff Pemberton	Captain	Riverside County Fire ( <i>alt.</i> -10/18 only)
Glen Savage	Telecom. Manager	State of CA-CAL FIRE Telecommunications
Mike Sidlinger	Battalion Chief	Ventura County Fire
Rick Smith	Captain	Santa Maria Fire ( <i>alt.</i> )
Don Stabler	Comm. Chair	CA Fire Chiefs Assoc. Comm – North
Hampton Stewart	Frequency Coordinator	State of CA-CAL FIRE ( <i>alt.</i> )

## **Guests in Attendance:**

David Andreas		
Chris Baker	Engineer	Roseville Fire
John Finnerty	Pilot	Los Angeles County Fire/FIRESCOPE Aviation S.G.
Stan Horst	Retired	Los Angeles City Fire
Terry McEluse		
Truman Van Dyke	Firefighter Paramedic	Los Angeles City Fire
Ian Wallace	Captain	Santa Clara County Fire
Stephen Weston	Firefighter/Paramedic	Los Angeles County Fire

## **FCSG Primary Members Absent:**

Fred Buhr	Frequency Manager	USFS Region 5 ( <i>no alternate designated</i> )
Lee Kraft	Battalion Chief	Clovis Fire ( <i>alternate absent</i> )

George Lowry	Assistant Chief	State of CA – OES Telecommunications ( <i>alt. absent</i> )
John Moulder	CDO Coordinator	National Interagency Fire Center – Boise ( <i>no alt. desig.</i> )
Denny Neville	Deputy Chief	Elfin Forest Volunteer Fire ( <i>no alternate designated</i> )
Kevin Nida	Battalion Chief	Los Angeles City Fire ( <i>no alternate designated</i> )
Rick Robinson	Battalion Chief	Orange County Fire ( <i>no alternate designated</i> )
Sal Santangelo	Sergeant Major	State of CA - Army National Guard ( <i>alternate present</i> )

**FIRESCOPE Communications Specialist Group (FCSG) Logistics**

**Approval of FCSG Minutes** – The minutes of the May 2007 meeting were approved with a minor correction submitted by Don Stabler.

Brent Finster suggested a formalized process for approval of past FCSG minutes with the intent of getting them approved and distributed to the fire service much sooner than waiting until the next FCSG meeting. After discussion, it was decided that the Secretary will have a target of 10 days from the end of the meeting to submit a draft to the Chair and Vice-Chair who will get their comments back to the Secretary as soon as possible. Draft #2 will then be distributed via the GroupHub to FCSG members who will have 14 days to respond back to the Secretary with any changes. If there are no significant changes, approval is assumed. If there are any significant revisions requested, the Secretary will then distribute Draft #3 for consideration with a maximum of 14 days before approval occurs. The target for distribution and posting of the final version of the minutes is 45 days from the end of the meeting.

**FCSG Roster/GroupHub** – Brent Finster advised that an updated roster will be emailed out to the group. Any changes should be emailed to [bfinster@cccfd.org](mailto:bfinster@cccfd.org). Reminder that the website address for the FCSG website is <http://FIRESCOPEComm.groupHub.com> and to contact Finster if you have any difficulties logging in or using the GroupHub.

**FCSG Membership** – Chief Drake advised that the FCSG membership should be reviewed and become reflective of the representation of the Board of Directors. At a later point in the meeting, a review occurred in which each membership category to be represented (City Departments North and South, County Departments North and South, FIRESCOPE original partner agencies, etc.) was crossed to members that were already in place. In almost every case, a direct line could be drawn between those already participating in FCSG and the positions that should be represented. However, two obvious membership categories were unfilled (City Fire Departments North and Fire Districts North). Chief Drake approved Chris Baker and Ian Wallace to fill these positions respectively. Truman Van Dyke indicated that he was now the alternate to Kevin Nida for Los Angeles Fire Department. Rick Robinson representing Orange County Fire Authority has been promoted to Division Chief and will likely be replaced by Chief Drake with Rich Toro. Lee Kraft will be dropped from FCSG membership. A new non-confidential roster will be posted to the [www.firescope.org](http://www.firescope.org) website.

