



2015 Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St., SW
Washington, DC 20472

[This page intentionally left blank.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

National Executive Summary	2
1. Introduction	2
2. CY 2015 RECCWG Accomplishments	3
3. CY 2015 RECCWG Challenges.....	9
4. Cross-State and Cross-Regional Collaboration.....	11
5. Looking Ahead.....	12
 CY 2015 RECCWG Annual Reports and Cover Memorandums	

[This page intentionally left blank.]

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The calendar year (CY) 2015 Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report assesses the long-term best practices and challenges of emergency communications coordination at the interstate Regional level. It highlights significant CY 2015 RECCWG activities and accomplishments in improving intra- and inter-Regional relationships, coordinating strategies and systems, sharing lessons learned from real-world events, and aligning plans for sustainable emergency communications interoperability within each Region, cross-Regionally, and nationwide.

In compliance with Title XVIII, Section 1805, of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Act of 2007 (Pub. L. 109-295), each RECCWG is required to report annually on the status of its Region's operable and interoperable emergency communications initiatives. Regional annual reports were completed for each of the 10 Regions. The Regional reports are developed by RECCWG membership with support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC). The Regional reports are compiled in this document, which outlines the RECCWG progress and accomplishments and is the fourth such annual report.

In addition, the final CY 2015 RECCWG Annual Report is distributed to the Director of the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce.

BACKGROUND

Congress established the RECCWGs as Regional planning and coordinating bodies in each of the 10 FEMA Regions across the Nation. These working groups collaboratively assess and address the needs of the first responder and emergency management stakeholder communities to enhance the survivability, sustainability, operability, and interoperability of emergency communications across all levels of government. The RECCWG membership represents an active and diverse group of stakeholders from State, local, Tribal, and Territorial public safety organizations, as well as representatives from Federal departments and agencies with responsibility for coordinating interoperable emergency communications or providing response and support services. Numerous partnerships with the private sector and nongovernmental organizations help facilitate interactions among responders throughout the disaster response community, and the RECCWGs serve as a coordination point on emergency communications-related matters.

Since their inception in 2007, RECCWGs have adapted to the evolving public safety emergency communications landscape, needs, and emerging technologies. Through a mix of in-person meetings, webinars, and teleconferences, they focus on challenges and opportunities unique to each Region and also share information across Regions on topics of multi-regional or national

interest. The remaining sections of this executive summary provide a national perspective of the RECCWG program by highlighting accomplishments and challenges, while incorporating trends frequently cited across the Regional 2015 RECCWG Annual Reports. Figure 1 summarizes the accomplishments and challenges.

Figure 1: Summary of Frequently Cited 2015 RECCWG Accomplishments and Challenges

Accomplishments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced Regional and National-level coordination and planning among Federal Emergency Support Function #2 (ESF-2) agencies, RECCWG members, and industry partners • Facilitated Regional and national-level coordination during real-world disaster response and recovery operations and security events • Established RECCWG subcommittees to enable collaboration on a number of specific critical issues affecting multiple States across Regions • Leveraged training opportunities and shared training resources among Regional stakeholders to achieve efficiency while improving capability • Broadened the reach and perspectives of the RECCWGs through continued growth and diversification of membership • Improved visibility of Regional assets and understanding of critical vulnerabilities
Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determining funding sources for interoperability requirements • Gaining Tribal participation in the RECCWG • Increasing inclusion of communications in large-scale exercises • Planning for Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN)/First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) development • Addressing national interoperability channel use and naming conventions

2. CY 2015 RECCWG ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Throughout CY 2015, the RECCWG role continued to mature through expanded outreach and information sharing, new membership, coordination during real-world events, and participation in planning and execution of regional communications exercises. The maturing of the individual RECCWGs also led to increased opportunities for coordinating across regional lines and nationally on issues of common interest. To facilitate cross-regional coordination, the RECCWG program re-energized the National RECCWG Co-Chairs group. The group holds regular teleconferences to share solutions and best practices for addressing common challenges, and to identify opportunities and determine priorities for cross-Regional collaboration. In addition, the FEMA RECCs, who are charged with administering and facilitating Regional RECCWG meetings, held a 3-day Summit in Frederick, Maryland. During the Summit, the RECCs collaborated with other ESF-

2 agencies (e.g., DHS National Coordinating Center for Communications [NCC], DHS OEC, National Telecommunications and Information Administration [NTIA], FCC, General Services Administration) and commercial telecommunications providers to set a path forward for increased RECCWG participation from these partners and improved information sharing at the Regional level during disasters. Disaster responses in several Regions, such as severe flooding in North and South Carolina, wildland fires in in multiple States, and Typhoon Soudelor on Saipan, also led to several lessons learned for the RECCWGs to share with their counterparts across the Nation. In addition, preparedness efforts were augmented by several joint communications exercises, training events, and workshops throughout the year.

