Communications Committee Meeting

January 31th, 2017
1400 hours at DES
Attendees: D. Bitner B. Stevenson, J. Thierwechter, J. Crider, S. Cressler, B. Denham, T. Reed, B. Holmquist

Old Business

- DES presented completed rough draft of Communications Manual. Combining LE with Emergency Services, Fire, EMS, and Fire Police (with respect to potential sensitive information) into one manual. Committee completing initial revisions for review at next meeting.

- CAD Data dump to FireHouse Software and ESO being looked at by DES and Chief Bitner. DES is looking into sending .xml file to Chambersburg FD's FireHouse Software. ESO discussion is continuing, hoping to integrate with CAD after upgrade. B. Stevenson stated they can send one .xml file per department. A request for additional data dumps has been submitted to Tri-Tech. This discussion includes the data transmission to "new" alerting system at Station 4. DES and EHSF and ESO are working towards data dump for EMS services.

- **DES is moving forward with quoting for CAD integrated unit specific MDCs/tablets similar to Berkley Co., WV (i.e. demonstrations and compatibility w/ hardware and possible command software to allow departments to best prepare for future purchasing).** Tri-tech is being contacted by FCDES to look into CAD integration with unit specific MDCs/tablets. Tri-Tech has their own software. DES received a general quote for upgrading to the new Tri-Tech CAD platform necessary for mobile computer compatibility. A possible regional grant down the road could assist with allocation and implementation. // 2016 DES budget allocated move to Tri-tech CAD from current Vision CAD (Tri-Tech purchased Vision) with IP based mapping (completion date April 2017). // Chief Bigler's (Co.18) suggestion (supported by consensus of FCFCA) for Communication's Center to revert back to tracking unit's Available on the Radio (AOR), Available In Quarters (AIQ) in attempt to ensure unit accountability has been put on hold by FCDES until MDC/tablet integration w/ CAD occurs minimizing additional radio traffic.

- Periodic communication best practices/training messages respective to all disciplines are being attached to this bodies meeting minutes. D. North looking into posting on the FCPSTC social media outlets. // Discipline reps will be responsible for disbursing to colleagues. The intent is to outline various communication topics (i.e. radios practices/procedures/SOGs). Topics will be approved by the Committee prior to posting.

- Still looking into the legal requirements aimed at forcing Franklin system from the current frequencies. DES is looking at lower frequencies in same bandwidth (still UHF) // Monitoring legislation. // The Commissioners have sent letters to government representatives.

- Emergency Fire Dispatch (EFD) has been moved to 2017 DES budget. EFD is being nationally recommended to improve standardization, consistency, ISO ratings, etc.

- Discussed looking into **closest unit dispatch** in the distant future. Can be accomplished in short-term by utilizing station locations, but not GPS of units. To best implement, this could include **standardized response plans**, requiring municipal buy-in (seeking discussion from ESA). // No immediate plans exist.

  Committee interested in standardized response plans, per Franklin Co. call type, as DES loads box cards into CAD and transition to "new" CAD. This will simplify process.

  Chief Trace pointed a recent survey sent out via the FCFCA resulted in 10 departments expressing support for standardized response plans, per Franklin County call types; and 11 departments would like to see Roll Call reinstituted. Looking for FCFCA looking to move forward.

  Chief Barnes, Myers and Carbaugh stated they are concerned about the diversity of the different box areas and taking discretion out of the hands of Chiefs and municipal supervisors when standardizing response plans. Chief Barnes challenged the validity/interpretation of the survey Chief Trace presented the prior month, with Trace unavailable to refute. Holmquist suggests the survey presented valuable data more relevant than any the FCFCA has to date. An additional survey could be sent throughout the FCFCA to determine the departments who are interested, and the potential for those departments to work together to at least begin to meet the request of DES. If standardization occurs the need may exist to allow exceptions to certain box areas. Chief Barnes questions whether there is actually a benefit to Communication's Center via CAD to standardize the response plans. Chief Hall suggests we look into the new version of CAD and actual benefit of standardized plans.

- Discussion initiated by Chief Bitner surrounding potential need to track on/off duty/staffed units in CAD. Stations could provide daily/real-time updates to Franklin's Communications Center noting staffed units available for dispatch, which significantly cuts down on units failing to respond and decreases response times overall by not waiting for replacement times. This is partly driven by PA Dept. of Health, who is requiring a "plan" showing how units are to be staffed/dispatched. Cross-staffing units in CAD could be an option to look into in order to permit one crew to staff multiple pieces dependent on response plans. No further discussion.

- Forrest Rangers are putting themselves "On-duty" with multiple counties, but then move outside the footprints of the radio systems. GPS enable radio equipment was discussed as a potential interim fix, as that would allow DES to see when Bureau of Forestry units have traveled beyond the RF footprint of the Franklin County system, and alternate means of contact could be attempted. Looking for suggestions to prevent Franklin from calling for a unit that has moved outside the county. Committee inquiring if feasible to require the Rangers to advise Franklin of moving outside of the footprint as a possibility. B. Stevenson states the GPS is live.

- Mercersburg Academy Security and Constables Association are seeking to gain access to Franklin County Radio System.