**Agency Reports**

**FIRESCOPE Operations/Task Force/Board of Directors** – Chiefs Drake and Stone updated the group on the recent activities of FIRESCOPE including an initiative to standardize the way in which the various Specialist Groups work and interact with the Task Force. Several different issues were brought forward including the need to keep the website work products updated and a need to regularly review the plan of work and charter. All work products must be submitted to the Task Force Liaison (Chief Drake and/or Chief Stone) for approval prior to distribution or posting. Two versions of the roster will be maintained, one for the website and the other confidential one for internal use. Chief Drake mentioned that although all FIRESCOPE meetings are open to the public, there were some concerns expressed by the Board of Directors about the number of attendees from a single agency thereby causing a large expense to those agencies for FIRESCOPE activities. Chief Drake indicated that the Board of Directors was appreciative of the work done by FCSG especially as it relates to the recent common nomenclature effort.

Since the Task Force had been meeting simultaneously in the building, Chief Greg West, Task Force Chair, shared some specific details of Task Force activities including the use of strike team cell phones assigned to staging areas which had been encouraging some inappropriate free lancing on incidents, work on the National Response Framework, increased cooperation with the State Fire Training, ICS typing, and the update of FIRESCOPE documents.

**OES Fire & Rescue** – Chief Drayer provided an update of OES Fire & Rescue activities including that the state's Emergency Council now had fire representation by Chief Mike Warren of Corona Fire Department, a recent meeting between the states bordering Mexico and their counterparts from Mexican states (FCSG to provide a list of communications issues for a future meeting-add to FCSG Plan of Work), convening of a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Specialist Group and EMS Specialist Group, CFAA negotiations, and a proposed Mutual Aid Plan modification to allow for a total of five strike teams to be ordered from neighboring Operational Areas (without going to Region) or from neighboring Regions (without going to State OES Headquarters), and the "Mayday" issue.

**OES Telecommunications** – George Lowry was absent so there was no report. It was noted that George may be unable to participate in future FCSG meetings because he has been re-assigned to Communications Coordinator for OES Region II. Brent Finster will contact George to clarify his future participation and who would replace him.

**CAL FIRE Telecommunications** – Glen Savage updated the group on CAL FIRE Telecommunications activity. The portable radio upgrade project is now complete with all CAL FIRE portable radios now being Bendix-King GPH Commander models including the CAL FIRE cache radios. There are 5 GPH-CMD radios in each cache box with 40 cache boxes being located south and 40 cache boxes north. In addition, each MCC has 20 GPH-CMD radios. Savage is working on a migration plan to narrowband all CAL FIRE Radio Nets by fire season 2010. Savage also reported that all ECC's have upgraded to ROSS that includes an Alturas CAD interface. The ECC Simulator in Lone is being replaced with a Mod-U-Com console with integrated 9-1-1 to allow for more realistic training. Savage indicated that he has no plans for a statewide radio re-programming of CAL FIRE "Group 3" frequencies in 2008.

**National Interagency Fire Center/National Interagency Incident Communications Division** – No report as John Moulder was absent. It was noted that Mark Hilton, previously the training coordinator at NIICD, has been transferred to the Forest Service to do radio system design and his replacement is Susan Blegg.

The issue of Radio Starter Kit NFES 4390's vs. 7390's was discussed. There have been instances this fire season, in which 7390's have not been properly maintained and there has been difficulty coordinating NIFC Command frequency assignments with North Ops and South Ops because the 7390's are being ordered differently than is done elsewhere in the country. NIFC had previously agreed to modify the 7390's into 4390's and then maintain them although that has not been done. As the 7390's currently are owned by USFS Region 5, Brent Finster was tasked to send an email to Fred Buhr asking what the formal procedure is to transfer the 7390's to Boise and to maintain a pre-position of six 4390's in California.

Frank McCarthy advised that requests to the Communications Duty Officers (CDO) for AM frequencies must now go to the FAA for them to make a frequency assignment rather than just approval of a submitted frequency as had been done in the past. This has caused some delays although it seemed to be decreasing from as much as two days to just a few hours towards the end of the fire season. McCarthy also acknowledged that besides himself, three other California fire service incident communications personnel were able to spend some time as CDO's at NIFC this fire season (Rich Gonzales, Matt Nilsen, and Kevin Harper).

