

ALMR INSIDER

Volume 2, Issue 4

October 15, 2008

Final Membership Agreement

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The Alaska Land Mobile Radio System (ALMR) Communications System Executive Council (EC) approved the final Membership Agreement at their August 21, 2008 meeting. All agencies operating on ALMR are required to have a signed Membership Agreement on file with the Operations Management Office (OMO).

The final agreement will replace the "Beta" agreements previously signed by member agencies and are valid July 1 thru June 30 of each year (State of Alaska fiscal year). The OMO will contact all member agencies prior to the end of each fiscal year to renew the agreement for another year. However, agencies are under no obligation to remain on the System, and may choose not to renew.

The Cost Share strategy, which will become effective on July 1, 2009 (State of Alaska Fiscal Year 2010) was determined by the cooperative partners (DOD, Federal Non-DOD, SOA, and locals). It will be

reviewed on an annual basis prior to June 30. For FY09, there is \$0 cost per subscriber unit for operating on System. The State of Alaska and the Department of Defense are sharing System costs for the remainder of FY09.

Future cost share will be determined by the total number of subscriber units on the System at the time of the review. The actual cost per subscriber is determined by dividing the total number of subscribers on the System into the combined total cost for Operations Management, System Management and SATS circuit costs. At this time, FY10 costs are estimated to be \$18 per subscriber unit per month. The cost of maintenance for the fixed infrastructure is not passed to all member agencies, just those who are infrastructure owners.

The OMO is contacting all agencies operating on, or requesting to operate on, the System and providing them with the final agreement. Please contact the ALMR Help Desk or the OMO if you have questions.

Multi-Band Radios

For years, first responders have dealt with arriving at an incident and finding several agencies/departments on scene and being unable to communicate because they are on different frequency bands. For instance, Anchorage Police are on UHF, Anchorage Fire on 800 MHz, FBI on VHF, and DEA on UHF. While some agencies swapped or shared radio resources, others used gateways or message runners to overcome communications issues.

There are radios now coming to the market that communicate across all of these bands, plus 700 MHz, and in analog, digital, conventional, and Project 25 trunked modes.

The U. S. Department of Homeland Security awarded a contract to Thales Communications™ in March 2008 to produce a multiband radio for public safety use. Since that time, Motorola™ and Harris Corporation™ have

introduced portable multi-band radios, which are scheduled for production in 2009. First cost estimates are somewhere between \$4,000-\$5,000 per unit, which keeps the price in line with radios currently purchased for ALMR use.

Thales Communications is scheduled to test their radio on ALMR in November this year. As additional vendor units come on-line, they can also be tested. Radios approved for use on ALMR are posted on the ALMR web site at www.ak-prepared.com/almr/almr_radios.

In addition to ALMR and the Alaska Interoperability Network (gateway system), the multi-band radio is an excellent choice for radio caches statewide. They can support communications from all federal, state, local, and tribal agencies along with utilities/private entities that might be utilized during a major incident.

User Council Representatives

The User Council is established by the ALMR Cooperative Agreement and is responsible for making all operating and maintenance decisions affecting the ALMR Communications System, including those governing its day-to-day operations. It is comprised of three primary members from each of the Systems four foundational entities: DOD, Federal Non-DOD, State of Alaska, and municipalities. All agencies operating on ALMR are represented by one these entities. The User Council meets once monthly. Meeting agendas and minutes are posted to the ALMR website at www.ak-prepared.com/almr. Anyone operating on ALMR may call in and listen to the meetings; however, only User Council members and ALMR staff personnel may speak during the meetings. If an agency has a specific issue they wish to be addressed, they should contact their representative to bring it to the council. For member contact information, please email: sherryshafer@5starteam.net.

