

2015 SW Communications Committee



October 29, 2015 @ 1000-AZ/1100-NM

Conference call notes

Conference call number: 866-814-0450

Conference call password: 2875001

Attendees: Scott Harness, NM-BLM/ Chris Romo, NMSF/Mike Spilde & Art Goldberg, AZ-BLM/ Ted Medina, NM-CAF/Dale Brown, AZSF/Curtis Steinman, NM-USFS/ Mike Tuominen, NIFC

1000 AZ-BLM request to Romo from AZ-BLM to move Air Ambulance portion of agenda to the end due to them running late participating in the call.

- Start time 1005/1105 NM

- **2016 SW Interoperability Guide**

Scott mentioned that it was a hard time getting the document compiled and gave special thanks to Chris Romo for compiling the document, distributing and posting on the password protected SWCC site in such a short notice.

Scott asked for suggestions on how to expedite the frequency gathering and distribution process. Dale Brown suggestion to get a memo out to the SWCG asking for the USF&WS to suggest their agency radio tech or manager to participate on the committee. Also, BIA used a sub-contractor last year, which helped to gather their information. AI from Tribal Co. helped out a lot with the BIA freqs. Scott will ask the SWCG to send out a memo for getting the freqs to the Commo Group by Jan 31st 2016.

Dale asked if anyone has been in contact with the Aviation on this. The reason being is this guide was designed to be a reference tool for their Aviation guide. They should be using this and not rely on each Dispatch Center. Scott has been in communications and will talk to Kenan and Aviation committee about the issue.

- **IDOPP/IDIPP** Scott convinced the SWCG to stand down with any further tasks to the SW Commo Group and possibly hire a RCDD to give them a write up of anything they need pertaining to this.

Ted Medina mentioned that TDC is currently moving to their new building at the County Building in Taos. The move is going slow due to funding issues but he anticipates the move to be smooth pertaining

to the transfer of their radio system. This is unrelated to IDOPP, but they have to move forward with their move due to the current building situation. Romo added that they are asking their interagency partners that work with TDC to offer contributions to the move they seem to be short in office furniture and other items. They are even going above and beyond asking their NM-CAF District Ranger Stations for funds. The R3 office is currently looking into ways to aid with funding.

- 1120 AZ-BLM joined the call.
- **SWCC/SWCG Commo Group Tasks-** SW Area Air Ambulance A/G Frequency & IDOPP
- **SW Area Air Ambulance A/G Frequency**

Mike T. said that there were 9 incidents in the Western States this year that had medivac frequency issues. He is part of a task group to see what they can do to utilize national all emergency medivac frequencies and possibly developed a Natl. standard. There was lot of feedback in the Western States and they are looking at other states. Currently Wyoming, Nevada, California are using the VMed28 Air medevac frequency channel.

Mike S. said this was an issue at the SW Ops committee with AZ and they asked for our involvement for a standalone VFire channel to be utilized in the SW for Incident medivac.

Pros & Cons

Switching AZ from VFire21 to VFire 28/29.

Dale Brown advised that the current standard by default in AZ for Air Ambulance companies is the common use of Vfire21 (154.280), weather right or wrong. The proposed use of VFire 28 for use on wildland fires as proposed by Mike (AZ BLM FMO) is certainly a proper use (noting that it is available for any medical response use and not specific to wildland fire). The use and change could be presented by Dale to the AZ SIEC group that represents communications for all responders. Operationally speaking, changing it in AZ could potentially have a negative impact in AZ. More info- VFire 28 is used in Southern AZ for some inter hospital and responder use. I can present this issue to the SIEC group in AZ. From an aviation perspective, (other hat) I have and will continue to gather Intel with my aviation counterparts. What we are asking to do is to change from standard operating procedures in AZ to accommodate an idea that is technically correct but might not be viable in terms of operations. From a technical communications perspective only- it certainly can be used. Is this an issue in NM?