A reminder to Type 1 and Type 2 Incident Management Team COML's to take the NFES 4253 Link Kit off of their team pre-orders as the link is now included in the 4390 Starter System.

### **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.

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

**FCSG Training Group (COMMTRAIN)** – COMMTRAIN Team Leader Matt Nilsen advised that he needed suggestions for a website to hold the training materials compiled by COMMTRAIN. Chief Drayer indicated that the FIRESCOPE website could do that once the training materials were approved for posting. Nilsen stated that the “radio etiquette and communications watchouts” curriculum is complete. The following FCSG members will be responsible for providing Nilsen with additional training curriculum: 1) CESRS – Glen Savage, 2) Current Radios – Alternate Members Rick Smith and Paul Clay, 3) Narrowbanding – Chris Hinshaw and Alternate Member Clay, 4) FOG Appendix A – Pete Lawrence and Steve Hobbs. Nilsen will compile and coordinate any training information sent to him but does not have the time to actually create any training curriculum himself.

(COMMTRAIN team members are Matt Nilsen, Pete Lawrence, Don Stabler (see New Business) and Alternate Members Rick Smith and Geoff Pemberton.)

**Channel Advisory Group (CAG)** – Previously a recommendation for an OES Transmittal requesting Operational Areas provide information to the FCSG on “Priority 4” channels that could be used for mutual aid initial attack had been sent to Chief Drayer for consideration by Chief Zagaris. The status of that recommendation was unknown. Chief Drake stated that he would take the recommendation provided and move it thru the process.

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

**ICS Form 205 Revision Group (FCSG205)** – FCSG205 Team Leader Brent Finster advised the status has he knew it regarding the formalization of the new ICS 205 and 217A forms. In regards to California, the forms were approved and Chief Stone advised that he had included them in a larger package of ICS forms that were being revised. In regards to NWCG, no actions are currently occurring unless the FIRESCOPE approval Chief Stone was referring to could be a catalyst for approval by NWCG. It is believed that incorporation into I-Suite would occur when the ICS 205 form is approved or adopted by NWCG.

In regards to NIMS approval, both the new forms were included in the new NIMS All-Hazard COML training curriculum. It is believed that as soon as that curriculum is approved by DHS, the new forms will be approved also.

FCSG205 will continue to monitor any future progress on formalization and will encourage that all COML's, COMT's and agencies use the standardized forms instead of creating their own.

(FCSG205 team members are Brent Finster, Chet Ashbaugh, and Alternate Members 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. The National Public Safety Telecommunications Council's Channel Naming Report that included about 95% of what was proposed by the collaborative effort of FCSG and CalChiefs was accepted by the NPSTC Executive Committee at its June 2007 meeting in Denver. The document is posted on the [www.npstc.org](http://www.npstc.org) website and has been subsequently adopted by CALSIEC. There are currently additional discussions taking place regarding a need for a statewide or regional

nomenclature using the same standard as the nationwide convention. The 800 MHz. FIREMARS and CLEMARS channels have been renamed by CALSIEC to be CAFIRE1/CAFIRE1D, CAFIRE2/CAFIRE2D and CALAW1/CALAW1D, CALAW2/CALAW2D upon rebanding. It was the consensus of FCSG that there is not a need for standardized regional naming of statewide channels to follow the nationwide NPSTC Channel Naming Report. Channel names (e.g. CALCORD, etc.) can continue to work well for California statewide interoperability channels as they are not nationwide channels.

**CALSIEC/CALSCIP Update** – Brent Finster updated the group on recent activities of CALSIEC. Most CALSIEC efforts this year are directed to the California Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan that is due to DHS by December in order that the state can accept the approximately \$100M for interoperable communications from the Department of Commerce's Public Safety Interoperability Communications (PSIC) Grant. The PSIC Grant's Investment Justifications will be prioritized and coordinated thru the CALSIEC regional planning areas.

### **Old Business**

**Recommendation-800 MHz. radios for Fire Service** – This recommendation was meeting some resistance due to the cost of procuring this additional equipment. It was pointed out the cost could be as low as \$500 and would only be for Strike Team Leaders potentially working in areas with 800 MHz. Infrastructure. Chief Drayer requested an Issue Paper justifying the need so that it could be considered further. Pete Lawrence will draft the Issue Paper prior to November 1, 2007.

