MBHSR Public Safety Communications Interoperability

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PURPOSE
Background: In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) initiated the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) to address national security issues on a regional basis. UASI identified communications interoperability, the ability of public safety agencies to talk across disciplines and jurisdictions, as a priority for the nation.

The purpose of the Metro-Boston Homeland Security Region (MBHSR) Public Safety Communications Interoperability project is to ensure that MBHSR first responders have the ability to share data and communicate at optimal efficiency, in real time, across jurisdictions and disciplines. Increased communications interoperability enables more effective emergency response during day-to-day operations and large-scale events. The mission of the MBHSR communications interoperability project is to improve regional communications interoperability among first responder agencies and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the region's overall response capabilities.

Towards that end, the participating agencies have created a Standard Regional Channel Plan for Communications Interoperability that will allow for other regional agencies to transmit and receive on their licensed frequencies. This plan (as modified and agreed to) with associated radio frequencies is to be installed on all portable, mobile and dispatch center radios as appropriate for the purpose of regional communications interoperability. This document allows for that use and defines the frequencies and policy for use.

AUTHORITY
The U.S. Department of Homeland Security designated Boston a *high-threat* urban area in July 2003 as part of the Office for Domestic Preparedness' (ODP) Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant program. As the core city, Boston oversaw the delineation of the region, and created the Boston Mayor's Office of Homeland Security (MOHS) to integrate and manage all homeland security activities. The UASI region was subsequently named the Metro Boston Homeland Security Region and consists of nine jurisdictions: Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Quincy, Revere, Somerville, and Winthrop.

The MOHS led an effort to develop a Strategic Plan for Communications Interoperability that addresses and prioritizes how the MBHSR can enhance interoperable communications capabilities during response to emergency incidents. The development of standard regional channel plans was identified as Initiative 1B in the MBHSR Communications Interoperability 5-year Strategic Plan.

PRINCIPLES
The Participating agencies will abide by the following principles:
1. That all parties will install or program the entire MBHSR Standard Regional Channel Plan as provided in the MBHSR Standard Code Plug, without changes, on all public safety radios

controlled by them that possess the capability to support it and utilize the channel nomenclature.

2. That all participating agencies authorize the emergency use of their licensed frequencies by other MBHSR agencies (parties) as outlined in the MBHSR Standard Regional Channel Plan and according to the Interim Guidelines and any future Standard Operating Procedures promulgated and agreed to by participating agencies.
3. That all participating agencies will utilize their block of assigned radio IDs as put forth by the MBHSR-CIS in consecutive order when possible.
4. That all participating agencies will ensure training on and adherence to the Interim Guidelines and any future Standard Operating Procedures promulgated and agreed to by participating agencies and that they will impose appropriate corrective action on personnel found to be in violation.
5. That all participating agencies will implement radio communications procedures for Communications Interoperability Channels consistent with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS), to ensure that effective communications processes and systems exist to support a complete spectrum of incident management activities, to include, but not limited to, the following excerpts from the NIMS Incident Management Communications requirements to:
   5.1. Individual Jurisdictions: They will be required to comply with national interoperable communications standards, once such standards are developed. Standards appropriate for NIMS
   users will be designated by the NIMS Integration Center (NIC) in partnership with recognized standards development organizations (SDOs).
   5.2. Incident Communications: Incident communications will follow the standards called for under the ICS. The Incident Commander (IC) manages communications at an incident, using a common communications plan and an incident-based communications center established solely for use by the command, tactical, and support resources assigned to the incident. All entities involved in managing the incident will utilize common terminology, prescribed by the NIMS, for communications.
6. That all participating agencies will ensure that communications operators at dispatch centers monitor appropriate interoperability calling channels. (e.g. BAPERN 3, Metro Red, UCALL)
7. That all participating agencies will ensure that interoperability-calling channels are monitored at the Incident Command Post on major incidents requiring significant aid from agencies beyond routine local interoperability. (e.g. BAPERN 3, Metro Red, UCALL)

INTERIM GUIDELINES FOR USE OF MBHSR CHANNEL PLAN

1. Users are only permitted to transmit on channels they have been assigned to by a control point or in the case of no control point, their Incident Commander.
2. All transmission within the standard regional channel plan other than the user's home frequency must use a call sign including city, agency, and user assigned ID.
3. All transmissions on frequencies not controlled by the user's agency must follow the policies and procedures set forth by the channel's control point.
4. Control points may authorize other agencies and their personnel to transmit on their frequencies.
5. Incident Commanders must seek approval from the channel's control point to transmit or allow others to transmit for the purpose of interoperability.
6. Use of any of these frequencies must adhere to the principles of the National Incident Management System and the Incident Command System.

[Source: Based on MBHSR Public Safety Communications Interoperability Memorandum of Understanding]

NIMS Compliance Document, Chapter 5 "Communications and Information Management" (http://www.fema.gov/txt/nims/nims_doc3-5.txt)