The following paragraphs detail key accomplishments that highlight progress made by the RECCWGs in CY 2015.

➤ **Accomplishment 1: Enhanced Regional and National-level coordination and planning among ESF-2 agencies, RECCWG members, and industry partners**

- Throughout the year, agencies such as the FCC, OEC, NTIA, Department of Defense (DoD), Transportation Security Administration, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Department of State regularly participated in RECCWG meetings across the Nation. The expansion of both the number of Federal partners and the quality of their engagement led to improved response operations and initiatives to improve preparedness for every Region.
- The Region I RECCWG coordinated with the Region I Defense Coordinating Element to explore options for programming of DoD radios with the national interoperability frequencies in Region I. A white paper was initially crafted in 2014, but the progress and advancements in 2015 resulted in an expanded DoD Interoperability Letter for national action. The initiative was well-received, and DoD J6 is coordinating nationwide programming of DoD radios to include channels from the National Interoperability Field Operations Guide (NIFOG) for use in support of domestic public safety operations.
- The FCC and NTIA engaged RECCWGs to inform members and seek comment regarding upcoming changes to regulations regarding programming of Federal Law Enforcement (LE)/Incident Response (IR) channels onto State/local/Tribal radios. The initiative also sets requirements for Federal agencies to standardize inclusion of LE/IR channels from the NIFOG onto their radios to improve interoperability with State/local/Tribal responders. The rule changes will also allow use in exercise scenarios to improve proficiency and capability of all responders.
- Through the sharing of real-world experiences and challenges and analysis of the current Incident Command System (ICS) structure, the Region I RECCWG determined that elevating the Communications Unit to a Command or General Staff level would enable the more accurate and timely exchange of information between leadership and communications personnel that is needed to provide effective communications support during an incident. The RECCWG developed a white paper describing the

challenges associated with the current structure and the proposed options for addressing these challenges. During CY 2015, the RECCWG also began coordinating this white paper and its concepts with the other RECCWGs nationally, SAFECOM, and the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators to obtain broader inputs and build a national consensus toward an effective solution.

- In collaboration with the OEC Regional Coordinator, FEMA Region II and the FEMA Caribbean Area Division formed the Caribbean Federal Interoperability Working Group. With more than 40 Federal agencies participating, the working group is intended to enhance interoperability efforts in the Caribbean region. The group has begun developing a Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan to catalog available communications assets and determine common procedures for sharing assets. The group has also coordinated with the Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation for access to a new Federal interoperability communications system in Puerto Rico, which will enable more reliable, interoperable communications for Federal emergency responders.
- In Region X, planning and exercises conducted as lead-ins to the 2016 Cascadia Rising full-scale exercise brought private sector industry and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) groups together with the RECCWG membership. Regular meetings involving various public safety and emergency management representatives have also included industry providers of critical communications infrastructure that supports response communication and public warning and information. VOAD groups have been included to ensure that the Whole Community approach is exercised to support mass-care, medical, and sheltering operations communications.
- The Region VII RECCWG membership receives regular briefings on the status of emergency communications infrastructure and assets within the Region. For example, Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska briefed on efforts to build out and/or transition agencies to statewide land mobile radio (LMR) systems. They also discussed specific solutions for enabling interoperability between statewide systems and legacy systems and among neighboring States. In addition, Federal RECCWG participants provided technical and operational information on nationwide networks such as the Shared Resources and FEMA National Radio System high-frequency (HF) networks. This information assisted RECCWG participants in understanding technical specifications necessary for interoperating with and/or leveraging these systems during emergencies, as well as lessons learned that can be applied to new buildouts.

