

Clinton County Department of Emergency Services

Narrowband Radio Project Update

July, 2011

Report #5

INTRODUCTION

While December 31, 2012 is still a long way off, we are another month closer to the deadline established in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Narrowband Ruling. Since the June Update, there has been little activity from the Department of Emergency Services (DES) regarding our transition to narrowband. Over the last thirty (30) days or so, there has been some dialog between the county, our consultant and the FCC regarding licensing. Additionally there has been some initial work on the review of radio procedure and protocol. Furthermore, we have worked to share information with a few municipalities and field user agencies specific to FCC licensing requirements.

With our emphasis currently focused on administrative and planning activities there have been a couple of positive steps taken as we prepare to keep moving forward. Probably the most important news since the last update is with regard to project funding. The Clinton County Board of Commissioners has included \$1.5 million for the narrowband project in their restructuring of a bond issue. While the Board of Commissioners has made the financial commitment to the project, we will continue to seek other potential funding sources in an effort to offset cost or re-pay the bond issue.

While it is important for all municipalities and organizations to verify the radio equipment they are using meets the narrowband requirement, you also need to be certain you are in compliance if you have FCC licenses specific to your agency. If your agency has an FCC license and desires to continue operating under this license after December 31, 2012, you will need to be certain your licensing is in order. Your agency initially took the time to obtain an FCC license. It is your responsibility to insure you maintain compliance with the regulations set forth by the FCC's. Furthermore, you need to keep in mind, if you are planning to operate your base station equipment on channels licensed to Clinton County, you will need to submit a letter of request to DES.

FCC LICENSING

It has been almost ninety (90) days since our initial submission to the FCC for license modification. In the middle of June we finally began to receive some of our newly modified licenses from the FCC. These licenses allow for our radio equipment to function in a wideband spectrum as well as narrowband. This functionality affords us the ability to continue operation with our current system, while at the same time securing the frequency for our use in narrowband spectrum as we transition our radio system. To this point, the modified licenses we have received are specific to law enforcement and our med channels. We had a small issue with regards to a new frequency we had requested for repeater

use. Essentially the frequency we had requested was relatively close in spectrum to a channel being used within a certain mileage radius. This raised a flag with the FCC regarding the possibility of interference. This concern required DES to work with its consultant to seek other options. Following some dialog and discussion a solution was identified and a new request has been submitted for consideration. We have yet to receive any feedback with regard to our submission specific to modification of our existing fire and EMS channels. Since these license modifications were submitted approximately forty-five (45) days after the police and med channel licenses, we do not anticipate any correspondence until late in July or early August.

As a follow-up reminder to FCC licensing information contained in the **INTRODUCTION SECTION**, if any of you (Public Safety Organizations or Municipal Government) are operating a base radio unit from your municipal building, police station or fire/EMS station you have FCC licensing issues that will need to be addressed specific to narrow banding. Additionally, if your organizations desire is to have county licensed channels programmed in your base station radio equipment, an official request will need to be made to DES, whom will in turn need to provide formal written approval. As mentioned in the previous update, your agency or organization may have previously obtained this approval in years past. However, in order to “dot all of the i’s and cross all of the t’s” and ensure we are all in compliance we feel it is important go through this exercise in record keeping/maintenance. Again, I would suggest holding off on making any changes to your licenses until the county receives final FCC approval on its proposed frequency plans. At this point I would simply recommend reviewing your records in preparation for making licensing changes.

Re-licensing and the approval process for use of the county’s licensed channels can be a little confusing. If your organizations intention is to operate a base radio and use county licensed channels, please make contact with me. I will gladly work with you to insure as smooth a transition as possible for permission to operate your base station with county licensed channels.

TECHNOLOGY TIMELINE DEVELOPMENT

Clinton County DES has engaged in formal conversation with its Consultant regarding the development of a Technology Timeline. This activity falls into Phase II of the Narrowband Project, which we officially plan to begin sometime during the month of July. We have received from our Consultant a Professional Service Agreement, which is currently under review by the County’s Solicitor. Once this document has been reviewed the County will sign into agreement with our Consultant and we will officially kick-off Phase II of the Narrowband Project, which will include the finalized development and implementation of the Technology Timeline.

