



FEMA

PRACTICE NOTE

Emergency Communications: Use of an Encrypted Radio Channel for Senior Regional Officials during the 2009 Presidential Inauguration

PRACTICE

The National Capital Region (NCR) established an encrypted radio channel for use by the region's senior leaders, operations centers, and command posts during the 56th Presidential Inaugural events. This secure channel provided a dedicated and reliable method for these parties to coordinate activities and information throughout the Inauguration.

DESCRIPTION

After the historic 2008 election of Barack Obama as the first African-American president, planners anticipated that the 56th Presidential Inauguration would draw record crowds to the District of Columbia for the 3-day program of events. Early projections of Inauguration Day attendees ranged from 2 million to as high as 5 million. The extraordinary scope of the Inauguration required multiple agencies and jurisdictions to coordinate their planning, response, and support efforts. The Department of Homeland Security designated the Inauguration as a National Special Security Event (NSSE), which made the US Secret Service the lead federal agency for planning, coordinating, and implementing security operations. The District's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (DC HSEMA) served as the lead District agency for planning and coordinating District resources for the Inauguration.

Recent NSSEs include President Gerald Ford's state funeral in 2007 and the 2008 Republican and Democratic national conventions.

The NCR established an encrypted radio channel in conjunction with the DC Office of United Communications and DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services. The channel was intended for use by senior officials and operations centers throughout the NCR. DC HSEMA appointed personnel to monitor the channel in an effort to ensure its functionality. The secure channel provided senior officials with the capability to share information easily and reliably during the Inauguration.

The NCR is comprised of the District of Columbia; Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland; and Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince Williams Counties and the City of Alexandria in Virginia.

The District of Columbia's Support to the 56th Presidential Inauguration After-Action Report Summary (AAR) recommends that event planners establish an encrypted radio channel for use during large-scale special events. The AAR noted that this channel should be dedicated specifically to key personnel. This will ensure that senior officials and operations centers will be able to communicate with each other throughout an event.

CITATIONS

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