➤ **Accomplishment 2: Facilitated Regional and national-level coordination during real-world disaster response and recovery operations and security events.**

- In Region IV, relationships established through the RECCWG enabled rapid deployment and communications coordination for Helicopter Rescue Teams from North Carolina to support response to flooding in South Carolina. Kentucky and Alabama coordinated communications-related Emergency Mutual Aid Assistance Compact support for response activity with FEMA Region IV and neighboring States via group calls with RECCWG members. South Carolina’s State Annex to the Regional

Emergency Communications Plan (RECP) was used by incoming Federal support teams to gain familiarity with State capabilities and was cited by the State for its value in reducing briefing requirements for incoming support teams.

- Several RECCWG discussions focused on best practices and lessons learned from the response and recovery operations for Typhoon Soudelor in the Pacific and the wildland fires in California. The Region IX RECCWG was instrumental in providing responders and command staff with critical information regarding the local communications infrastructure and the resources needed for response and recovery operations. Both incidents demonstrated that success stems from having strong, pre-established partnerships with multijurisdictional and multidisciplinary response agencies prior to major emergency events.
- The first official visit of Pope Francis to the United States included stops in Washington, DC, Philadelphia, PA, and New York City. Declared a National Special Security Event (NSSE) by the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, the event also coincided with the 70th Annual United Nations General Assembly. Members of the Region II and Region III RECCWGs worked collectively to prepare for the events, for which multiple Federal, State, and local public safety and emergency management agencies and jurisdictions had responsibilities for maintaining security and responding to potential incidents. Planning efforts resulted in a comprehensive Concept of Operations and Emergency Communications Plan, which included ICS 205 documents for each venue and outlined radio interoperability procedures for all participating agencies. The involvement of Region II and III RECCWG members helped to facilitate operable and interoperable emergency communications for the duration of the NSSE.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Established RECCWG subcommittees to enable collaboration on a number of specific critical issues affecting multiple States across Regions**

- The Region V RECCWG reinvigorated the Standard Operating Procedures & Usage, Training and Exercise, and Integrated Public Alert and Warning System subcommittees to address communications-related mission ready packages and updates to the Region V Interoperable Spreadsheet throughout the Region. The RECCWG also established new working groups to improve awareness and coordination with the National Guard, Civil Air Patrol, and Amateur Radio organizations in every State.
- The Region VII RECCWG established several subcommittees to guide creation of its 2016 goals. Examples include implementing a RECCWG Membership Subcommittee to ensure better representation of communications disciplines, and a RECCWG Communications Unit Credentialing Subcommittee to facilitate mutual aid support.
- During CY 2015, the Region VIII RECCWG revitalized its Membership and Charter Subcommittees. The Membership Subcommittee reviewed the membership list to determine whether the needs of emergency response disciplines, VOADs, Tribal Nations, and commercial critical infrastructure were being met. The Charter

Subcommittee drafted recommendations to the full membership for updates and modifications to ensure the optimal makeup of the RECCWG.

➤ **Accomplishment 4: Leveraged training opportunities and shared training resources among Regional stakeholders to achieve efficiency while improving capability**

- Region V membership shared information regarding multiple training opportunities, to include Communications Unit Leader and Communications Unit Technician training, as well as Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP) and Broadband workshops. This outreach and information sharing allowed the Region to leverage existing resources and training opportunities to meet its training goals in a restricted fiscal climate.
- The Region IX RECCWG enabled its members to share information regarding multiple training opportunities, as well as exchanged certified instructors to teach courses throughout the Region.
- Region III used its fall plenary meeting to conduct a tabletop exercise to prepare for degraded communications scenarios during the 2015 Papal visit NSSE.
- The Region VIII RECCWG's Auxiliary Communications Subcommittee continued its dedication to strengthening and enhancing amateur radio capabilities by holding two meetings that focused on training amateur operators to prepare them for providing auxiliary communications during emergencies. A 2-day meeting in August provided training for the amateur role in emergency management, forming coalitions among the amateur community and paving the road forward for strengthening the auxiliary communications functions in the Region. The event featured a keynote speaker and panel discussions by representatives from both emergency management and amateur radio communities to outline auxiliary communications roles and responsibilities. The RECCWG also held an auxiliary communications workshop in October that provided training to amateur operators to prepare them for disaster operations. The training was video-recorded for sharing among other RECCWGs and remains available for viewing via YouTube.
- Several RECCWGs began making plans to hold joint exercises in CY 2016 to expand lessons learned and best practices beyond their individual working groups.