OPERATIONAL TIMELINE DEVELOPMENT

Transitioning operationally to a new radio system continues to be an area of discussion with DES and field user agencies. DES has compiled data concerning the various radio vendor’s being used by field user agencies and also compiled data on additional frequencies being used in addition to the county licensed channels. This information will be used as we work with the public safety sector to formalize a timeline to meet our operational needs and insure a smooth transition.

REVIEW & REVISION OF CURRENT RADIO PROCEDURES

As part of the monthly Fire Procedure Committee meeting, the reviewing of procedures has begun. The fire & EMS group has decided on a frequency profile to accommodate the proposed addition of repeated operations channels. Additionally, this frequency profile listing includes capacity for those agencies with approval to operate on radio channels from contiguous counties. The frequency profile also includes the use of VHF channels designated for interoperability with resources from within North Central Task Force (NCTF) and Commonwealth agencies operating on the 800 MHz. A similar discussion will occur at the next Law Enforcement Committee meeting. With frequency profiling behind us, the next areas for review and discussion will be more focused on various operational aspects. These portions of our procedures are somewhat lengthy and will presumably take some time to get through.

CREATION OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Pending the review and approval of the Professional Service Agreement with our Consultant, we anticipate officially beginning the Request for Proposal (RFP) development during the month of July. During informal dialog with our Consultant we have exchanged several ideas/ thoughts concerning system needs and vendor requirements. This information will be used in the development and creation of the formal RFP. Our goal is still for the RFP to be complete and ready for distribution by early in September of this year.

BIDDING OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

It continues to be the hope of DES that the project will be in a position for the completed RFP to go out for bid to the various vendors in September of 2011. Following regulations set forth by County Code, the bids will be opened in an official meeting of the County Board of Commissioners. Once the bids are opened, they will then be reviewed by DES and their consultant to insure accuracy of the bids received. It is still anticipated this process will occur in mid November 2011.

AWARDING OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Following formal review of the received bids, a formal recommendation will be made to the Board of Commissioners. It is hoped the formal recommendation and the RFP will be awarded by December 2011 or no later than early in January of 2012.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Following the awarding of the RFP, the County will enter into contract with the successful vendor and project implementation will commence. 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

In reviewing this month's update, one might get the impression there was really not much activity with the county's narrowband project. At this stage of the project, it is truly difficult to physically see where there has been much activity, as most of what is presently happening can be consider as "behind the scenes" work. The big news for this month is; the Clinton County Board of Commissioners has made a financial commitment in order to be certain we meet the deadline of **December 31, 2012** for achieving the FCC's narrowband compliance regulations. While the Board has made this financial commitment, we still continue to hope for and will seek additional financial support that can be used for debt reduction/ bond repayment.

As we continue through the summer months, physical changes will continue to be missing from the narrowband project, as we still have a significant amount of planning activity in front of us. While there will be no physical appearance to narrowband activity, we need to be certain the **December 31, 2012** deadline does not fall to the bottom of our list of things to do and get forgotten. If you are an organization with FCC licensing issues needing addressed, you need to be digging into those records and getting prepared to make modifications. If you have issues or questions regarding licensing please do not hesitate to call. I will be happy to work with you. Also, if you have not done so, you should be confirming your current radio equipment is definitely narrowband compliant. If you're not certain about your equipment, simply contact your radio equipment vendor and inquire with them. They should be able to assist you in making the appropriate determination.

Over the next few months we will continue moving forward at a gradual pace insuring the planning process is completed in an efficient manner, resulting in a radio system designed to meet our needs. DES 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. Please feel free to contact me directly by telephone or Email. My office phone is **(570) 893-4090 ext. 3407**, while my Email address is kfanning@ClintonCountyPA.com.