Primary Representatives

- Mr. Ocie Adams, SOA (DOT)
- Chief Mark Beals, Central Municipalities
- Mr. Bryan Fisher, SOA (DMVA & All others)
- Mr. Bev Fronterhouse, Federal Non-DOD (DOI)
- Major Matt Leveque, SOA DPS (AST) ***Chair**
- Deputy Chief Brad Johnson, Northern Municipalities ***Vice Chair**
- Mr. William Mitchell, DOD (Eielson AFB & Clear AFS)
- Mr. Peter Murphy, Federal Non-DOD (FBI)
- Ms. Natalie Newman, DOD (US Army Alaska)
- Chief Sheldon Schmidt, Southeast Municipalities
- TSgt James Shearer, DOD (Elmendorf AFB)
- VACANT, Federal Non-DOD (TSA)

Alternate Representatives

- TSgt Scott Blaine, DOD (Elmendorf)
- Ms. Susan Borrego, Federal Non-DOD (FBI)
- Mr. Jim Caldwell, Federal Non-DOD (TSA)
- SSgt Kyle Fenimore, DOD (Eielson AFB & Clear AFS)
- Mr. David Gibbs, Northern Municipalities
- Mr. Glenn Hansen, SOA (DMVA & All others)
- Captain Dave Lawson, Central Municipalities
- Chief Ray Leggett, Southeast Municipalities
- Mr. Mike Lewis, Federal Non-DOD (DOI)
- Chief George Keeney, Central Municipalities
- Mr. Greg Patz, SOA (DOT)
- Mr. Ron Royal, DOD (Eielson AFB & Clear AFS)
- SSgt Juliana Smith, DOD (Elmendorf AFB)
- Lt Barry Wilson, SOA (AST)
- VACANT, DOD (US Army Alaska)

Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

The Operations Management Office received only 20 responses to the Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey from two separate distributions to the agencies operating on the System.

Overall, the ALMR System was rated "Above Average," the Operations Management Office was rated "Above Average," and overall satisfaction with the Help Desk service was rated "Very Satisfied" by respondents.

New rating areas were added this year for the User Council, the *Insider* newsletter, training, and the ALMR website.

The annual survey is a valuable means for the Operations Management Office to identify areas of concern to the System users. It is extremely important for a substantial number of users to respond and express their opinions and provide comment on System performance.

Agency POCs were encouraged to disseminate to all personnel in their agency operating mobiles and portables. For complete statistical data email: sherryshafer@5starteam.net

FACTOIDS:
Agencies on ALMR: 76
Average daily voice calls
Zone 1: 15,923
Zone 2: 12,653
For September 2008

2008 ALMR Annual User Council Conference

The second Annual User Council Conference was held September 16—17 at the Anchorage Sheraton. Training sessions were offered on radio usage and Moto-bridge™ operations. Briefings were provided on:

- Office of Emergency Communications, Mr. Don Speights
- SIEC/Cross Border Interoperability/2010 Special Olympics, Mr. Robert Schwent-Washington State Highway Patrol
- MOA AWARD Update, Mr. Trygve Erickson-MOA Project Manager
- Florida Interoperability Network (FIN), Major Larry

Beaton, Putnam County Sheriff's Office

- Rescue 21, LCDR Craig Dykes-Rescue 21 Alaska and Senior Chief Jimmy Belcher-USCG Sector Anchorage
- VoIP, Mr. Dennis Hollenbeck-Joint Information Technology Center Alaska
- Motorola Technology Update, Mr. Micah Applewhite
- Grants, Mr. Jim King-Grant Administrator DHS&EM
- APCO 2012, Ms. Pam Provost-Executive Council Member APCO-AK Chapter and Ms. Susan Lamasko President APCO-AK

For a copy of the CD containing all the presentations, please email: sherryshafer@5starteam.net



State of Alaska: Site Build Out Update



The build out of the remaining ALMR sites, which the State of Alaska (SOA) committed to, is nearing completion.

The Skagway site was completed and turned on for full ALMR use in September.

The door interference issues have been resolved and Fire Station 12 should be completed in November.

The Honolulu site has been under

construction all summer, amidst a range of site-related issues that included having to rebuild access to the construction site. As of this writing, Honolulu should be operational before the end of the calendar year.

