

## RELATED TERMS

- Incident Radio Communications Plan
- Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan



## Lessons Learned Information Sharing

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# LESSON LEARNED

## PRIMARY DISCIPLINES

- Emergency Communications
- Emergency Management

## Emergency Dispatch: Monitoring the Quality of Communications Links during Major Incident Responses

### SUMMARY

Dispatchers should continuously monitor communications links for quality and degradation during major incident responses. This can help ensure that communications problems are recognized and resolved before operational disruptions occur.

### DESCRIPTION

On September 17, 2006, the Metropolitan Boston Homeland Security Region (MBHSR) conducted the Operation Poseidon full-scale exercise (FSE). The FSE was designed to evaluate the region's Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP). MBHSR's TICP provides guidelines for the control, distribution, and use of communications resources during incident response operations in the Boston area. The Operation Poseidon FSE simulated a radiological dispersal device incident, the discovery of a suspicious package, and a hazardous materials incident occurring at three separate sites in the metropolitan Boston area. More than 500 representatives from 30 federal, state, local, and private sector agencies participated in the FSE, including members of the Boston area's emergency medical services (EMS) team.

Dispatchers at Boston's Central Medical Emergency Direction (C-MED) Center facilitated communication between EMS field units and hospitals during the FSE. At one point during the exercise, an EMS unit contacted C-MED to request a radio link with a local hospital emergency room. The C-MED dispatcher who established the link noticed a signal distortion that would likely have interfered with communication between the EMS unit and the hospital. The dispatcher immediately informed the EMS unit that they "did not have patch quality audio" and instructed the unit to continue to the destination hospital and to contact C-MED when they were closer. The dispatcher's early recognition of the problem prevented the signal distortion from interfering with EMS communications and patient transport. MBHSR's after-action report on the FSE emphasized the need for dispatchers to regularly monitor the quality of communications links during incident response operations.

Dispatchers should continuously monitor communications links for quality and degradation during major incident responses. This can help ensure that communications problems are recognized and resolved before operational disruptions occur.

### CITATION

Metropolitan Boston Homeland Security Region. *Communications Interoperability: Interoperable Communications Plan*. Boston, MA. 01 May 2006.

Metropolitan Boston Homeland Security Region. *Operation Poseidon Full-Scale Exercise, TICP Evaluation, After-Action Report*. Dec 2006.

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