➤ **Accomplishment 5: Broadened the reach and perspectives of the RECCWGs through continued growth and diversification of membership**

- Region I saw significant turnover in the RECCWG and took the opportunity to nominate and select new members in a manner that provided participation across all member States while also structuring the group to be representative of the many emergency communications, emergency management, and emergency response disciplines that play a role in providing emergency communications support. Several new members were added, including a third Tribal representative, to ensure quality and breadth of experience supporting the RECCWG.

- Region VI sought replacements for departing members while maintaining foundational makeup and knowledge base of the group. The RECCWG identified potential members from differing communications disciplines and invited them to attend RECCWG meetings to gain an understanding of the group's purpose and goals. Through the continuous efforts of the RECCWG members, several new members from various areas were added, including VOADs, the amateur radio community, and a representative of the 9-1-1 collaborative operating group. Members continue to engage private sector communications partners, such as AT&T, Verizon, and Sprint, to participate in the RECCWG and bring their industry perspectives. The group worked closely with the FEMA Region VI and State Tribal Liaisons to find ways to involve the Tribes in the RECCWG.
- In Region VIII, the Utah Communications Authority and the new Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) became members of the RECCWG, and Tribal leaders and emergency managers were invited to attend RECCWG teleconferences and plenaries. Colorado and Montana experienced leadership changes in key communications positions, and the incoming staff committed to continued support to the RECCWG. The Region VIII RECCWG members representing VOAD groups met with those from Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, Utah, Washington State, and Wyoming to discuss communications for disaster operations both in Region VIII and across Regional borders.
- As a part of a continuous commitment to enhance its knowledge base and collective capability, Region III added 13 new members to the RECCWG from Federal, State, and local levels.

➤ **Accomplishment 6: Improved visibility of Regional assets and understanding of critical vulnerabilities**

Twenty States/Territories from Regions I, IV, VI, VIII and IX worked with the FEMA Disaster Emergency Communications Division and the Region staff to provide a clear picture of their communications capabilities at all jurisdictional levels in the effort to produce updated versions of the RECPs and accompanying State Annexes. RECCWGs were used to inform members about changes to the process and provided a venue to discuss process improvements and schedule engagements with State, local, and Tribal representatives. Coordination with the FEMA Region VIII Tribal Liaison and the Utah Division of Emergency Management Tribal Liaison resulted in four Tribal Nations participating in the update to the Utah Annex. Discussions with Tribal members at the Region IV summer plenary resulted in engagement with all six Tribal Nations in the Region, as well as increased membership in their RECCWG. Updated Annexes and RECPs provide insight for emergency responders deploying to the Region into State, local, and Tribal capabilities and potential requirements for communications support during response and recovery operations. Updates include analytics on the impact on communications critical infrastructure, review of State and Tribal communications capabilities for response and recovery, and review of all communications networks and mobile communications resources likely to be used during disasters.

3. CY 2015 RECCWG CHALLENGES

In addition to their accomplishments, the RECCWGs also identified a number of challenges that they will continue to address in the coming year. Common challenges identified across the RECCWGs include the following:

➤ **Challenge 1: Determining funding sources to address interoperability requirements**

Many interoperability enhancements in recent years were achieved by leveraging grants—such as those funded through the Interoperable Emergency Communications Grants Program and Public Safety Interoperable Communications grants program—that are no longer available. The loss of these funding sources, along with reduced availability of internal funding at the State and local levels, is causing many States and their agencies to make tradeoffs among capabilities essential for operable and interoperable communications. As existing communications systems and equipment continue to age or become obsolete, these tradeoffs put the agencies at increasing risk of not being able to effectively exchange critical communications during event response. Five of the RECCWGs noted the need for additional funding in their 2015 annual reports. Some examples include the following:

