

# Knox Regional Communications Center Users Group

Wednesday  
September 16, 2015  
4:00 p.m.

A meeting of the Users Group of the Knox Regional Communications Center took place on **Wednesday, September 16, 2015 at 4:00 p.m.** in the Knox County Emergency Management Agency Office.

**Executive Board members in attendance:** Adam Miceli, Rockland Fire/EMS; Camden Fire Chief Chris Farley; Craig Cooley, Rockport Police Department; Francis Brandon, North East Mobile Health Services (EMS); and Knox County EMA Director Ray Sisk. **Members absent:** *Thomaston Police Chief Kevin Haj, and Ruston Barnard, Rockland Fire/EMS.*

**Users Group members in attendance:** Arthur Kiskila, Cushing FD/EMA; Clarence Keller, Hope FD/EMA; Helen Darmara, Cushing EMS Director; Jesse Thompson, Union; David Stone, Appleton Fire Chief; Edward Grinnell, Warren Fire; Kevin Benner, Friendship Fire; Tom Johnston, Washington EMS; Tim Polky, St. George Fire; Jason Peasley, Rockport Fire Chief; Brian Sullivan, Appleton Fire; and Kevin Soule, Union FD/EMA. *Note: There were more meeting attendees than this but not everyone signed in.*

**Others in attendance:** Knox Regional Communications Director Linwood Lothrop, Knox County Administrator Andrew Hart, and Administrative Assistant Candice Richards.

**I. 4:00 Meeting Called To Order**

**II. 4:01 Action Items:**

1. Approve minutes of March 19, 2015
2. Review 2016 Operating Budget Draft
3. Review proposed Incident Time Clock Draft
4. Review proposed SOG 2.3 Staging Draft
5. Seek comment on proposed change to MAY DAY SOG #5
6. Review proposed Utility Problems/Wires Down Draft

**III. Discussion Items:**

1. Excessive Radio Traffic

**IV. Other Business**

1. Fire Protocols Approved

**V. Adjourn**

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Chris Farley at 3:58 p.m. He noted that this is the first joint meeting of the Executive Board and Users Group since the By-laws were rewritten.

**II. Action Items**

1. Approve minutes of March 19, 2015.

- Francis Brandon motioned to approve the March 19, 2015 minutes. Craig Cooley seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.

2. Review 2016 Operating Budget Draft.

Director Lothrop went over some budget highlights:

- Personnel services include an additional dispatcher position starting June 1 of 2016 so it's only a partial year cost. Based the need for that on the call volume.
- Telephone line is down \$1,000.
- Radio repairs and equipment went up because of the console software maintenance fees which the County has no control over.
- Requested funding capital items from undesignated account (total of \$32,590). The remote IP monitor allows the County to keep tabs on the towers without having to go there to resolve a problem. ProQA software determines EMD vs. Fire software so it is handled seamlessly for the dispatchers. Fleet SYNC is caller ID for radios one-time expense for \$4,200 but not in the budget figure because Capital items will come out of undesignated funds.

The State of Maine adopted the new fire protocols but it will take a few years before they do the bid process and get it completed. Then there will be training for all staff on the software.

Director Lothrop was asked if it was even possible to fill the new dispatcher position since the Center is already understaffed and having a hard time finding employees. Director Lothrop explained that the County is working at recruiting methods, as well as training, to try attract and retain quality employees. The pay level for new employees might be an issue in terms of attracting people since Knox pays less than other centers, but that's not the whole issue. Over the next two years the job description will change dramatically because of the NextGen 911. It will put more demands, both physical and mental, on the dispatchers. Administrator Hart added that he sits in on the dispatcher interviews and some of the applicants think the job is as simple as answering the phone. Once they start going through the training, they see what the job actually consists of and they decide it's too much for them to handle. The County does polygraph and psychological tests and that weeds some people out, but it's not really possible to know which new-hires are going to give up on themselves before training is completed. Not everybody is cut out to be a dispatcher. It is not a reflection on the department or the director. Law enforcement has been having the same problem.

