

Clinton County Department of Emergency Services

Narrowband Radio Project Update

December, 2011

Report #10

INTRODUCTION

We are now a little more than one (1) year away from the deadline of **December 31, 2012** for meeting the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Narrowband requirement. Since the November update, there has been very little activity for the Department of Emergency Services regarding the Narrowband Project. The extent of our activity has been to participate in a couple of conference calls with our consultant in an effort to answer questions from the various vendors. The next date of interest will be December 13, 2011, which is the deadline for RFP's to be submitted to the Commissioner's Office. Those RFP's will then be opened during the Commissioner's Meeting on the morning of December 15, 2011.

FCC licensing remains an item that is all but complete. We simply are awaiting the receipt of licenses for the additional channels we have requested. There are some additional housekeeping items with regard to licensing needing completed. Those items will be discussed in more detail in the FCC Licensing Section of this report.

While our FCC licensing endeavors are all but completed, those of you whom have FCC licenses for two-way radio communications purposes should be committing time and effort to ensure you are compliant. Modifying FCC licenses for narrowband compliance is really not difficult to work through. It just takes a little time and depending on what you are having done, a little bit of money. With the magical date of **December 31, 2012** clearly in our sites now, the time has come for you to be certain you are addressing all of your FCC licensing and two-way radio needs.

With the Holiday Season upon us and the start of a new year also rapidly approaching, thoughts and priorities can change. It is important for us to be certain the **December 31, 2012** deadline for meeting narrowband compliance remains on our "bucket list" of things to be completed prior to **December 31, 2012**.

FCC LICENSING

Now that we have approval for all of our law enforcement channels and are awaiting final approval for the fire & EMS channels, we have some housekeeping and additional licensing requiring attention. In the approved licenses we have received, there are a couple of modifications we are seeking to make in an effort to be certain we are FCC compliant in our public safety two-way radio operations. Additionally, we are also working with our consultant to license base station radio equipment for those public safety agencies having requested the county's permission to operate such equipment as a control station on our radio network. Upon approval from the FCC for control station operation, we will be reaching out to those agencies which have requested permission to operate control stations and working with them to enter into a User Agreement. This User Agreement with the county will allow the agency to operate their base station radio on the County's radio network.

Agencies who have not submitted a form requesting permission will not initially be permitted to operate base station radio equipment on the County's network. However, you will at a later time be given the opportunity to request permission for such approval. The County has taken this approach to the licensing of base station radio equipment for two reasons. The first reason is so we have some control over the equipment operating on our radio system. The second reason is to afford the opportunity for field user/subscriber agencies to save on the costs associated with FCC licensing. It is important to remember control station licensing only applies to channels the county is licensed for. If your agency is using private or municipal channels for communication, your agency is responsible for the licensing of those channels.

With 2011 rapidly coming to a close, ***December 31, 2012*** will be here before we know it. Don't wait until the last minute. Evaluate your licenses and equipment and have a plan for transition. If you have questions or are confused about what you or your organization should be doing, please feel free to contact me. I will gladly try to answer your questions or get you pointed in the right direction.

TECHNOLOGY TIMELINE DEVELOPMENT

With the RFP being released, we continue to have some discussion regarding the Technology Timeline. However, we will not be able to finalize this timeline until we have identified a vendor for the project. That being said, we anticipate a formal timeline will be in place by the first part of January following a kick-off meeting with the successful vendor.

OPERATIONAL TIMELINE DEVELOPMENT

While the Operational Timeline for the most part focuses on the field user community, it will also be dependent upon details of the Technology Timeline. We continue to have informal discussion with the public safety groups and seek input from them.

REVIEW & REVISION OF CURRENT RADIO PROCEDURES

Activity related to review of the current radio procedure has been very limited. The fire/EMS group will not be meeting again until after the start of the New Year. Once those meetings start to get back on track in January of 2012, review of the Fire Dispatch Procedures will become a priority.

As for the law enforcement group, with the addition of channel capacity there is an opportunity to put some of those channels into use prior to cutover of the new radio system. We will be looking to develop procedure for the use of these channels and putting them into operation hopefully prior to the end of the first quarter in 2012. In addition to the development of procedure for using these new channels, there will also need to be some discussion about programming of field user/subscriber equipment.

AWARDING OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Interested vendors should be working to complete their RFP's in preparation for submission by close of business on Tuesday December 13, 2011. The RFP's will then be opened during the regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners on the morning of Thursday December 15, 2011.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Following formal review of the received RFP's, recommendation for a vendor will be made to the Board of Commissioners. Once the recommendation is accepted by the Board of Commissioners, DES and its consultant will work to enter into agreement with the successful vendor and project implementation will commence. We expect to be under contract with a vendor by the end of December 2011 or first thing in January 2012 at the latest. It is estimated that the implementation of all phases of the transition will take approximately nine (9) months. The details of this work will be formally outlined in the Technology and Operational Timelines.

SYSTEM TESTING

With hopes of all system components being in place and programming of field user radio equipment complete, system testing will hopefully be conducted through October 2012.

SYSTEM ACCEPTANCE

Upon successful completion of system testing, the County will accept the system as complete and then schedule an official date for cutover to the new system. Presently System Acceptance is anticipated to occur sometime in early November 2012.

SYSTEM CUTOVER

Official cutover to the new system will occur on the officially proposed date. Field user agencies will be notified of the official date and time for cutover. Presently the County anticipates cutover occurring in mid to late November 2012.

MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR

The Department of Emergency Services has been focused the last several months on preparation for transitioning the County's public safety radio system to narrowband compliance prior to **December 31, 2012**. As part of that planning, we have reached out to you for feedback and input on different things. Your feedback and input has been very valuable to us as we have worked through this planning process. ***"Thank you for taking the time to share and provide input"***. With any kind of luck, when you receive the next update, we will have selected a vendor and will be working to schedule our kick-off meeting to begin finalizing the transition to our updated FCC narrowband compliant public safety radio system.

For those of you with FCC licensing issues, if you have not yet begun to evaluate the status of your licensing, please be certain to keep this on your list of things to do. At one point someone took the time and effort to obtain these channels for your organization to use. Not to mention the initial cost they incurred for obtaining licensing. **December 31, 2012** is now only a little over a year away, so please be certain to take the necessary action to maintain ownership of those licenses and also ensure narrowband compliance.

In closing, I would like to wish you all a safe and enjoyable Holiday Season. As we close out 2011 and ring in 2012, we will look to move forward in the transition to an enhanced and FCC compliant public safety two-way radio network. The Department of Emergency Services and the County look forward to working with you as this transition continues to take shape.

The Department of Emergency Services remains committed to insuring an orderly transition to a narrowband compliant radio system. Furthermore, we will continue working as a resource to local municipal government and the public safety community. I would ask that you share this document with your fellow public safety personnel and municipal officials. Sharing of this document will help to keep everyone informed of the FCC mandate to be narrowband compliant by **December 31, 2012**. Sharing this document will also help to keep everyone informed of the activities associated with improvements to Clinton County's public safety radio system. As always should you have questions, please feel free to contact me directly by telephone or Email. My office phone is **(570) 893-4090 ext. 3407**, and my Email address is kfanning@ClintonCountyPA.com.