- In Region VII, the Iowa State Patrol (ISP) LMR system is out of date and needs to be replaced in the near future. With limited funding sources, the ISP purchased radios from public auction sites to ensure compliance with the FCC’s narrowband requirements. As other States in the country began updating their antiquated 9-1-1 technology to Next Generation (NG) 9-1-1 technology, the Iowa State Legislature used \$4 million of Iowa’s 9-1-1 service fund to begin updating the State’s LMR system. The ISP radio system will now be able to support most of Iowa State agencies’ LMR requirements as well as some local and Federal agencies; however, the State is now at risk of not having the funding needed to make significant strides in updating its 9-1-1 system to NG9-1-1 technology.
- In Region VIII, rural entities are finding themselves unable to afford subscriber units that are compatible with updated State and Regional networks or the usage fees to support those networks. In some cases, the high usage fees are driven by the States’ need to leverage commercial telecommunications carriers for backhaul rather than incur near-term expenses of upgrading State-owned microwave systems, even though the latter would likely save users overall costs in the long-term.
- In Region X, an 89-percent drop in emergency communications grant funding has affected the ability of the States in the Region to employ a full-time SWIC. As the central coordination point for a State or Territory, the SWIC plays a critical role in a State’s interoperability efforts. He or she works with emergency response leaders across all levels of government to implement a statewide strategic vision for interoperability. The SWIC also oversees the daily operation of the State’s interoperability efforts, coordinates interoperability and communication projects, maintains governance structures and updates/maintains the SCIP, which establishes a vision for interoperability in the State. As of the end of CY 2015, no Region X State had a full-time SWIC. The trend is being seen on many States nationwide.

➤ **Challenge 2: Gaining Tribal participation in the RECCWG**

Recent amendments to the Stafford Act allow Tribal Nations to request support directly from the Federal Government for incident response rather than requiring their requests to go through the State. It is critical, however, that Tribal Nations, States, and FEMA collaborate prior to an incident to ensure all entities understand what emergency communications resources are available in the Regions, where and how to acquire them, and any existing communications needs or requirements. Five of the 10 Regions reported some progress in Tribal engagement in 2015, but the majority of the RECCWGs would like to see a higher level of involvement in the coming year. Emphasis on obtaining representation from Tribal Nations would benefit the RECCWG's ability to meet communications needs during time of disaster; however, securing and maintaining consistent Tribal participation in the RECCWGs remains a challenge. Many of the Tribal Nations have small populations or land areas and do not have full-time emergency managers or dedicated first response personnel. Many rely on local jurisdictions to provide emergency services and therefore are not actively involved in the planning for disaster response. Participation of Tribal Nations in the RECCWGs would ensure that all entities understand what communications resources are available to them and what resources will likely be needed during emergency responses.

➤ **Challenge 3: Increasing inclusion of communications in large-scale exercises**

Major exercises do not include a large communications component frequently enough to affect preparedness of State and local communications professionals. In Region VI, recent efforts have been made to forge a partnership between the Exercise Planning Office and the RECC. The RECC will now be included in regular planning meetings, and State counterparts have expanded discussions to include communications in future exercise scenario planning. Arkansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas State communications leads have all conducted outreach to their State operation components to encourage inclusion of emergency communications for more realistic scenarios in both State and Regional exercise planning. The Region V RECCWG held discussions about sending a letter to all member State Emergency Management Chiefs to mandate testing of degraded and/or failed communications scenarios in all State and local exercises. The letter is being drafted for submission to State emergency management agencies in 2016.

There are no routinely scheduled Regional or multi-Regional level communications-focused exercises, drills, or tests for interoperability. Local jurisdictions work among themselves to coordinate such tests. The Region IX RECCWG identified the need for Region-wide communication exercise opportunities to test communications among Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies in a variety of situations. The RECCWG has determined that these exercises should take place quarterly if possible, but semi-annually at a minimum.

➤ **Challenge 4: Planning for NPSBN/FirstNet development**

Challenges remain with receiving consistent updates regarding the rollout, services, and scope of the FirstNet NPSBN, thus impeding the strategic and budgetary planning efforts of the RECCWGs. Regions V, VII, and VIII noted that planning for the NPSBN buildout is a major concern of their members, and it will become a challenge nationally in the coming year.

Successful strategic planning and budgeting for public safety communications requires RECCWG members to consider all available communications technologies, including LMR, landline, mobile, portable voice and data resources, and all forms of backup communications, such as satellite and HF radio. Planners, public officials who determine funding streams, emergency managers, and responders need a clear vision of how the NPSBN will integrate into public service answering points, emergency operations centers, field command centers, and response vehicles to provide a cost-efficient and comprehensive strategic plan for the future of communications in the Regions.

