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LESSON LEARNED

Interoperable Communications: Identifying All Shared Radio Frequencies by Common, Region-Wide Nomenclature

SUMMARY

All shared radio frequencies should be identified by common, region-wide nomenclature. Emergency response organizations should consider creating a region-wide template for programming each organization's radios based on uniform terminology wherever possible.

DESCRIPTION

On September 14, 2006, the Kansas City Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Region conducted a 3-hour tactical interoperable communications plan (TICP) limited full-scale exercise. The purpose of the exercise was to validate the Kansas City UASI Region's TICP and to help participating agencies gain familiarity with the Plan's organizational structure and their communications equipment. The exercise scenario involved three separate terrorist incidents occurring within the Kansas City UASI Region. The first incident simulated an improvised explosive device detonating at a mall, while the other two incidents simulated the identification of two additional locations as potential targets for a terrorist attack. Exercise participants included 67 representatives from 28 local agencies, the Kansas Highway Patrol, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The **Kansas City UASI Region's TICP** describes the types of interoperable communications resources available within the Kansas City urban area. The plan also details which emergency response organizations control each communications resource and prescribes operational procedures for the use of each resource during emergency response.

Some participating organizations did not have uniform labels for mutual aid radio channels during the exercise. Many organizations used National Public Safety Planning Advisory Committee (NPSPAC) mutual aid radio channels for interoperable communications. These channels were the only resource that could facilitate region-wide communications among the unified commands at each of the three incident sites. Explosive ordinance disposal and hazardous materials teams also used NPSPAC channels to establish discipline-specific networks between responders at the incident sites. Although many of the participating organizations had NPSPAC channels, emergency responders had named the channels differently within their radios. When emergency managers requested radio dispatchers for the channels, the procedures used to activate them were adequate and met the needs of the responders. However, the Kansas City UASI Region TICP exercise after-action report (AAR) concluded that the inconsistencies within the naming convention could have caused confusion if the exercise was an actual incident that required a large number of mutual aid responders from outside the region. The AAR recommended that all shared radio frequencies should be identified by common region-wide nomenclature. The Region's Interoperability Committee has already initiated a process to create a region-wide template

for programming each emergency response organization's radios based on uniform terminology wherever possible.

All shared radio frequencies should be identified by common, region-wide nomenclature. Emergency response organizations should consider creating a region-wide template for programming each organization's radios based on uniform terminology wherever possible.

CITATIONS

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