Director Lothrop briefly went over his five-year capital improvement plan:

**5-Year Capital Plan**

Project Name	Description	Priority	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
		(H, M, L)							
IP Radio Project	Dual Mode Operation	M			\$5,000				\$5,000
Remote Monitors	IP RF Monitor (VNL)	H		\$5,700					\$5,700
Computers	Replace Workstations	L			\$8,000				\$8,000
Battery Backup	Replacement Ragged	L				\$8,000			\$8,000
Replace Laptops	Replace 2 laptops	H		\$2,400					
ProQA Software	Interface FD-EMS-LAW	H		\$23,090					\$23,090
Fleet SYNC ANI	Radio ID	H		\$4,200					\$4,200
Repeater Replacement	Scheduled replacement	M						\$24,000	\$24,000
Additional Staff	Supervisor/Dispatcher	H		\$33,305	\$59,706				\$93,011
			<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$68,695</b>	<b>\$72,706</b>	<b>\$8,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$24,000</b>	<b>\$171,001</b>

2017

- \$5,000 IP Radio Project was included after talking to Bruce Marcus. Knox's operation needs to be dual mode so the radio equipment can operate in both analog and digital. The \$5,000 is a placeholder to start the conversation because Knox is going to need to switch entirely to digital operation before too long, and it would be better to not wait until it's mandatory by the FCC.
- \$8,000 6 workstations need to be replaced because of lifespan
- Additional supervisor position

2018

- \$8,000 Benner Hill and Ragged Mountain replacing battery backups

2020

- \$24,000 Repeater site replacement should be done starting in 2020 because of life span (one tower at a time)

3. Review Proposed Incident Time Clock Draft.

- Tom Johnston motioned to approve it as written. Jason Peasley seconded the motion. A vote was taken with none opposed so the motion passed.

4. Review Proposed SOG 2.3 Staging Draft.

Director Lothrop explained that the reason for this SOG is because people keep calling the KRCC enroute to incidents because they do not know where they are needed, but the dispatchers don't know where to send them. If the responding agency tells the KRCC upfront where responders should go, it cuts down on the initial confusion and then once the people get to the staging area, the Incident Commander can tell people where they need to report to. It keeps it neat, clean, concise, and everybody knows their assignment and where to go. The incident commanders take it from there. Tom Johnston commented that people also really need to be specific about what they need. If you need a ladder truck, then say so.

- Tom Johnston motioned to approve it as written. Tim Polky seconded the motion. A vote was taken with none opposed so the motion passed.

5. Seek Comment on Proposed Change to MAY DAY SOG Sec.5.

Tim Polky asked about where the additional help would come from. Director Lothrop said that he didn't have to worry about that – once this plan is in place, the department on scene just calls out MAY DAY and the KRCC will find the help the department needs. Adam Miceli suggested that people be clear with dispatchers about exactly what they need.

- Tom Johnston motioned to approve it (with 2 engines and 2 ambulances). Jason Peasley seconded the motion. A vote was taken with none opposed so the motion passed.

6. Review Proposed Utility Problems/Wires Down Draft.

Director Lothrop explained that the purpose of this SOP is so that instead of dispatchers drawing a separate incident for each and every fallen tree, etc., there will be one incident number and the others will be listed underneath. This only applies to wires down and trees down, not everything else (like fires, etc). The single incident would continue the entire length of the storm (i.e.: 72 hours). It just makes it cleaner and easier to track on the dispatch end. The Center did something similar at the Lobster Festival and it worked well. Departments will still get the time the incident was reported and KRCC staff can get additional times from the radio logs. Director Lothrop said that he essentially considers the start of the incident to be when the EOC is activated, and once the EOC closes, dispatchers will revert to issuing individual tickets for complaints. The Center can print departments a copy of the radio log for their individual agency so everyone can have all of their times. If a department tell dispatch that the department is closing their station, the Center will know to re-tone you if the Center needs you out there again.

- Craig Cooley motioned to approve it as written. Tom Johnston seconded the motion. A vote was taken with none opposed so the motion passed.

**III. Discussion Items**1. Discussion – Excess Radio Traffic.

Chris Farley explained that the Executive Board had received a complaint of excessive radio traffic on the Union fire.

Tom Johnston stated that his was as one of the towns that had an email of complaint of excessive radio traffic and that there was a reporting attached to it. There was no mention of what the problem was in particular. There were two radio calls that were not appropriate, but without details of the issue, it is difficult to figure out how to address it. He said that he asked what the issue was, but has not received any response. There was a lot of radio traffic but he felt that most of it was appropriate. He added that he was just looking for a little bit more guidance of what the exact problem was so he could direct the training for staff.