Scott asked to get ahold of the NM frequency coordinator. Romo said to go through him and Donald Griego, NMSF State FMO.

Mike T. mentioned that this frequency will not be used strictly for Wildland Fire Incidents and it can be used for all emergency situations. Chris Lewis from National also got a National RFA for VFire 28/29 so all States can operate under them if needed. He will send the RFA to the Group.

Dale added that this will be quite a challenge in AZ they have 16-23 Medevac Helos and it will change how they do business. AZ uses 154.28 for public safety with local & state cooperators. VFIRE21 and VHF-AM 123.025 has seen enhanced use in AZ after several midflight collisions. Do we want to change to Vmed 28/29 this AZ? VFIRE 21 has been very successful in AZ, weather right or wrong.

Mike S. will report back to SW Ops. Scott will ask for further input from the GACC/ SWCG.

Dale asked Mike T for his perspective on the subject.

Mike T. replied, VMED 28/29 are licensed through the FCC but still needed the RFA. That's why Chris Lewis acquired it specifically for the frequency use. It is good to have a Natl. standardization, currently other States that are using them are using Vmed 28 as the primary and 29 as secondary for their Air emergency standard. NM & AZ need to ask for input from their State that governs these types of frequencies. Jeremy Knoll AZ & NM DOIT Frequency Coordinator. Dale thinks he has the contact for NM and will relay to Romo.

Romo asked Scott if he has been in contact with the Aviation committee on this issue. We need their input as well. Dale Brown sits on the Aviation Committee and they want to move forward with utilizing a standard frequency in the SW.

Scott proposed that another conference call to discuss this further: January 20th @ 10:00 NM time. Will notify the SW Aviation/Ops/SWCG & SWCC. Also, Eric Walker has been briefed and onboard.

- **Round Robin**

NMSF: State FMO is working on A/G freq. in NM to help with any areas in NM. Ted asked where is was going to be utilized? It will be utilized in conjunction with the Federal frequencies currently being utilized in the SW. It will be added to Mike T. arsenal and used if needed to free up a frequency or to be utilized in a possibly A/G congested area. It will be FCC licensed through NMSF identical to what AZ has done.

There has also been updates to their base stations at their repeater sites. These are base stations and not true repeaters. They need to be switched to repeaters to be more effective.

AZSF: There are currently 52 repeater site in AZ and the current system is working well. There were challenges with first responders, a lot of them have migrated to a 700/800MHZ system. AZ answer to this problem was installing an Air Network on 42 of their mountain tops that convert 800, UHF & VHF so they can still communicate on this triband system. An addition 12 sites will be created in mid-2016.

AZ-BLM: They have reorganized their Fire channels so Fire & Amin can both utilize it. The Co. River District will be the last district to get theirs updated. Q. Miller is handling their fire feq. guide. Other than that Ops normal and they are currently developing a new SW IHC, the "Sierra Vista Hotshots". They will

be a Trainee Crew until they meet the IHC standards. They are receiving National funding and have hired a Superintendent. The crew will be comprised of Military Veterans and should be available May 1st 2016. This IHC will benefit the State/GACC & National Interagency partners.

NM-BLM: No frequency changes anticipated. They have incorporated new radios in the Albuquerque District.

NM-USFS: The Gila, Coronado, and Apache/Sitgreaves NF are planning to change frequencies this winter. We will get the new frequency plans into the frequency guide. Working with TDC on their Dispatch Center move. Ted added that he has a standalone base station radio at the Cimarron Office and he can program other frequencies as need. Romo said that he has already programmed the frequencies he needed and he has utilized this in the past when their radio has gone down or when maintenance has been conducted. Ted also mentioned if they needed a better antenna he can facilitate one. Romo will be in contact with Ted.

- **1156 Meeting adjourned- Next conference call date/time**

January 20th @ 10:00 NM time/ more info will be forthcoming