

RELATED TERMS

- Channel
- Communications Unit
- Incident Command



Lessons Learned Information Sharing

www.LLIS.gov

PRIMARY DISCIPLINES

- Emergency Communications
- Emergency Management

LESSON LEARNED

Communications Protocols: Awaiting Acknowledgement of Channel Change Notices

SUMMARY

Units operating under an incident command structure should await acknowledgement of notices of communications channel changes prior to changing channels. This practice ensures that all units have received the communications transmissions and are informed of how to contact each other.

DESCRIPTION

The Topeka/Shawnee County, Kansas, Urban Area, an Urban Area Security Initiative community, validated its Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP) at the Topeka/Shawnee County Urban Area TICP Full-Scale Exercise on September 19, 2006. The exercise scenario involved a vehicle explosion at a university and the threat of another explosion at a water treatment facility. Over 93 individuals representing 21 federal, state, local, and private organizations participated in the exercise. These participants responded to the scenario using an incident command structure and performed communication procedures in accordance with their TICP.

During the exercise, the command and dispatch teams suffered a 17-minute lapse in communication because neither team waited for acknowledgement of their communications. The command unit designated a command channel at 9:18 am on the day of the exercise and notified all appropriate units, including the dispatch team, of this decision. Then the command unit immediately switched the command channel without waiting for acknowledgement from its subordinate units. The dispatch unit attempted to notify the command unit at 9:19 am that it would use another channel. The dispatch unit then began operating on this channel without waiting for the command unit's acknowledgement. Though the dispatch team may have known which channel the command unit was using, the command channel was unaware of how to communicate with the dispatch team. Seventeen minutes transpired before the teams recognized the problem and reestablished communications. Either team could have prevented this lapse by waiting for acknowledgment of receipt before changing channels.

Units operating under an incident command structure should await acknowledgement of notices of communications channel changes prior to changing channels. This practice ensures that all units have received the communications transmissions and are informed of how to contact each other.

CITATION

Shawnee County, Kansas, Emergency Management. *Topeka/Shawnee County Urban Area Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan Full-Scale Exercise*. 25 Oct 2006.
https://www.llis.dhs.gov/member/secure/detail.cfm?content_id=25130

DISCLAIMER

Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS.gov) is the US Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency's national online network of lessons learned, best practices, and innovative ideas for the emergency response and homeland security communities. The Web site and its contents are provided for informational purposes only, without warranty or guarantee of any kind, and do not represent the official positions of the US Department of Homeland Security. For more information on *LLIS.gov*, please email Feedback@llis.dhs.gov or visit www.llis.gov.