➤ **Challenge 5: Addressing national interoperability channel use and naming conventions**

Discussion among the RECCWGs has highlighted interference issues on mutual aid frequencies in multiple States. The problem stems from some organizations' holding licenses to operate on designated interoperability channels as primary dispatch channels. In an emergency, if responders attempt to use these interoperability channels in areas where they are licensed for agency use, they can cause interference with local traffic or vice-versa. Region VI was proactive in CY 2015, both in contacting the FCC and soliciting input from other Regions to determine whether the issue was becoming a hindrance to emergency communications at a national level. The problem has been longstanding in Texas, with Oklahoma and Arkansas reporting recent interference issues as well.

Regarding naming conventions, the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council recommended a standardized channel-naming convention in 2006. It became an American National Standards Institute standard in 2010 and is currently in the review and update process. Despite national standards, exercises in Region VIII demonstrated that naming conventions for common and mutual aid channels are still an issue, particularly at the Federal responder level. This issue affects the ability of responders to access the proper interoperability channels during an event.

4. CROSS-STATE AND CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATION

As the RECCWGs continued to mature in CY 2015, special emphasis was placed on reaching across borders to share resources, coordinate strategies, collaborate on ideas, conduct training, and respond to real-world events. Examples of these efforts include the following:

- **Exercises**—Missouri participated in a communications exercise, hosted by the State of Kansas, to test cross-border interoperability with the adjacent States and with local response agencies located in the Kansas City area. The After Action Report and Master Scenario Events List were shared with RECCWG membership during the November monthly RECCWG teleconference.
- **Real-world events**—Flooding in Region VI brought together four States from the Region, as well as States in neighboring Regions, to provide assistance. The RECCWG was instrumental in coordinating support and providing information to response agencies during the incident.

- **Joint meetings, presentations, and conferences**—In CY 2015, the RECCWG Co-Chairs—who are State, local, or Tribal representatives elected by the membership to facilitate and lead RECCWG activities—initiated monthly calls to coordinate across Regions on common challenges and priorities. Results of these calls included the sharing of best practices and lessons learned relating to cybersecurity of communications networks, collaboration on a position paper recommending changes to the ICS structure, an increase in the visibility of training opportunities, exercises, events of cross-Regional interest, and identification of shared challenges to begin addressing in the coming year.
- **Joint planning and product development**—Region V States worked together to establish Inter RF Subsystem Interface (ISSI) connections between States that have compatible networks and infrastructure which allow interoperability via ISSI technology. The initiative has resulted in Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana establishing preliminary connectivity for coordination on a daily basis, with hopes to expand to other States in the Region.
- **Interoperability efforts**—During 2015, the Region VI RECCWG worked with the NTIA and FCC to reach an agreement that allows civil first responders to program NTIA-issued frequencies into their radios, which will increase interoperability among responders to wildland fires and other disasters in the Region.

5. LOOKING AHEAD

The growth and diversification of the RECCWG membership in CY 2015 has served to increase the value of the RECCWG to each of the individual participants by providing greater access to the emergency communications communities in each Region and nationally, and by bolstering the ability of the RECCWGs individually and collectively to tackle the toughest challenges facing these communities moving forward. CY 2016 brings with it strong momentum in support of cross-Regional collaboration, with plans already in place for joint exercises and joint RECCWG plenary meetings, a national initiative led by FEMA and the DHS NCC aimed at increasing participation of industry partners, and routine meetings among the RECCWG co-chairs nationwide. As national efforts (e.g., buildout of the NPSBN) continue to affect planning and budgets at all levels of government, assessing the survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of both new and legacy systems will become critical to maintaining and enhancing each Region's emergency communications posture. The RECCWGs will play an increasingly vital role in sharing best practices and other information to enable efficiency, interoperability, and effectiveness. To continue this momentum, the RECCWGs are committed to further broadening and diversifying their membership through outreach efforts focused on enlisting participation of volunteer amateur radio organizations, Tribal representatives, industry partners, and emergency communications personnel at all jurisdictional levels and disciplines.

The following RECCWG Annual Reports from each of the Regions provide insight into the challenges that will frame RECCWG priorities at both the Regional and national levels heading into CY 2016, and the successes that the program will build on to ensure sustained progress toward its continuing and evolving goals.

