

Clinton County Department of Emergency Services

Narrowband Radio Project Update

September, 2011

Report #7

INTRODUCTION

With the passing of another month, the deadline of **December 31, 2012**, for meeting the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Narrowband requirement continues to get closer. With the summer months behind us for the most part, we are beginning to see activity increase with the narrowband project. Through our consultant, we continue to stay focused on items related to FCC licensing so as to insure we maintain our existing frequency capacity and also add some additional capability. As of this writing, we have secured the bulk of our existing frequency capacity with a couple of exceptions, and we anticipate resolution to those exceptions in the near future. Additionally, we are awaiting notification and approval for the increased capability we have requested. ***In this month's update, you need to read carefully the FCC licensing section, as there are some changes specific to licensing of base station radio equipment.***

During the month of September the Department of Emergency Services along with our consultant will be sitting through vendor presentations to evaluate radio equipment so as to be current with modern technology in the two-way radio industry. While we seek to be more educated in the current technology, we have a need to also ensure the products we end up using for our upgrade will meet future technology requirements as well.

We have completed two (2) planning conference calls with our consultant since the last update. During those conference calls we discussed at great length items needing included as part of the RFP process, as well as had discussion on items related to timelines. Those meetings also included the scheduling of vendor presentations and follow-up on our FCC licensing.

On the morning of August 17, 2011 the Board of Commissioners, our consultant and I presented in front of the County Commissioner Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP). Our presentation was specific to the steps Clinton County has taken thus far in the narrowband process and, our plans to be compliant prior to **December 31, 2012**. It was an interesting opportunity to see what other counties are also doing in order to prepare, as well as see where they are at in the process.

Over the next few months our narrowband activity will be increasing tremendously as we begin working through the RFP process and begin to take a more comprehensive look at the transition process. The clock continues to move forward as we get closer to **December 31, 2011**. It is important for those of us at all levels of government to insure we keep the **December 31, 2012** deadline on our radar screen. We need to be mindful of the deadline so as to avoid the possibility of not being compliant and suffering the penalty for failure to comply.

FCC LICENSING

As previously mentioned, we are still in process with the FCC on three (3) remaining licenses and the additional frequency capacity we have requested. Part of the challenge is the limited availability of frequencies and how we plan to use the frequencies we have requested. The frequency coordinator and the FCC need to be certain there will be no interference issues with the channels we hope to use. We simply need to be patient and allow the process to work through. We will eventually end up with what we have requested. It is just taking a little longer than anticipated.

Over the last several months, we have been asking all emergency service organizations and municipal governments to be checking into the status of any FCC licensing they might have in place for their respective agencies. The reasoning for this was because much like the county, you also have FCC licensing issues you will need to address. During our conference calls we recognized some challenges for public safety agencies and municipal government with regard to licensing. Additionally, here at DES we had concerns over maintaining control of the new enhanced public safety radio system. As a result of these concerns, our consultant has recommended a solution that would eliminate the need for some organizations to go through the licensing process in order to operate a base station radio if they are only going to use channels already licensed by Clinton County DES. In lieu of each agency needing to license the channels already licensed by Clinton County, we the county would license your base station radio as something known as a "Control Station". Essentially, this gives agencies the opportunity to maintain their base station radio for use on the county's public safety radio system, without the need to obtain a separate FCC license for their base station radio. This will be the only way the county is going to allow agencies to operate a base station radio on the public safety radio system. The county will not be granting permission for outside agencies to independently license base station radio equipment for operation on our public safety radio system. Licensing your base station as a "Control Station" is our means of maintaining control of Clinton County's public safety radio system. There will be more formal information specific to licensing base station radio equipment as a "Control Station" coming out in the near future. For certain you will need to have written permission from the County to operate a "Control Station" on the county's radio system. Again, more details will be forth coming. Please keep in mind, the "Control Station" option is only specific to channels licensed to Clinton County DES. If you are using other channels on your base station radio you still need to be licensed to operate on those channels. Each agency is responsible for the licensing of these other channels for their base station radio equipment.

FCC licensing can be a cumbersome process to work through. If you have any questions or need help in navigating the licensing process for your other channels, 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

During the conference calls held with our consultant in August, we have begun to circle in on the formalization of the technology timeline. Unfortunately, with the unforeseen weather event during the week of September 5, 2011 we have gotten a little off track. We hope to formally finalize our Technology Timeline while our consultant is onsite for vendor presentations during the week of September 12, 2011.

OPERATIONAL TIMELINE DEVELOPMENT

The Operational Timeline has temporarily fallen to the back seat. While we have had some limited discussion with the public safety community regarding a potential process and timeline for transition, the discussion to this point has not been very formal. It is anticipated that once the Request for Proposal has been developed and released, we will then engage our consultant to assist in the development and finalization of a plan to transition over to the new public safety radio system. We should begin to focus time and effort on the Operational Timeline sometime in late October or early November.

REVIEW & REVISION OF CURRENT RADIO PROCEDURES

Activity related to review of the current radio procedure is ongoing for both the fire/EMS and police sides of the radio system. Some initial work was done with the fire/EMS portion early in the summer and follow-up discussion was held during the month of August. The next scheduled meeting was on the evening of September 7th and was postponed due to the potential of severe weather. A follow-up meeting has yet to be scheduled. Review of the procedures related to the police side is being overseen by Q/A Supervisor Joanne Furl. Ms. Furl is working with law enforcement personnel to review radio procedure as part of the monthly Law Enforcement Committee Meeting.

CREATION OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

RFP development is in process. Our consultant has been actively working on the development of this document. As part of the development process they will be making a return visit to each of our tower sites to insure all aspects of the project have been identified and will be included in the final RFP. We anticipate the final RFP will be ready for distribution at the end of September.

BIDDING OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

As indicated in the RFP creation section, we anticipate the final RFP will be complete by late September and will then be going to bid by early October. As part of the RFP bidding process, DES in partnership with our consultant will be conducting site visits with interested vendors. These site visits will be scheduled for sometime in early to mid October. 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

Here at the Department of Emergency Services we are beginning to see activity picking up with regard to the narrowband radio project. There is a great deal of work needing done on our end as we move through the next couple of months. We seem to be staying on task with the various items, which are under control. However, we still have some uncertainty in our FCC licensing. I am confident we will be able to see the remaining licensing through and receive the approvals we have requested. We simply need to be patient. Based on the County's experience with FCC licensing, you can clearly see why it is important for you as an emergency service organization or municipality to get a handle on what you have and make decisions about what your plans are for any existing licenses you may have. DES has a solution to address base station licensing for the public safety arena, but some of you still have licensing

to take care of regarding other municipal channels or private channels you have had licensed. The county started its venture with FCC licensing in the middle of April this year. We are five (5) months in and we still do not have resolution and approval for all of our licenses. So if you have municipal and/or private channels requiring update or renewal, the **December 3, 2012** dead line will be here before you know it. Now is the time to get those licenses out and evaluate your needs for licensing of those municipal or private channels you have.

I am pleased with the position we are currently in as we work to meet the **December 31, 2012** deadline. While working to meet the FCC narrowband requirement, we are at the same time making some much needed enhancements in our public safety radio system. These enhancements will not only make us narrowband compliant, but will also give Clinton County a state of the art radio system capable of future expansion and upgrade should the need arise.

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. 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.