

# ALMR INSIDER

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## Exercise ARCTIC FREEZE

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The Alcantra National Guard Armory, located near Wasilla, provided the central backdrop for one of Alaska's most challenging communications exercises in recent history. The site was configured to emulate a large-scale emergency incident response with wide-ranging communication requirements for local and state first responders, interagency partners and Active Duty and National Guard Department of Defense and State of Alaska units.

Whether bringing together interagency partners for a video teleconference (VTC) linked over four separate satellite communications systems, or extending coalition networks via tactical line-of-site radios for the Alaskan NORAD Region (ANR), these expert communicators were up to each and every challenge. Both the US Northern Command Standing Joint Forces Headquarters (NC-SJFHQ) and the Defense Coordinating Officer (DCO) Region X team were on-hand to share their experiences and provide subject matter expertise.

Specializing in the operation of the DCO Emergency Response Vehicle (ERV) and man-portable, commercial-based satellite systems like the SWE-DISH, these individuals trained and bolstered the confi-

dence of our Alaska-based operators and maintainers.

The Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) Communications System Transportable Area South (TAS) system team from Anchorage demonstrated their new Motorola® gateway device and enabled communications between handheld ALMR users on the ground to Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 helicopter pilots, and separately, to members of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) flying in the local area.

The Alaska National Guard (AKARNG) new Joint Incident Site Communications Capability (JISCC) package was the central focal point at Alcantra. Currently undergoing fielding in all fifty states and four territories, the JISCC possesses a unique and highly-capable, satellite-based communications package providing first responders with radio software interfaces, wireless Internet access and VTC among numerous other IP-based capabilities.

Two days of the exercise included time set aside for demonstrations to local DOD leaders and civilian emergency management coordinators.

Photo and article excerpts reprinted with permission of LTC Charles R. Parker, Alaskan Command J61



## Plainly Speaking

The interoperable capability afforded by the ALMR shared system for voice communication between the many disciplines represented by the membership (e.g. police, fire, EMS, public works, etc.) highlights the need to use terms that are understood by all.

In the coming months, the ALMR Operations Management Office (OMO) will be coordinating a series of meetings to explore the possible transition of first responder agencies to “common” or “plain” language for day-to-day radio communications. It is our understanding, for the most part, that fire and EMS, as well as various other non-emergency agencies, no longer use coded radio language unique to their agency or discipline. Law enforcement, on the other hand, continues to use unique 10-codes for day-to-day operations.

Clearly, the use of codes among agency staff is not prob-

lematic. However, the opportunity for misunderstanding among multiple agencies responding to a single incident clearly increases when some responders use unfamiliar codes.

We recognize transitioning away from codes to common language may not be a course that some agencies wish to pursue. However, in the interests of improving communications interoperability and coordination among Alaska’s first responders, we would like to initiate the discussion of the topic among a wide range of first responders.

Please contact Sherry Shafer, 907-269-8408 or [sherryshafer@5starteam.net](mailto:sherryshafer@5starteam.net), if you would like to participate in the discussion. Ms. Shafer can also provide you with documents that discuss the pros and cons of the issue, if you desire.

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## MotoBridge® Update

The MotoBridge® Project is proceeding on several fronts. Eighteen of the 30 planned sites were “cold installed” in October 2008 without power or connectivity back to the main server. Installation of the remaining sites will begin late in the first quarter 2009, as weather to install exterior antennas permits. The State of Alaska is providing and upgrading the circuits for the MotoBridge® System. To date, connections at four of the planned sites have been upgraded. The goal is to complete this process for all sites by the end of the first quarter so only one stop is needed to complete the installation and connect the equipment. The Project Office will also be working to finalize any Memorandums of Understanding and to verify frequencies and establish frequency sharing agreements during the first quarter of 2009.

The other portion of the project involves processes, procedures

and training. Based on the Florida site visit and the Gateway Summit last fall, a set of procedures is being drafted and will be sent to each affected location for review. A set of “drawer plans,” which will document the bridges that will likely be established during a specific event, is also being planned. Requests for information to develop these drawer plans will begin in January 2009. These procedures, processes, and drawer plans will then be integrated into the technical and operational training scheduled for the second quarter of 2009.

Status reports, schedules, and documents will be posted on the ALMR website ([www.ak-prepared.com/almr/motobridge.htm](http://www.ak-prepared.com/almr/motobridge.htm)). For more information/questions on the MotoBridge® Project, contact Joe Quickel at 907-269-8618.

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## ALMR System In Action

While testing the coverage of the ALMR radio network between Seward and Anchorage for the Ride for Life, my wife and I happened upon a head-on accident on the Seward Highway. Suddenly, I had three patients who were all critically injured. The needs being as great as they were, I was extremely busy assisting the injured. Luckily, I had an ALMR radio on my belt and a speaker microphone attached to my lapel! I was able to forward the information through the Alaska Professional Volunteers’ dispatch, while continuing to assist the injured. The System worked flawlessly!

