

Metro Region ARMER Standards

Section 3 – Metro 3.11.0 FEDCOM VHF Interoperability with U.S. Government Agencies

Date Established

11-28-07

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4-14-20

1. Purpose or Objective

To provide guidance on use of the Department of Justice (DOJ) interoperability VHF channel for the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area communications for interagency command level coordination and tactical operations coordination between local, state, and federal agencies during emergency or interagency incidents.

2. Technical Background

• Capabilities

The federal interoperability channel, FEDCOM, will operate as P25 narrowband, conventional, digital VHF multicast-voted repeaters, which include two transmitters and nine receivers. Participating agencies that have direct access to the federal interoperability channel may program the interoperability frequencies into authorized radios and specifically authorized mobile communications platforms. The frequencies are authorized for use in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. The FEDCOM channel is encryptable using the NLECC DES ALL key.

• Constraints

This channel may only be used for federal to local and federal to federal agency communications. It cannot be used for local to local agency communications. Due to technical constraints, the FBI cannot setup or take down a patch.

3. Operational Context

This channel can be used to coordinate resources and responses during an incident, or to patch other agencies to this channel.

- First priority will be given to agencies requiring interoperable communications during an “emergency incident”.
- Second priority will be given to agencies requiring interoperable communications during “regular” investigations or interagency operations.
- Third priority will be given to agencies requiring internal communications during “regular” investigations or interagency operation, but require another wide area channel to conduct their investigation or operation.

Encrypted talk groups may be patched to this resource, as long as the FEDCOM users are encrypted.

4. Recommended Protocol/Standard

• For a preplanned event:

A user of the ARMER system should coordinate a patch by contacting their dispatch center, who will then contact the FBI dispatcher at 612-376-3200. The FBI will then notify Hennepin

County Dispatch to reserve the resource on the status board for that event. Federal partners should also notify the FBI of a preplanned event to reserve the resource.

The contact between agencies will be accomplished via the agency's dispatch console that provides access to the Federal Interoperability Channel. When requesting interoperable communications, the agency should be prepared to provide the following information:

- a. User's agency name.
- b. User's name or radio call sign/designator.
- c. Person or agency with whom the user wishes interoperable communications.
- d. Reason for requesting interoperability.
- e. Estimated time of use, if possible.

• **For Emergent Events:**

The dispatch center in which the event is initiated is permitted to initiate the patch as needed. After the patch is established, the dispatch center will then notify the FBI dispatch that a patch has been made. The dispatch center initiating use of FEDCOM will update the status board application accordingly.

FEDCOM VHF

Requirements

- Mandatory
- Highly Recommended
- Optional
- Not Allowed

For Whom?

- All Regional 800 MHz Dispatch Centers
- None
- Approved suitcase and portable repeaters
- Unauthorized mobile or portable radios

Cross Patch Standard

- Soft Patch
- Hard Patch

Yes/No

- Yes
- No

To Talkgroup(s)

- Determined
- None

5. Recommended Procedure

Activation:

Once authorization has been granted by the user's agency, each agency should follow its internal procedures for activating the interconnectivity.

1. The agency requesting the patch must verify the availability of the resource by checking the Status Board.
2. All involved dispatchers shall select a resource/channel on their dispatch console to be patched to FEDCOM.
3. The dispatcher shall connect the agency's identified resource/channel to FEDCOM, using their agency's internal procedures for establishing a patch between agencies.
4. The dispatcher shall broadcast to users that a patch is activated and, if necessary, instruct users to switch to a designated channel.
5. Each radio user that is patched to FEDCOM needs to identify themselves using their agency name and unit identifier.
6. Involved dispatchers shall monitor the interoperability resource/channel to address requests.

De-Activation:

When the patch is no longer required, agencies should follow these deactivation procedures:

1. The requesting agency/user or incident commander shall contact the FBI dispatcher and their dispatcher so that the patch can be deactivated.

This contact will be via FEDCOM, landline, mobile telephone, in-person, etc.

2. Prior to the patch being disabled, the dispatch center that initiated the patch shall make an announcement on the interoperable resource/channel indicating that the patch will be deactivated.
3. The dispatch console that activated is responsible to deactivate the patch.

Testing:

The FBI Minneapolis office will be the lead agency dispatch center for conducting roll call testing procedures for the federal interoperability network. To ensure that equipment components of the interoperability solution are operating properly, each agency shall participate in the following testing procedure:

1. FBI Minneapolis dispatch will conduct a radio roll call that will occur monthly on the first Wednesday of each month at 1000 hours.
2. Each agency will monitor FEDCOM prior to the roll call.
3. FBI Minneapolis dispatch will initiate roll call by contacting each agency by name.
4. Each agency must respond when called, stating their agency name and that the transmission was successfully received.
5. FBI Minneapolis dispatch personnel will document and maintain a checklist of agency responses for roll calls on each channel.
6. After the roll call list is complete, FBI Minneapolis dispatch will request any agency that did not respond initially, to respond.
7. FBI Minneapolis dispatch will make an official announcement, via radio, that the test is complete.
8. MnDOT is authorized to do maintenance testing as needed.

6. Management

The FBI is responsible for operation and maintenance of this Federal VHF interoperability resource and infrastructure and shall maintain a list of federal agencies and a point of contact for each. The list of federal agency contacts is Law Enforcement sensitive and NOT for dissemination to the public.

Any state or local agency that has P25 capable radios have permission from the Department of Justice to include the FEDCOM channel in their radios, including any day to day, cache, EOC, ICP & ICC radios.

The dispatch center managers for agencies on the metropolitan region of the ARMER system shall ensure that the procedures for use in this standard are followed.

Dispatch center personnel shall receive initial and continuing training on the use of this procedure.

The system managers and administrators will be responsible to see that this policy and procedure is implemented as defined in the system standards manual. Identified issues and concerns will be brought to the Radio TOC meetings for resolution.