[This page intentionally left blank.]

REGION I

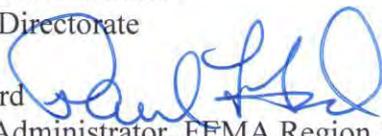
[This page intentionally left blank.]



FEMA

DATE: March 29, 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn
Assistant Administrator
Response Directorate

FROM: Paul F. Ford 
Regional Administrator, FEMA Region I

SUBJECT: FEMA Region I Regional Emergency Communications
Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

As required by Title XVIII, Section 1805 of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2007, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in Title XVIII.

The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region I RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined calendar year (CY) 2015 RECCWG Annual Report that will be distributed to the Director for the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP)
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements
- Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region I RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region. The accompanying Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole of Community as it is embodied by the RECCWG membership.

Enclosed: Region I summary for the CY 2015 RECCWG Annual Report

**REGION I
REGIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP
(RECCWG)**

CY 2015 SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

Through the efforts of its members and their participation in the monthly national teleconferences, attendance at semi-annual face-to-face meetings, and involvement in real-life incidents, the Region I RECCWG had a productive CY 2015. Key accomplishments included collaboration and coordination of intrastate and interstate emergency communications efforts, such as sharing training classes across State lines and developing a white paper describing the case for elevating the Communications Unit (COMU) within the Incident Command System (ICS) organizational structure. The paper gained national attention and is serving as a baseline for coordination of a common position with RECCWGs and Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWIC) across the Nation. Continued advocacy for this white paper is a top priority for the Region during CY 2016, as well as increased participation and cooperation for additional interstate and inter-Regional (IR) efforts.

For additional information regarding the Region I RECCWG, please contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region I Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), Jarrett Devine, at jarrett.devine@fema.dhs.gov or (978) 461-5357.

Table 1. RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2015

Name	Role or Agency
RECCWG Leadership	
Paul Ford	RECCWG Chair, FEMA Region I Regional Administrator
Michael Manning	RECCWG Vice-Chair
Tribal Members	
Joe Loring	Northern New England Tribes
Robert Hendricks	Southern New England Tribes
Nelson Andrews	Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe
Connecticut (CT) Representatives	
William Hackett	Director CT Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP)/Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security (DEMHS), SWIC
John Gustafson	CT DESPP/DEMHS
Paul Zito	CT State Police
Keith Victor	West Hartford Police
Frank Kiernan	Meriden, CT Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP)
Dan Warzoha	Emergency Management Director, Greenwich, CT

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
Maine (ME) Representatives	
Steven Mallory	ME Emergency Management Agency, SWIC
Lynette Miller	ME Emergency Management Agency, Public Information Officer (PIO)
Mike Smith	ME 9-1-1
Kathy Knight	ME Emergency Management & Homeland Security (EMHS)
Tom Higgins	Bangor Fire Department
Darren Woods	Emergency Management Director, Aroostook County
Massachusetts (MA) Representatives	
Steve Staffier	Statewide Interoperability Coordinator, MA
Jon Ruda	Communications Manager, MA Emergency Management Agency
John Surette	Telecommunications Specialist, Boston Police Department
David W. Clemmons	Operations Section Chief, MA Department of Fire Services
Mark Cady	City of Worcester Fire Department, Lieutenant
Gerald Reardon	Cambridge Fire Department
New Hampshire (NH) Representatives	
John Wynne	NH Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM)
Pete DeNutte	NH Interoperability
John Stevens	NH Department of Safety, SWIC
David Rivers	NH 9-1-1
Sherry Baker	NH 9-1-1
Art Durette	NH 9-1-1
Rhode Island (RI) Representatives	
Thomas Guthlein	RI Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA), SWIC
Alex Potts	RIEMA
Joe Delgiudice	Providence Communications
James McLaughlin	Warwick Fire Department
Gil Woodside	RIEMA
Pat McMahon	Charlestown Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
David Schnell	LifeLine
Brian Glancy	RI Interoperable Communications Committee
Vermont (VT) Representatives	
Rob Schell	VT Emergency Management, Communications Officer
Chief Al Barber	Hinesburg Fire Department
Jessica Stolz	VT SWIC