A week or two later, while providing communications for the Ride for Life, I came across a Suburban towing a trailer that had blocked the two southbound lanes and half the northbound lane of the Seward Highway. After checking the scene for injuries, I contacted Soldotna

Trooper Dispatch. They told me there was a trooper en route, but he was over 50 minutes away. Since we are on the same talkgroup, I talked directly to the trooper and told him there were no injuries. I also had DOT vests and ‘Stop/Slow’ signs and told him we were providing safe traffic control. We provided traffic control for 45 minutes until the trooper arrived, and as they were understaffed, continued to provide traffic control and assistance for an hour and a half after he arrived on site.

The abilities of the ALMR System allowed me to be very effectively provide communications for the Ride for Life, even while I was supervising the traffic control at the request of the troopers on another radio system.

Extracted from an email from Donald Lederhos, Alaska Professional Volunteers

## Annual User Council Conference Presentations

The second Annual User Council Conference was held September 16 - 17, 2008, at the Anchorage Sheraton. Training sessions were offered on radio usage and Mo-toBridge® 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 Wireless Communications Director
- 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](mailto:sherryshafer@5starteam.net)



### State of Alaska: Build Out Update



The Honolulu site was completed and declared operational in December 2008 with the State of Alaska Telecommunications System (SATS) team overcoming a full range of site-related issues, including the need to rebuild access to the site. The two remaining sites in Haines and Ketchikan are in the permitting and design stages, with construction scheduled to begin as weather permits in the spring as soon.

Resolving issues of de-confliction continues. The Palmer Correctional Centers confliction with Bailey Hill was resolved at the end of October. The Mat-Su Pretrial facility and Hiland Mountain Correctional Center confliction with the Alcantra site have been resolved, as well. The Mat-Su facility issues were corrected in November, and the Hiland facility confliction was corrected in December.

Remaining de-confliction issues con-

tinue to be the priority of the SATS team throughout the winter months. This will allow the team to focus all their attention on completing the two remaining sites in Haines and Ketchikan prior to the end of this summer.

Submitted by  
SOA ETS ALMR Project Manager,  
Jim Kohler



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



As reported in the October issue, the Municipality has begun transitioning several agencies/departments to the Anchorage Wide Area Radio Network (AWARN) 700 MHz node of the ALMR System. This required final assignments of talkgroups for these agencies.

During November, the Municipality's technical staff spent two weeks in training on zone and site controllers, with particular emphasis on talkgroup programming. Like many modern computer systems, one of the challenges is the seemingly endless number of choices system managers must make. To make the best choices, it is necessary for technical staff to have a complete understanding of available options so they are able to explain any implications to users and managers. Because AWARN is

truly a interoperable segment of ALMR, all decisions must be made in concert with the ALMR Operations Management Office (OMO), whose assistance/guidance has been invaluable.

Unlike the VHF portion of ALMR, AWARN utilizes two types of radio sites. One is simulcast, which is unique to AWARN. These are the six 15-channel sites in the most densely populated areas of Anchorage. The second type are located in the more suburban areas of Anchorage and are configured and operating in the same manner as ALMR sites with from three to six repeaters each. Several functions differ between the site types. To insure seamless interoperability and roaming, careful consideration

was given to the programming so movement from one type of site to another is transparent to the user.

Anchorage has been fortunate to be able to build on the knowledge and experience of the ALMR team in understanding the system programming process. One of Anchorage's most experienced technicians, with over 20 years of trunked radio experience, said following the training and programming process, "This was the most complex process I've ever been involved in."

Submitted by:  
MOA Wireless Communications  
Director,  
Trygve Erickson

### Rescue Workers Promote Use of 'ICE'

In today's age of instant information and convenience, almost everyone owns a cell phone to keep in touch with family, friends, coworkers, and their job. Given this, the cell phone has become an important tool not just for everyday living, but also for the first responder community in life-and-death situations.

Paramedics, policemen, and firemen often waste valuable time trying to figure out who to contact when disaster strikes. They must search through personal belongings or scroll through cell phone address books and then guess who they should call. Often times family and friends listed in cell address books are only identified by a first name, making them indistinguishable for one another.

Even if 'mom' or 'dad' is listed in a cell address book, sometimes calling them would be inappropriate. Parents may be elderly, in poor health, or in another state, making them unable to assist and causing them great dis-

stress.

Now a simple initiative, conceived by a paramedic in Britain, has gained momentum to help solve this problem. Cell phone users are urged to use the acronym ICE (In Case of Emergency) before the names of the individuals they want to designate as next of kin, or other important contacts, in their cell phone address books (i.e. ICE Mom, ICE Steve, ICE Home, etc.).

Not only does this assist emergency first responders identify a responsible party when they come upon an unconscious person, it also helps identify the owners of lost cell phones.

This simple solution could be one that gives you and your family peace of mind should the unthinkable ever occur. Please take a few minutes to program your cell phone, and encourage others you know to do so, as well.

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**Website: <http://www.ak-prepared.com/almr/>**



**Photo of the Summit Lake site. The SOA building is located on Chugach Electric Association land and houses Department of Defense U.S. Army Alaska equipment. It is located on the Seward Highway between Girdwood and Seward.**

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