

Clinton County Department of Emergency Services

Narrowband Radio Project Update

November, 2011

Report #9

INTRODUCTION

Another month is behind us, bringing the deadline of December 31, 2012 for meeting the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Narrowband requirement closer. It has been a busy month for the Department of Emergency Services and our consultant as we continue to move forward in the process of transitioning Clinton County's Public Safety Radio System to narrowband compliance prior to December 31, 2012.

It appears as though we have finally managed to work our way through the FCC licensing process. After seven (7) months we have been able to identify channels and navigate our way through the governmental process to obtain approval. At this point we have a high degree of comfort we will be receiving final approval for the frequency capacity we have requested in order to enhance our public safety radio system, while also meeting the FCC narrowband requirements prior to December 31, 2012.

In addition to FCC licensing,, probably the biggest news is the advertising and posting of our Request for Proposal (RFP). The document was actually released a week sooner than we had originally anticipated and has actually been available since early in October. This was a turning point for us, as we will soon be taking the next big step in the process, which will be the identifying and selecting of a vendor to build out our public safety radio system.

October also saw DES reaching out to the public safety agencies and requesting information pertaining to the possibility of licensing base radio equipment as control stations. A questionnaire was sent via Email and the US Mail to all public safety organizations in Clinton County. Interested agencies were to complete the form and return it to DES. Agency response was very high in numbers and we will be working to include this licensing as part of the narrowband project.

With the last two (2) months of 2011 upon us our attention will be turning to the hunting season, along with the holidays. While our attention and focus will certainly change for a brief period of time, the December 31, 2012 deadline to meet the FCC narrowband requirement will still loom large for us and will be here before we know it. The Department of Emergency Services will continue its endeavor to stay on task in order to meet the deadline of December 31, 2012 to be certain the public safety radio system is in compliance and fully functional well before the December 31, 2012 deadline.

FCC LICENSING

It appears as though we have cleared all of the hurdles with our FCC licensing needs. Getting through the process has certainly been a challenge for us and our consultant. While it has been challenging, it has also been educational for us here at DES. As things look now, we have a tentative listing of all new channels we will be adding to the public safety radio network and have also received notification of modification to narrowband for most of our existing FCC licenses.

As has been customary through this process, we breakout our radio system into two (2) sides. The fire/EMS side of the system and the police side of the system. All licensing for the police side of the system is complete. We are now awaiting the final approval for licenses specific to the fire/EMS side of the system.

As previously indicated, public safety agencies were provided via Email and US Mail a document titled "Control Station Operation Request Form". Completion of this form and return to DES was needed by November 4, 2011 in order for public safety organizations to be considered for operating a base radio on the County's public safety radio network. Having received the completed request forms, our next step in the licensing process will be to seek and receive FCC approval for operation of base station radio equipment from the various locations of the requesting agencies. Agencies who have not submitted a form requesting permission will not be permitted to operate base station radio equipment on the County's network. With the receipt of completed request forms, we have submitted the necessary information to our consultant. They will begin the process of seeking official FCC approval. Agencies who have not submitted will have the opportunity at a later date 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.

Once the county receives FCC approval to add these control stations to the radio system, the agencies who requested permission will be notified by DES that approval has been received. We will then require you to enter into agreement with the county for operation of your base station radio on our public safety radio network.

The Department of Emergency Services has been contacted by a very limited number of municipalities. For municipal officials, I would encourage you to evaluate any FCC licensing you may have in place for your city, borough or township. Additionally, you need to be evaluating your radio equipment to be certain it is also compliant. As quick as the year 2011 has passed, I am certain **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 continues for both the fire/EMS and police sides of the radio system. While there has been some progress, personnel from the fire & EMS side of things have reached a point where they are going to take time to brain storm some ideas and concepts until we officially know what our frequency capacity is going to be with the fire& EMS side of the radio system. Over the next couple of months, procedure committee members will bring their ideas and concepts to their monthly meeting for discussion. Those ideas and concepts will be taken into consideration and more formal action will be taken with regard to procedure changes. Review of the procedures related to the police side continues to be 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 & ADVERTISING OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

The RFP has been completed, advertised and posted on the Clinton County Government Web Site. Due to the sensitive nature of some information contained in the RFP, there was only an advertisement of the RFP released and posted on the web site. Interested vendors were required to contact our consultant and following verification a copy of the RFP was provided. Interested vendors were required to participate in an official site walk, which was conducted on Friday October 28, 2011. This site walk consisted of visiting nine (9) tower sites so the vendors could get an understanding of what will be required to meet our public safety radio communications needs.

AWARDING OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

With the RFP having been advertised and the mandatory site walk being complete we continue to be on task. Completed RFP's are due into the Clinton County Commissioners Office by close of business on 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

With the change in seasons and the realization that 2011 is almost over, **December 31, 2012** does not seem to be that far off anymore. The Department of Emergency Services along with its consultant has done a great deal of work through October to begin lining things up for our transition to narrowband and make enhancements to our public safety radio system. At this point in the process, we are pretty much in a holding pattern as the various vendors work to complete their RFP's and prepare for submission by the required due date. Once the RFP's have been received, evaluated and a decision made, we will be in position to hopefully hit the ground running first thing in January 2012.

Narrowband activity through November will be limited. We will be answering questions from vendor's preparing an RFP for submission, as well as working to prepare for gathering additional field user information from the public safety agencies. As we move closer to planning the replacement of the radio console in the 9-1-1 communications center, we will be requesting information about field user equipment to aid us in some of our planning. With the possibility of leadership changes in some volunteer organizations, we will not be requesting this information until after the start of the New Year.

While the County is preparing to close the FCC licensing chapter of this project, I would encourage those of you with private or municipal channels to make sure you are addressing your

licensing needs. I am certain when this issue was first brought to your attention **December 31, 2012** seemed like a long time off. With calendar year 2011 rapidly coming to a close, **December 31, 2012** really is not that far away. If you have not started to address your FCC licensing needs, there will soon be a sense of urgency for you to make sure you are getting those licensing needs taken care of. **December 31, 2012** is no longer that far away.

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.