Clarence Keller said that he had listened to the recording and that it was his understanding is the only person who can sign on enroute is the chief officer. This has been a discussion for 27 years. Listening to the recording can be very beneficial. Do we really need 2, 3, 4, or 5 chief officers signing in enroute to mutual aid calls? It can be improved but it will probably never be perfect. Adam Miceli noted that the Executive Board has offered to have people come out and train the departments on I Am Responding, etc so that radio traffic isn't so crowded that information gets missed. The Board isn't trying to pick on any one department – this is just an incident that happened that gives everybody a chance to look at this type of problem that occurs with multijurisdictional responses to incidents.

Director Lothrop noted that if the Center has someone on I Am Responding, then dispatchers already know that person is on their way. Once the Center been told what the staging location is and the staging frequency is, dispatchers can just send out that information.

*Craig Cooley left at 5:13 p.m.*

A few meeting attendees expressed concern that some people in departments either don't have cell phones or don't want to use IAR. Some areas also do not get good cell reception. Tom Johnston said that the KRCC needs times recorded when a chief is on his way there for liability reasons. He really didn't think it was a bad radio traffic incident. Jason Peasley noted that the Board was just saying that the incident is an educational tool that brings the issue to light for discussion.

Director Lothrop again made the offer to send staff to individual agencies at their training sessions and talk about SOGs and provide any needed training, etc. Departments just to make the request.

Clarence Keller commented that service chiefs need to take the issue of inappropriate radio traffic very seriously and pass it on to their own staff to make sure everyone does better. The chiefs need to figure out which members of their team are abusing the radio by listening to department calls on a day to day basis so staff can be educated. When there's a MAY DAY call, chiefs need to ensure the safety of their personnel by making sure these habitual abusers are trained to correct their radio use.

Adam Miceli stated that the KRCC staff needs to take some of the responsibility for some of the extra traffic. He wondered if the dispatchers are not looking at IAR to see who is responding, or maybe it's just not updating fast enough. The dispatchers will also say things like "I'm not hearing anybody do you want it toned again?" That's essentially inviting extra radio traffic. Director Lothrop said that the dispatchers can be a little gun-shy doing something without being told to, but they are being trained to not ask – but to just re-tone it after 3 minutes.

#### **IV. Other Business**

##### Fire Protocols Approved.

Director Lothrop noted that the State approved the fire protocols. It works very similar to EMD protocols. It provides the level of consistency across the board regardless of who answers the call. It will probably be the middle of next year before it can be utilized.

##### Safe Word / Code Word: 10-74

At the last Executive Board meeting, it was discussed that there will now be a safe-word for EMS responders to use if they feel their life is in imminent danger or are being held hostage. The Board decided

to use 10-74 because law enforcement already uses that. A person commented that he didn't think there was time to ask for help on the radio and using a 10-code is not NIMS compliant. EMA Director Ray Sisk noted that he's a stickler on NIMS compliancy, but there's no way to use plain language in that type of situation.

The safe word is not just limited to EMS – Fire may use it as well, but agencies need to be really careful about not misusing it because if you use it you can expect law enforcement to show up with guns. This isn't just for common, uncooperative incident. It's for unique situations.

#### Tone Tests

David Stone asked if the KRCC does tone tests anymore. Director Lothrop responded that they can be done any time, but KRCC staff does it when you're having a department meeting because then everybody is there. The test is done and you'll be able to figure out who's pagers aren't working. The agencies have every right to ask for a tone test. The only time the Center couldn't do it is if there's an accident incident. As soon as the dispatchers are free again, they'll do the test.

Chris Farley commented that the KRCC services 39 agencies so departments need to speak up if they need something or have an issue.

David Stone asked if he needed to attend every Users Group meeting. Adam Miceli pointed out that if Chief Stone had been at past meetings, he would have known that Director Lothrop didn't cancel tone tests – the Executive Board did. Departments now just need to speak up when they want to do one and the Center will take care of it. Chris Farley added that the Users Group only meets twice a year anyway so there aren't a lot of meetings to try to fit into your schedule. Tom Johnston suggested that everyone make sure their email address is current so they can all get the agenda, and will then know what's going to be discussed. If you can't attend a meeting but have an issue you want brought up, share it with one of the Board members and they will bring it up for you.

## **V. Adjourn**

- Kevin Soule motioned to adjourn. Jesse Thompson seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 5:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards  
Administrative Assistant