



Operation Safety Net: Emergency Communications Planning

March 3, 2021

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) division of Emergency Communication Networks (DPS-ECN) is actively engaged in supporting Operation Safety Net. DPS-ECN has prepared this document to facilitate local, regional, and statewide planning and coordination efforts related to emergency communication capabilities.

9-1-1/PSAP:

Minnesota's 104 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) receive over 2.95 million 9-1-1 emergency calls per year and play a vital role in supporting response operations.

- Planning & Coordination Efforts: DPS-ECN and the Metropolitan Emergency Services Board (MESB) are facilitating efforts to help ensure that 9-1-1 service and PSAP operations are not adversely impacted during periods of high demand.
- Recommendations:
 - Understand the potential impact that civil unrest may have on 9-1-1 call volumes and PSAP capabilities.
 - Ensure that PSAP personnel are included in the operational planning process.
 - Review Continuity of Operations (COOP) plans and/or mutual aid agreements with neighboring PSAPs.
 - Consider the need to implement alternative methods for the public to contact the PSAP and request non-emergency services, thus reducing demand on the 9-1-1 system.
- 9-1-1 Network Performance Issues: Issues related to the performance of the 9-1-1 network infrastructure should be reported to the Century Link/Lumen Network Operations Center at 1-800-357-0911.

ARMER System:

With over 90,000 active users, the statewide Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response (ARMER) system provides nearly every Minnesota public safety agency with interoperable Land Mobile Radio (LMR) capabilities.

- Planning & Coordination Efforts: Communications Unit (COMU) personnel from the Metropolitan Emergency Services Board (MESB) region have developed a robust Incident Communications Plan (ICS-205) to support response operations.
- Recommendations:
 - Unit Identifiers / Plain Language: During multi-agency/multi-discipline response operations utilizing regional/statewide interoperability talkgroups, ARMER system users should identify themselves by agency, discipline, and call sign (e.g., "Hennepin EMS 512", "Hennepin Sheriff 1129", etc.). Radio transmissions should be clear, concise, and understandable using plain language.
 - Dragging Resources: "Dragging" an ARMER talkgroup resource to other tower sites occurs when an uninvolved responder selects the active talkgroup to monitor radio traffic. This practice is strongly discouraged as it can adversely impact system performance and, more importantly, responder safety.
 - Lost, Missing, or Stolen Radios: An ARMER radio in the wrong hands can compromise operational security and pose a threat to responder safety. Agencies should maintain an accurate radio inventory and engage their system administrator to immediately disable any lost, missing, or stolen radios.
- StatusBoard: Coordination and efficient use of ARMER talkgroup resources amongst all users of the system is essential. Statewide interoperability talkgroup resources must be reserved in StatusBoard. Remember that ARMER is a statewide radio system and other users may need to access these resources.
- ARMER System Performance Issues: Issues related to ARMER system performance should be reported to your local ARMER system administrator, who, in turn, will share this information with regional and Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) partners as necessary.

Wireless Broadband:

Emergency responders are increasingly dependent on cellular service providers to support their interoperable voice and data communication needs.

- Recommendations:
 - Cellular service provided by certain carriers may be severely taxed during periods of high demand. Understand the impact that large crowds and increased demand may have on the ability of emergency responders to access their cellular service provider's network.
 - Engage cellular carriers to verify that reliable coverage and capacity is available at key locations/facilities within the area of operation.
 - Consider the need for diversity and redundancy in terms of cellular technology and/or service providers. This will help ensure that emergency responders have reliable access to cellular service.
- Support Resources (Verizon Wireless): For 24/7/365 technical and operational support, Verizon Wireless customers can contact the Verizon Response Team at 1-800-981-9558.
- Support Resources (FirstNet): For 24/7/365 technical and operational support, FirstNet customers can contact FirstNet Dedicated Care at 1-800-574-7000.
- Support Resources (T-Mobile): For 24/7/365 technical and operational support, T-Mobile customers can contact the Emergency Response Hotline at 888-639-0020 or 254-295- 2220 for Government Emergency Telephone System (GETS) users.

Public Alert & Warning:

The Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) provides local alerting authorities with the capability to issue Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) messages to the public via cellular devices (smartphones & tablets) and Emergency Alert System (EAS) messages via commercial broadcast partners (television, cable, radio, etc.).

- Recommendations:
 - Understand the public alert and warning capabilities that are available locally to support response operations.
 - Incorporate public alert and warning roles, responsibilities, and authorities into the operational planning process.
- Support Resources: John Dooley, the DPS-ECN IPAWS Program Manager, is available to provide technical, training, and operational planning support related to WEA and EAS capabilities. John can be reached at 651-201-7099 or john.dooley@state.mn.us.

Situational Awareness/Information Sharing:

- Suspicious activity and/or malicious acts related to PSAP operations and emergency communications infrastructure should be reported to the MN Fusion Center at 651-793-3730 / MN.FC@state.mn.us and DPS-ECN at ECN_ALERT.dps@state.mn.us.
- Any adverse impacts to PSAP operations and/or emergency communications infrastructure should be reported to DPS-ECN at ECN_ALERT.dps@state.mn.us. DPS-ECN will, in turn, ensure that the Operation Safety Net MACC (Multi-Agency Coordination Center) and SEOC (State Emergency Operations Center) are notified as necessary.

Questions?

Questions regarding these recommendations and DPS-ECN's ongoing planning and coordination efforts to support Operation Safety Net should be directed to one of the DPS-ECN team members listed below:

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