



NEWSLETTER

Operation Mayhem—PPSTN Interoperability in Action

On September 19th at 10:00 a.m., the Prince Albert Mutual Aid Group hosted a major emergency management exercise in the City of Prince Albert. Front-line response agencies included Prince Albert Fire & Rescue, Prince Albert Police Service, Parkland EMS, Buckland Fire & Rescue and the RCMP.

The scenario involved a tornado touchdown on the south side of the City, at Carlton Comprehensive High Schools, resulting in multiple casualties, extensive damage and entrapments. Students eagerly participated in the role of casualties. The scenario continued to a second location in the north-central part of the City, at the Dave Stuart arena, where the scenario again involved multiple casualties, structural collapse and entrapment



The exercise was extensively monitored by emergency management observers from across the Province.

The PPSTN was involved in the event by providing support during the planning, exercise and post-exercise analysis phases, in both the technical and voice communication management areas.



This was an excellent opportunity for the PPSTN to showcase its multi-agency response support for the critical area of voice communications, and the potential for unified site command. The PPSTN provided 24 cache radios for the use of the exercise monitors, and to support additional operational personnel.

A talkgroup management plan utilizing the interoperable talk groups “Public 1-3” was implemented. Agencies were encouraged to utilize their own talkgroup for tactical and scene-to-dispatch communications, while unified command utilized the Public talk groups for multi-agency scene communication.

The exercise was an overall success and it was a major step forward in providing interoperable voice communications capacity to support of our front-line responders. Lessons learned included: the need for training; the need to use common terminology; that the different dispatch centers are a critical part of any interoperable communication plan; that large-scale incidents require a communications management plan; and the need to establish common radio usage protocols. Fire Chief Les Karpluk stated: “we now have the capability for all agencies to talk – this is critical for the safety of our first responders and the public we serve.”



Province-Wide Interoperability—Where Do We Go from Here?

The front-line response community has long awaited the development of multi-agency interoperable capacity in our Province. The Fire Commissioner has directed that work begin on the formation of a Provincial initiative to address voice interoperability as an immediate priority, with an eye to the future development of data sharing in support of emergency response.

The Provincial initiative will be in line with the national stratagem, as adopted by the Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency Management (interoperability working group). This strategy embraces the 5 pillars of the Canadian Communications Interoperability Continuum: Governance, Standard Operating Procedures, Technology, Training and Exercises and Usage.

In support of this developing initiative, high level representatives from key public safety stakeholder groups recently met in Regina. As a result of this meeting, a *Saskatchewan Interoperability Interest Group* will be formed early in the new year, and tasked with forging a provincial interoperability strategy and action plan in line with national-level initiatives. One of the most important contributions of this group is their high-level endorsement of the development of province-wide interoperability. The Ministry of Corrections Public Safety and Policing was asked to lead the efforts of this consensus-based group.

The PPSTN must play a large role in the first critical steps of achieving functional, broad-based voice interoperability. The PPSTN has long promoted the principle that “operations must drive technology – technology does not drive operations.” In other words, the PPSTN provides one tool – the practitioners need to develop the best way to utilize it.

During the recent Operation Mayhem multi-agency response exercise in Prince Albert, the powerful interoperable capacity of the PPSTN was utilized by front-line response agencies for the first time. This represents a significant step forward, and the lessons learned during this exercise will assist in the development of training and protocols for effective communications support of front-line response.

Emergency Management and Fire Safety and the PPSTN are committed to the success of this effort – more to come in the future.

Voice Interoperability Pilot in Progress

A pilot project was recently initiated in the Prince Albert area to further develop support for multi-agency voice interoperability.

As a result of Operation Mayhem's successful multi-agency exercise, Prince Albert Mutual Aid group partners, Emergency Management and Fire Safety, and PPSTN personnel agreed that a pilot project would be a great way to develop a model for voice interoperability. Working meetings of this group have resulted in the development of a draft voice interoperability protocol and training plan. The Pilot Group will begin utilizing the protocol over a 6 week evaluation period; it is expected that their success will form the base for a province-wide interoperability protocol.

Industry Canada Licensing

Industry Canada requires all radios transmitting or receiving on the PPSTN be licensed annually. Radios not fixed to a geographical location – mobiles and portables – cost \$41 each year for a license renewal, while those in fixed locations – base stations – cost somewhat more, depending on the number of channels they use. This year, the typical base station licensing cost was \$174.

The Industry Canada licensing fee for the period of April 1, 2012 through March 31, 2013 is due before the end of March 2012. The PPSTN billed clients these fees in January 2012 and will remit them to Industry Canada upon receipt.

These invoices described the licensing as “License Billing – 3rd Quarter” when it should have been described as “License Billing – April 2012 – March 2013.” The PPSTN regrets the confusion this may have caused its clients.

PPSTN clients are reminded it is their responsibility to ensure non-PPSTN channels in base station radios are properly licensed with Industry Canada.

Did You Know?

Every front-line responder has access to the interoperable radio talk-groups “Public” 1-6. These are the first flush of talk-groups that EMS, Fire, Municipal Police, the RCMP and other public safety groups will utilize to facilitate tactical inter-agency communication.

Simplex Channels have been installed on all PPSTN radios to allow for further interoperable communications, and radio-to-radio communications in areas that might not otherwise have portable radio coverage.

Help Us To Help You!

The PPSTN Helpdesk is available toll-free, 24/7 at 1-888-953-3693

For non RCMP and non SaskPower Users: When you call the PPSTN Level One Help Desk to report trouble with a mobile or portable radio to better help you we need to know:

What happened – describe in detail what you experienced with the radio – we will also need to know the RSSI (signal strength) – this is obtained by pressing the small button with one dot right below the transmit button on a portable, and by pressing the button labeled RSSI on a mobile.

When did it happen – the time and date that the trouble occurred.

Where did it happen - When you press the button that you pressed to get the RSSI value, you will also see the Site number displayed immediately after the RSSI.

Who did it happen to – who was using the radio at the time, the type of radio – mobile or portable, model and the LID number of the radio.

What talk-group were you on when it happened.



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