The final two sites in the South East, Haines and High Mountain in Ketchikan, are finally on the other side of the issues associated with site selection. Engineering and permitting is under way, and both sites are scheduled to be

operational by June 2009.

The SOA Telecommunications Systems team has been working in overdrive. I congratulate them for their efforts, which were seemingly heroic at times.

Submitted by:
SOA ETS ALMR Project Manager
Jim Kohler



Anchorage Wide Area Radio Network (AWARN): 700 MHz Update



The final milestone in Phase I of the AWARN project occurred September 30, when Motorola® demonstrated interoperability between ALMR and AWARN.

Phase I consisted of 6 simulcast radio sites, of ten repeaters each (expanding to 15 as of this writing). These sites are located in/around the Anchorage bowl and have been on the air and in testing since late June. Also, included in the initial purchase was a zone controller identical to the existing ALMR North and South Zone Controllers. This controller is located in the new AWARN communications building co-located with Anchorage Fire Station 12.

The installation of the AWARN Zone

Controller required close coordination between the ALMR Operations Management Office, Municipality of Anchorage Communications Shop and Motorola® to insure uninterrupted operation of the ALMR System.

The acceptance test demonstrated seamless operation between VHF ALMR radios at several sites in both North and South Zones, and 700 MHz AWARN radios at several of the Anchorage simulcast sites. The only requirement for portable radio users was selection of a Regional Incident Command channel on all radios for communication to take place. It was demonstrated that the call set-up time, and all other user identifiable characteristics,

were the same in AWARN or ALMR-only conversations.

Several Anchorage area agencies and departments will transition to AWARN in November. Permitting and contracting are taking place for Phase II at this time. All Anchorage Municipal agencies are expected to be using AWARN in 2009 upon the completion of Phase II, which includes site equipment at six more locations north and south of existing simulcast sites.

Submitted by:
MOA Project Manager
Mr. Trygve Erickson

Alaska Agencies Successfully Exercise Using ALMR

Agents from the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) and the Alaska Railroad Corporation recently conducted an enhanced security readiness exercise utilizing the ALMR System to achieve the coordination and interoperability they would need in a “real world” security-related incident. Command and Control of the exercise participants deployed in Seward, Anchorage, Denali Park, and Fairbanks was coordinated from TSA offices near Ted Stevens An-

chorage International Airport. The communications plan for the exercise involved the use of separate talk groups for each of the locations, with overall coordination provided by exercise controllers in Anchorage. According to TSA officials, the exercise went extremely well, proving the value of ALMR in providing the interoperability capability between agencies engaged in a common effort, but spread out over a wide geographical area.

Motobridge™ Installation Will Broaden ALMR Capabilities

A few weeks ago, an incident occurred on a remote area of the Parks Highway involving the crash of a tanker loaded with Methane. Although a single vehicle was involved, the response required 11 agencies, which included Fairbanks, AST Dispatch, Palmer Police Dispatch, Talkeetna Fire, Trapper Creek Ambulance, Talkeetna Ambulance, Central Mat-Su Hazmat Team, AST, 103rd Civil Support Team, DEC Hazmat Team, and Ron Webb Towing.

A post incident review revealed Alaska hasn’t completely resolved radio communications conflicts that can occur when responders are using differing radios/frequencies. Conventional radio-equipped responders couldn’t communicate directly with ALMR radio-equipped responders on scene. Also, existing communications capabilities (ALMR IOP Zones) were not used.

Would use of a gateway to “bridge” ALMR talk groups

to frequencies utilized by conventional radios have improved on-scene response? Because of the capabilities provided by a gateway; the answer would be yes. With appropriate planning, procedures and processes in place and coordination between dispatch centers, conventional frequencies and ALMR talk groups could have been “bridged” to allow direct on-scene communication between all emergency responders.

Although not available for this incident, it will be extremely important over the coming weeks and months as gateway equipment installations are complete, dispatchers are trained, and that discussions, coordination, planning, and exercises occur between agencies. Prior planning ensures that when necessary, “real world” responses that require use of gateway technology allow responding agencies to take full advantage of this interoperable communication capability.

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