Homeland Security

Office of Emergency Communications
All-Hazards Type III Communications Unit Leader
Frequently Asked Questions

All-Hazards Type III COML Training and Implementation

Q1: What is an All-Hazards Type III Communications Unit Leader?

The Communications Unit Leader (COML) is a position under the Logistics Section of the Incident Command System (ICS) (see pages 57-58 of the National Incident Management System [NIMS], which is available at http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/NIMS_core.pdf). The COML's responsibilities include developing plans for the effective use of incident communications equipment and facilities, managing the distribution of communications equipment to incident personnel, and coordinating the installation and testing of communications equipment. The COML will supervise other members of the Communications Unit such as the Communications Technician (COMT), Radio Operator (RADO), and Incident Communications Center Manager (INCM), if those positions are filled during an incident.

Q2: What constitutes a Type III Event?

Incident response is categorized into five types according to incident magnitude and complexity. The type of response operation needed for an incident is determined by the level of resources required to address the incident as well as its duration (e.g., one hour, several weeks, etc.). The most complex incident, a Type I response (such as the one required by a large-scale natural disaster like Hurricane Katrina), necessitates a multi-disciplinal, multi-jurisdictional response for a significant duration. The least complex incident, a Type V response, such as the one required by a small fire or routine traffic stop, requires limited resources and time. A Type III event includes:

1. Activation of some or all of the Command and General Staff positions, as well as activation of some or all of the Division/Group Supervisor and/or Unit Leader-level positions.
2. Deployment of a Type III Incident Management Team or incident command organization to manage initial action incidents with a significant number of resources, manage an extended attack incident until containment/control is achieved, or manage an expanding incident until transition to a Type I or II team.
3. Extension into multiple operational periods.
4. Development of a written Incident Action Plan for each operational period (as necessary).

An All-Hazards Type III COML is prepared to respond to any Type III incident and implement the appropriate Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP).

Q3: Who should be trained as an All-Hazards Type III COML?

Candidates for COML training should have knowledge of the following: local communications processes and technologies; available communications systems; and regional, State, and local communications plans. Training should be taken by all public safety communications experts involved in any of the following activities: developing plans for the effective use of existing incident communications equipment, facilities, policies, and procedures; managing the distribution of communications equipment to incident personnel; and coordinating the installation and testing of communications equipment.

Q4: What are the prerequisites for taking the class?

Candidates should meet the following criteria:

1. A public safety communications background with exposure to field operations. This experience should be validated by the authority who supervised the applicant.
2. Fundamental public safety communications technology, supervisory, and personnel management skills. These include, but are not limited to, knowledge of:
   - local communications and communications systems;
   - frequencies and spectrum;
   - technologies;
   - local topography;
   - system site locations, including knowledge of State, regional, local communications plans and knowledge of regional and local TICPs, if available; and
   - communications and resource contacts.
3. Completion of the following training courses:
   - **IS-700**, which explains the purpose, principles, key components, and benefits of the NIMS. The course also contains Planning Activity screens, which allow participants to complete planning tasks during the course.
   - **IS-800b**, which introduces participants to concepts and principles of the National Response Framework.
   - **ICS-100**, which introduces the Incident Command System (ICS); provides the foundation for higher-level ICS training; and describes ICS history, features, principles, and organizational structure, as well as the relationship between the ICS and NIMS.
   - **ICS-200**, which provides training on, and resources for, personnel who are likely to assume a supervisory position within ICS.
   - **ICS-300**, which provides training on, and resources for, personnel who are required to implement advanced application of the ICS.

Q5: Does completing the class make me a COML?

No. Upon successful completion of the class, students must meet the requirements set forth by their State to become a certified COML. This process includes the completion of a task book. The task book may be found at http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/currentprojects/comltraining/comltraining.htm.

Q6: Our State would like to train our own trainers to teach the COML class. Is a Train-the-Trainer class available?

A COML Train-the-Trainer class is being finalized, and a plan to offer classes in early 2009 is being developed.

Q7: What are the qualifications to be a COML Trainer?

To qualify as a COML trainer, a student must be certified by his or her State as an All-Hazards Type III COML (see Question 5), meet the trainer qualifications set forth by his or her State, successfully complete a COML Train-the-Trainer class, serve as an adjunct instructor with a Lead Instructor for one class, and have an Instructor Task Book signed by the Lead Instructor. States may also impose additional requirements. To be added to the adjunct instructor list, please send a message to comltraining@hq.dhs.gov.

Q8: Where do I go to see a schedule of COML classes and COML Train-the-Trainer classes sponsored by OEC?

A current schedule of COML classes along with registration contacts are available at www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/currentprojects/comltraining/comltraining.htm.

Q9: Can grant funds be used to attend COML training?

Yes. Travel costs will be the responsibility of the individual State or local agency. However, the Federal Emergency Management Agency Grant Programs Directorate has confirmed that Homeland Security Grant Program funds and Interoperability Emergency Communications Grant Program funds, once awarded and programmed as such, may be used for travel, overtime, and backfill expenses related to COML training or the development and administration of credentialing processes.

Q10: Our State would like to sponsor our own COML training. Until our own trainers can be trained, whom do I contact to find qualified instructors?

OEC will maintain a list of trained instructors. The list may be obtained by sending a request to comltraining@hq.dhs.gov. Determining whether the instructor meets State

instructor qualifications and contracting for professional services is the responsibility of the two parties. An instructor's inclusion on the list does not indicate an endorsement of the instructor on the part of OEC. In addition, OEC maintains that the list only represents instructors who have met the basic requirements set forth by OEC.

Q11: Whom can I contact within DHS to obtain additional information on COML training?

States may contact OEC at comltraining@hq.dhs.gov for additional information.