



Homeland
Security

Office for Domestic Preparedness

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ICTAP Bulletin

Connecting First Responders, Keeping America Safe

ODP Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP) provides on-site, comprehensive interoperability technical assistance to ODP grant recipients

September Highlights

The Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP) provides free technical assistance to enhance interoperable communications between local, State, and Federal emergency responders and public safety officials to cities and States that have received grants from the Department of Homeland Security, Office for Domestic Preparedness (ODP).

- **Tampa**—ICTAP analyzed interoperable communications problems experienced during Hurricane Charley. [For more on Hurricane Charley, see page two.]
- **ICTAP** staff introduced DHS's RapidCom 9/30 Program staff to key local officials in Chicago, San Francisco, Miami, and New York City.
- **Idaho**—ICTAP participated in five WMD exercises.
- **Kansas City**—ICTAP completed simulcast analysis of the region and gained approval for the use of target frequencies, moving closer to regional interoperable communications. [For more on interoperability progress in Kansas City, see page two.]
- **Houston**—ICTAP helped develop detailed scripts for tabletop exercises.
- **San Diego**—ICTAP helped establish Interoperability Working Group in response to an official request for assistance from the city.
- **Denver**—ICTAP identified potential problem areas and recommended the acquisition of additional cache and field radios.
- **ICTAP** interviewed communications personnel in over a dozen jurisdictions in the Miami and Tampa areas to help create regional equipment inventories.
- **Hawaii**—ICTAP initiated a survey to assist in the development of statewide interoperable communications for Hawaii's first responders.

ICTAP Analyzes Hurricane Communications, Lessons Learned: Control Mutual Aid Channels and Provide Radio Caches

—When Category 4 Hurricane Charley came ashore at Punta Gorda, Florida, on Friday, August 13, 2004, first responders relied on line-of-sight, radio-to-radio communications and sneaker-net to pass information for the first few days. Initially, Mutual Aid (MA) channels were overwhelmed by both the number of users and technical difficulties, causing some communications problems. However, by Monday, MA channels were working again and temporary trunked and conventional radio systems were installed to provide reliable communications. Some of the specifics are noted below.



Charlotte County Public Safety Answering Point after Hurricane Charlie, Bruce Mitchely, Miami-Dade PD

When relief efforts began in Punta Gorda, Polk County first responders received help from throughout the state. Forty (40) officers from the Tampa Police Department were assigned to patrol a 20-mile stretch of highway. These officers received 30 swap radios, which enabled them to patrol assigned sectors without need-



ing a manned relay. Additional swap radios were supplied to other first responders who arrived from outside of Polk County. For example, 50 radios were supplied from Jacksonville PD, 75 radios from Lakeland PD, and 225 radios directly from Motorola. This swap cache of radios was invaluable in providing a communications capability to first responders whose equipment was incompatible with Polk County equipment.

In addition, a communications problem occurred in Charlotte and Hardee Counties when law enforcement deputies arrived from other counties to assist with traffic control in the wake of multiple traffic light failures. Initially, the MA channels became overwhelmed when some repeaters, designated to be in non-transmit mode, were activated and overloaded the communications link. Eventually State and local policies prevailed, and the MA channels were regulated and used as intended.

In sum, the key interoperability “lessons learned” in responding to Hurricane Charley were: 1) control access to Mutual Aid channels;

- 2) maintain a list of those authorized to control repeaters; and,
- 3) maintain a cache of radios.

ICTAP Completes Simulcast Analysis of Kansas City UASI

—The ICTAP technical assistance team recently completed a simulcast analysis of the 800 MHz band for the region and gained local approval for the use of target frequencies, moving closer to the goal of interoperable communications in the region. The eventual system, called RAMBIS (Regional Area Multi-Band Integrated System), will connect interoperability channels throughout the eight-county metro region and will include all three major frequency bands used by public safety. RAMBIS will provide a “go to first” capability, giving the first responder an immediate resource to use for communications with other agencies.



Kansas City Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP)

For more information, contact the ODP Centralized Scheduling and Information Desk (CSID)

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