**Travel Net** – Glen Savage reported that the memorandum of understanding between OES and CAL FIRE regarding the use of CESRS as a travel net had been executed. OES Fire & Rescue Chief Zagaris required that use of CESRS should be contingent upon an authorization agreement. George Lowry had distributed via the FCSG GroupHub a draft of the CESRS Travel Net authorization agreement. FCSG discussed the draft and several questions and corrections were needed that Glen Savage will compile and email to Lowry with a copy to Chief Drake. To reiterate, at this point, CESRS may only be used in direct mode for a travel net. Authorization to use repeaters will not occur until a future date as decided by OES and CAL FIRE.

**Communications Resource Database/ICS Communications Unit Resource Typing** – Pete Lawrence advised that he had submitted communications resource capabilities (e.g. gateways, towers, mobile communications centers, etc.) for the NIMS Integration Center to consider in May 2006. Lawrence had contacted OES Fire & Rescue Chief Zagaris who sits on the NIMS nationwide ICS typing committee for a status on the communications resources without success. Lawrence will re-submit the recommendation to Chief Drake with a copy to Brent Finster.

**Incident Dispatcher Program** – Don Stabler advised that he was optimistic in future contacts with State Fire Training in regards to the adoption of the Incident Dispatcher curriculum due to a recent personnel addition. CalChiefs will be taking the INDI curriculum as well as some other fire dispatcher curriculum to State Fire Training for consideration. Stabler advised that there were four INDI classes scheduled for the Spring of 2008 (Long Beach, Napa, Sacramento, and Contra Costa County).

**Communications Response Teams** – Don Stabler advised that CalChiefs is continuing to work on and support the creation of Communications Response Teams at the Operational Area level.

**S-358 Communications Unit Leader Re-Write** – Brent Finster advised that he had no recent information on this effort due to a change in NWCG committee leadership. In May 2007, NWCG was soliciting for an agency to sponsor a Beta class of the new S-358 class but Finster had not heard anything since then.

**NIMS All-Hazard Communications Unit Leader** – Brent Finster advised that stakeholders had been waiting for the curriculum to be approved by DHS since it was submitted to them the first of August. Within the last two weeks, representatives from California and Florida (and even more recently Arizona) have participated in several conference calls and reached out to IAFC and APCO regarding suggestions as to how to proceed with the roll out of this training. California and Florida are intending to move forward with plans to train based on the SEARCH-created NIMS All-Hazard COML curriculum. The California

Office of Homeland Security is intending to fund NIMS COML training in California out of the state's PSIC Grant funds.

**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.

**Incident Communications Conference** – Rick Robinson was promoted and no longer available to work on this project. Don Stabler and Chris Baker had met via email and conference call with other project members to finalize details for the conference to be held Thursday, December 13, 2007 at the Marriott Hotel in San Ramon. The cost will be \$35 for APCO members and \$50 for non-APCO members that will include lunch. The agenda will include an overview of incident communications during the 2007 Fire Season (presenter to be determined), ROSS overview (Bruce Shomaker), Resource Ordering System (Stabler), Nomenclature and Technology (Brent Finster), NIMS COML overview (Chris Suter). CALCHIEFS will be providing morning refreshments. Attendees will be encouraged to stay overnight for the APCO Northern California Chapter annual vendor show and luncheon on Friday (see [www.napco.org](http://www.napco.org) for details). Stabler will handle marketing from the FCSG standpoint and was approved use of the FIRESCOPE logo by Chief Drake. All FCSG members are encouraged to attend, however space is limited to 48 participants.

**FIRESCOPE Communications Specialist Group Workplan** – Members created a Plan of Work for the next year. FCSG officers will refine it before submission to the Task Force.

**Frequency User Authorization Agreements** – Brent Finster shared a model Radio Channel/Talkgroup Authorization Agreement and process that incorporates the new ICS 217A form. He solicited comments as he intends to put this into place for his Operational Area and as it is refined, to continue to share it as a possible best practices model for other agencies or to use such as FIRESCOPE, CAL FIRE, or CALSIEC. There was discussion as to how this relates to the Priority 4 channels and the requirement on the part of some radio technicians to see an actual authorization form prior to programming a transmit frequency into a radio. All comments were positive that this model appeared to achieve that need.

