

FLORIDA REGIONAL DOMESTIC SECURITY TASK FORCE STATE WORKING GROUP

June 8, 2007

Ms. Marilyn Ward, Executive Director
National Public Safety Telecommunications Council
8191 Southpark Lane, Unit 205
Littleton, Colorado 80120

Dear Ms. Ward,

As the Interoperable Communications representatives of the Regional Domestic Security Task Force (RDSTF) State Working Group, we hereby offer our support from the State of Florida for the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council Interoperability Committee's proposal for a standard naming convention for mutual aid interoperability channels.

The State of Florida created a statewide Domestic Security Task Force (RDSTF) which divides the state into seven geographical regions. Each of the seven regions established subcommittees that represent the various components of public safety response, one of which is Interoperable Communications. The State Working Group is the oversight component of the regional subcommittees, which also includes an Interoperable Communications subcommittee.

The Florida RDSTF is responsible for various functions including coordination of the annual Homeland Security Grant funding process, acquisition and deployment of public safety equipment and resources, supporting local response using specialized personnel, teams and equipment, the development of plans, and providing training.

While the original mission of the RDSTF revolved around terrorism, it has migrated into an all-hazards, multi-discipline entity which is actively involved with the preparation, response, mitigation and recovery processes for incidents and events within the state of Florida and beyond. As the Interoperable Communications Chairs of the State Working Group, we have had years of experience working with agencies from throughout Florida and many other areas of the United States. In today's world of limited funding and resources, our model in Florida is built upon a tiered response starting at the local level, and escalating to regional, state, and federal levels.

The creation of a national standard for nomenclature of public safety mutual aid and interoperability channels is a tremendous accomplishment that goes a long ways toward enhancing interoperability throughout the United States. A common nationwide standard for the labeling of these channels in radio equipment as well as the names used to refer to interoperability channels is long overdue, and the NPSTC Interoperability Committee Channel Naming Task Group is to be commended for their comprehensive proposal. There are countless examples where the programming of radio equipment within and across jurisdictions at all levels of government is not consistent, and hinders the ability for agencies to communicate with each other when the need arises.

In Florida, the RDSTF Interoperable Communications Committee has facilitated a wide array of projects, all of which serve the primary goal to enhance interoperable communications. These include the development of Tactical Interoperable Communications Plans, construction of a statewide interoperability network, placement of mutual aid stations on all bands throughout the state, deployment of various transportable communications systems, placement of radio equipment in Mobile Communications/Command vehicles throughout the state, and acquisition of portable radios caches. In one form or another, all of the listed equipment contains reference to or programming of the common public safety mutual aid and interoperability channels.

Florida has experienced a tremendous number of large scale incidents and events that have resulted in the utilization of the listed communications resources as well as the deployment of personnel. There have been numerous occasions where inconsistent programming and lack of a common naming standard for reference to interoperability channels has either delayed or prevented interoperable communications from occurring because agencies did not realize they had common channels. This issue has been observed throughout Florida at the local, regional, and statewide levels, and has also been a factor when interacting with or providing support to agencies outside of Florida.

The need for a nationwide common standard for naming mutual aid and interoperability channels is absolutely critical. We recognize that it is impossible to establish a standard that everyone in the United States will completely agree with, however, the adoption of the NPSTC proposal is a giant step in the right direction for the public safety community. Timing is particularly desirable for the 800 MHz portion of the proposal as we face the rebanding/retuning process in the immediate future where all radios require reprogramming. This is an excellent opportunity for widespread implementation of the new naming convention in an environment which may otherwise have taken a much lengthier and fragmented approach.

Again, we applaud and support the efforts of the NPSTC Interoperability Committee Channel Naming Task Group, and urge the immediate adoption and implementation of this proposal. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

Randy Kerr, Co-Chair
Interoperable Communications Sub-Committee
Florida Regional Domestic Security Task Force
State Working Group

Victor Cullars, Co-Chair
Interoperable Communications Sub-Committee
Florida Regional Domestic Security Task Force
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