

Metro Region ARMER Standards

Section 3 – Metro 3.21.0 Recommended Initial Communications Plan for Large Scale Disaster Level Mutual Aid Incidents

Date Established

5-28-08

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8-19-20

1. Purpose or Objective

To recommend an initial “default” incident communications plan utilizing the statewide ARMER interoperability talkgroups to facilitate effective command, control, situational awareness, coordination and staging for the initial response to a large scale and/or disaster level incident.

2. Technical Background

• Capabilities

The Statewide Emergency Communications Board (SECB) has established a standard for use of the statewide incident response talkgroups in SECB Standard IOP-3 (formerly ARMER Standard 3.16.0). This standard encourages communications interoperability among first responders and establishes common statewide talkgroups to facilitate interoperability. The statewide talkgroups authorized for communication between service branches are S-TAC 1-12. Law enforcement has an additional four clear and eight encrypted statewide tactical talkgroups.

• Constraints

Experience has shown that all agencies have used many different processes in the past. Not all responding agencies to a large-scale incident may have regional interoperability talkgroups. This standard strives for consistency among all metro agencies.

3. Operational Context

These recommendations are based on core principles of NIMS, including establishment of an Incident Communications Plan to support the Incident Command System (ICS) as it is established for a large-scale mutual aid incident.

4. Recommended Protocol

SECB Standard IOP-3 (formerly ARMER Standard 3.16.0; effective June 12, 2017) requires STAC 1-12 plus STAC 13E and 14E to be programmed in *all* PSAP consoles. Any PSAPs which do not have space in its consoles for these resources must file a variance with the SECB.

5. Recommended Procedure

When an emergent large scale or disaster level incident requires an immediate and massive mutual aid response, the following initial Incident Communications Plan should be implemented by the dispatch center with primary control of the incident:

- A. The Incident Commander (IC) should be identified. A Command Net should be immediately established utilizing the first available STAC talkgroup, starting with STAC 2; STAC 1 is typically assigned last, as it is normally used for helicopter landings. The Command Net should be used for communications between the IC, the

controlling dispatch center, other dispatch centers providing resources and the Emergency Operations Center if established.

- B. A Staging Net should be established utilizing the next available STAC talkgroup, starting with STAC 2. The Staging Net STAC should be patched to conventional interoperability resources, if agencies outside the ARMER network are involved. This will be dependent on the nature of the response, e.g. VLAW31 for Law Enforcement, VFIRE21 for Fire responses, etc. During initial response, this talkgroup would be used to notify responders of situation updates. The use of this talkgroup will transition to a Staging Net talkgroup. For local metro response, ME TACs should be utilized before going to an STAC.
- C. A Staging Officer should be assigned by discipline (Police, Fire, EMS) and a physical location for the incident staging area(s) designated.
- D. In the absence of an ICS structure and Staging Officer, during the initial phase of the response, the controlling dispatch center may designate a staging area as a collection point for responding mutual aid agencies from all branches. Once the ICS structure and Staging Officer are in place, units will be moved to the designated discipline staging by that specific Staging Officer.
- E. Operations Section Tactical Nets should be established for each major service branch on statewide TACs using the first available STAC after the Command and Staging Nets are established. Units will be assigned to the designated Tactical Net upon receiving their assignment at staging. Consideration should be given to channel capacity at the ARMER sites covering the incident to prevent system busy conditions.
- F. The attached ICS-205 should be used as a *sample* ICS-205 for the initial recommended Incident Communications Plan until the incident Communications Unit Leader (COML) prepares the ICS-205 for the next operational period.
- G. Whenever possible, talkgroups should be reduced to regional or local talkgroups to help prevent system loading outside the incident area.
- H. If and when transfer of command occurs, appropriate handoffs need to happen to ensure a smooth transition.

Upon initial response the dispatch center with primary control of the incident is responsible for the following:

- Assigning the proper STACs for the Command Net and the Staging Net
- Assigning the proper STACs for Operations Section Tactical Nets; Law enforcement may use their service branch-specific talkgroups
- Establishing the necessary patches to ARMER resources and conventional channels as required
- Updating the status of the incident to effected PSAPs using the METCOM talkgroup
- Announcing the mutual aid staging collection point if there is no ICS structure to designate
- Announcing the location of the incident staging area(s) to incoming units
- Announcing the need for personnel and resources
- Updating the Status Board application to designate which interoperability resources have been assigned for use
- Advising when responding units can be cancelled
- Utilize regional talkgroups when feasible

This communications plan deals with the gap between the initial dispatch of the incident and the establishment of an ICS Communications Unit to prepare the Incident Communications Plan for the next operational period.

6. Management

Dispatch center managers and supervisors for agencies on the metropolitan region of the ARMER system shall ensure that staff is trained on this procedure and that it is followed for usage and assignment of the STAC talkgroups be adhered to, as well as the setting up of soft patches for which they are responsible.