  ESA made motion and voted to support Communications Committee recommendation to restrict LE Fleetmap to law enforcement. Eliminating security agencies.

  A revised draft of a non-encrypted LE Fleet Map was presented as a potential for Mercesburg Academy security use. This is the first draft Fleet Map presented for review. If granted access to the Fleet Map, Chief Phillippy believes CPD access should be removed from this Fleet Map. Chief Phillippy suggests access be granted to only the local government Fleet Map, as well as to the Constables, including an inter-agency TG. Discussed where EB activations will revert. A meeting is planned with Commissioners and Mercesburg Academy.

- Co. 7 inquired about new station alerting at Station 4 in reference to upgrading their system (Firehouse Alerting Software). The new alerting system is operational, although working through several issues. If departments are interested in purchasing and installing the new alerting system, the primary contact at DES is B. Stevenson.

- Franklin County-wide Fire Police Tone going live in next couple weeks (old Medic 84 tones). DES will program pagers for free.

New Business

- DES reminds everyone they must be notified when putting a new radio in service.

- Periodically communications personnel will be dispatching out of the backup center for training purposes. Although there may be some noticeable audio issues, there should be no alerting issues.

Finalized Items to be included in revised version of Franklin Co. Communication's Manual:

- o Granting the ability to field officers/units to advise Franklin to hold off on replacing units (radio and/or phone). The Committee inquired into benefits vs. risks to determine if action needed. Majority agreed if Franklin is acknowledging an Officer advising to hold off on a replacement unit, their credibility shouldn't be challenged based on the geographical location of the incident. Due to uncertainty surrounding current written policy and to best accommodate responders, the ability to advise Franklin to hold off on replacing units will be added to the Communication's Manual.
  Section VIII, D. – permits this.

  Chief Barnes asked is there going to be a time frame applied to units Franklin have been advised to hold off on replacing. This would apply a level of accountability. –No specific timeframe is going to be applied, but the dispatcher and supervisor will continue to track units in CAD.
  Verbiage being considered referencing who can advise Franklin to hold off on replacing units should include: chiefs, duty officers, responding unit.
  Chief Trace requested verbiage to include not holding off unless the unit is going to have staffing. Chief Holmquist reiterated personnel should not advise to hold off on replacing a unit, unless they are confident the original unit will get out staffed and within a timeframe which ensures the unit will still be best for the call when compared to the unit that would be replacing it.

- o Eliminating the re-announcement of the incident address and call type on Fire/EMS Dispatch after unit(s) respond. Simply acknowledging the response on Dispatch will suffice. The address, call type, class response and scene security concerns (when necessary) shall be re-announced on the assigned OPS TG. This will cut down on the transmissions on Fire/EMS Dispatch, paired with the fact the majority of units switch to the assigned TG immediately after transmitting their response on Dispatch. The Class Response will be given during the re-announcement of the incident on the TG assigned to the incident to ensure responding units are aware of emergent vs routine responses determined via EMD. The change will be added to the Communication's Manual.

- o Add Communications Supervisor's ability to coordinate emergency vehicle transfers throughout the county, as best suited position to maintain an overall picture of county resources.

Next meeting March 9th @ 1400 hours @ FCPSTC
Next meeting will be primarily dedicated to revision of the DES Manual.

<u>**Basic Radio Etiquette**</u>

- Before transmitting on a talk group, monitor the talk group for at least three seconds to ensure it is clear of traffic. This is specifically important when switching from one talk group to another.

    > Ex: Engine 1 clears an incident and switches from the assigned OPS 3 to Fire/EMS DISP to mark themselves "Available." Without monitoring the talk group prior to the transmission, E1 may immediately keying up in the middle of Franklin dispatching an additional incident.)

- Think before transmitting. Organize your thoughts before pressing the PTT. The over-eager operator is a source of wasted time and confusion.

- When pressing the PTT to transmit a message, pause momentarily to allow for the talk-permit tone to sound prior to transmitting.

- Personnel should exercise due regard when transmitting their unit's response on Fire/EMS Dispatch. Third, fourth, fifth, etc. due units should refrain from immediately keying up, instead allow first and second due units the opportunity to immediately transmit their response. The speed which one transmits on the radio does not correlate to faster on scene times.

- Remember…Per the Franklin County Communications Manual:

SECTION VIII: FIRE DISPATCH RESPONSE (Franklin County Department of Emergency Services: Fire, EMS, and Fire Police Fleet Map Standard Operating Guidelines) **REVISED: March 4th, 2013.**

> **II. Response -** *Units are permitted to respond on the assigned operations TG when their immediate communications with Franklin is necessary.*

Personnel should NOT regularly respond on the OPS talk group assigned for incident operations. If waiting for the completion of tone alerts and the dispatch of the incident on Fire/EMS Dispatch would hinder a unit's ability to initiate mitigation efforts, the unit shall be permitted to respond on the talk group assigned to the incident.

> Ex: An incident is dispatched two blocks away from the fire station. The first due engine will arrive prior to the completion of the entire round of dispatching; therefore, the unit transmits their response to Franklin on responds OPS 5, which was assigned for the incident operations.