**Need for Additional OES Mutual Aid Channels** – Hampton Stewart and Glen Savage met and determined that this need will be partially resolved with the 2010 narrowbanding in that there will be three more "White channels" created.

## **New Business**

**Pre-designation by NIFC of special repeater pairs** – Pete Lawrence requested information on how the NIFC "specials" were determined and why the frequency lists could not be published. It was explained that NIFC C-1 to C-7 were the only pre-determined frequency pairs and that the "specials" were determined on the fly by temporarily borrowing frequencies from other federal agencies for either a specific incident or a short time period. There was no way to determine ahead of time what the exact frequencies for these special repeater pairs will be.

**Butler Fire** – Tim McClelland shared several issues involving communications on the recent Butler Fire in San Bernardino County.

**Use of Unauthorized Tactical Nets** – As part of the discussion with the Butler Fire communications issues, as well as some actions observed on other incidents, Tim McClelland and Pete Lawrence led a discussion about the culture of using home agency channels on incidents. Frequencies are only authorized to be used in a specific geographic area and are re-used across the state and country. As soon as a user leaves their home area, they will likely cause harmful interference to other radio users. This can lead to a serious safety issue. There appears to be either a misunderstanding of the technology or a clear defiance on the part of some users to adhere to FCC and FIRESCOPE requirements. McClelland mentioned the need for a change of mindset in regards to this thru an outreach program.

Suggestions included emphasizing the issue at the annual Incident Management Team meetings, an OES Transmittal or Bulletin, adding this to the Safety Specialist Group Plan of Work, and a discussion about enforcement options with the Incident Commanders. McClelland was tasked with drafting some standardized language to be used at incident briefings and will provide that to Chief Drake for consideration by the Task Force regarding direction on this entire issue.

**National Logistics Workshop** – This workshop will be held in Reno, Nevada March 18-20, 2008. 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, and RADO's) are encouraged to attend. For additional information or to submit agenda items, contact Rick Smith at [rsmith779@yahoo.com](mailto:rsmith779@yahoo.com).

**Narrowband Migration** – Chet Ashbaugh expressed his frustration regarding the lack of coordination when the Cleveland National Forest changed Dispatch Net frequencies earlier this year. Notice was received by cooperators two days after the change took place which continues to negatively impact Initial Attack communications. Although a plan to use a CDF Command repeater was put in place immediately, there is no timeframe established to force all users to re-program their radios to the new CNF frequencies. Glen Savage will work directly with Ashbaugh to confirm a date by which the temporary automatic assignment of the CDF Command repeater will cease.

This issue led to a larger discussion among those present regarding what agencies intend to do when they migrate to narrowband which is required by all local and state government agencies by 2013. CALFIRE and OES had previously committed to a 2010 transition although there are a significant number of details that must be worked out during the actual transition period. After much discussion, the CTAG team in concert with Glen Savage, was tasked with developing a graceful migration process as a best practice that agencies could use. Due to the possibility that a migration process might take as long as 18-24 months and that the target date for narrowbanding the California fire service frequencies (CAL FIRE and OES) by the 2010 fire season, the process must be identified by February 2008. A CTAG meeting to work on this issue was set for October 24, 2007 in Riverside and a FCSG conference call will be held on November 16<sup>th</sup> to review the Narrowband Migration Plan product developed by CTAG.

**Coordination of ICS Communications Training Courses** – Matt Nilsen advised that NIFC is unable to support the demand for multiple S-258 and S-358 training courses that California desires. NIFC personnel had suggested that these courses be coordinated on a rotational basis between northern and southern California. FCSG members advised that the need for NIFC cadre personnel being involved with this training was critical for consistency and credibility. Don Stabler agreed to join the COMMTRAIN group and help Nilsen work on this coordination.

### **Good of the Order**

Pete Lawrence advised that he was part of the review committee for the National Response Framework and would be willing to send drafts to FCSG for review. Any comments would need to go back thru Lawrence and not directly to DHS.

### **Next meeting**

The next FCSG meeting will be hosted by Roseville Fire Department near Sacramento on Wednesday, January 16, 2008 1300 to 1700 hours and Thursday, January 17, 2008 0900 to 1500 hours. The following meeting will be held April 29 and 30, 2008 in Fresno.