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
Federal/Private Partners	
Jarrett Devine	FEMA Region I Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC)
Richard Andreano	Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC)
Walker Canfield	General Services Administration (GSA)
Emmanuel Domkam	Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
Stephen Veader	National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
Robert Clair	Transportation Security Administration (TSA)
Philip Dow	TSA
John Driscoll	TSA
Michael Eaton	Maynard Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) Telecommunications Manager
Timothy Perrier	FCC
Grant Fournier	FEMA Region I Disaster Emergency Communications (DEC) Telecommunications Specialist
Mark Gallagher	FEMA Region I Response Division Director
Peter Gavrilles	FEMA Region I DEC Telecommunications Specialist
John Lombardo	Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)—Communications
Michael Schmidt	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF)
Mike Pettis	FBI—Communications
David Schafer	United States Army Corps of Engineers (ACoE)
Chris Tuttle	OEC
Michael Varney	FirstNet Regional Coordinator
Keith Vetreno	U.S. Department of State (DoS), Diplomatic Security Service (DSS)
Jim Coll	Verizon Wireless
Brian Falvey	FEMA MERS

REGION I RECCWG CY 2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

➤ **Accomplishment 1: Continued Regional coordination efforts to effectively leverage new technologies.**

The RECCWG continued coordination and information sharing as technological updates were made to several statewide land mobile radio (LMR) systems in New England. Group members shared information on how responders could leverage LMR capabilities in their States to improve interoperability around State borders. Maine briefed the membership on the deployment of its new Harris system, MSCommNet, and both Maine and Vermont discussed their efforts to improve interoperability along the Canadian border. In addition, Rhode Island discussed ongoing efforts to develop Tac-Stack capability, leveraging the success shared by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on how these platforms can improve interoperability. These projects were briefed to RECCWG members so that everyone could maintain situational awareness in the event of a multistate incident. State and Federal partners gained valuable information from these discussions that will aid them in leveraging these capabilities should an incident occur that requires their operational support.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment 2: Improved interoperability and sharing of best practices among Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies.**

Federal partners are a key aspect of the RECCWG success, and their involvement in CY 2015 activities was no exception. There was regular participation from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), Department of Defense (DoD), Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, and the Department of State.

The Region I RECCWG led the effort to coordinate with the Region I Defense Coordinating Element for programming of DoD radios with the national interoperability frequencies. A white paper was crafted in 2014, but the progress and advancements were made in 2015. The resulting DoD Interoperability Letter has been well received and reviewed by US Northern Command (US-NORTHCOM) and the Joint Chiefs Staff. DoD will be reprogramming radios to include the national interoperability frequencies on military radio equipment that may be used to support domestic public safety operations.

During CY 2015, RECCWG members worked consistently with public safety personnel at Hanscom Air Force Base to implement the programming requests in this letter intended to

improve communications between military and civilian law enforcement and first responders.

The RECCWG also partnered with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for a presentation titled "Safeguarding Communications Infrastructure." This informational presentation outlined how the FBI is protecting critical infrastructure nationwide, but also how the RECCWG members of each State can assist the FBI with information sharing.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Increased the knowledge contained within the RECCWG membership to cut across a broader set of emergency communications agencies and disciplines.**

With several members retiring or taking new positions throughout the year, the RECCWG took the opportunity to nominate and select new members in a manner that provided participation across all member States while also structuring the group to be representative of the many emergency communications, emergency management, and emergency response disciplines that play a role in providing emergency communications support. Several additional members were also added, including a third Tribal representative, to ensure quality and breadth of experience supporting the RECCWG.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

➤ **Accomplishment 4: Achieved cost efficiencies in meeting training goals through sharing of training resources.**

RECCWG membership shared information regarding multiple training opportunities, including Communications Unit Leader (COML) and Communications Unit Technician training as well as Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan and Broadband workshops. This outreach and information sharing allowed the Region to leverage existing resources and training opportunities to meet its training goals in a restricted fiscal climate.

➤ **Accomplishment 5: Led the development of a white paper proposing repositioning of the Communications Unit within the ICS.**

The Region I RECCWG identified a number of challenges associated with the current positioning of the COMU within the ICS. For example, after-action reports from several incidents have cited critical failures resulting from insufficient visibility and planning for communications by decision-makers during the initial phases of a response. Through the sharing of real-world experiences and challenges and thorough analysis of the current ICS structure, the RECCWG concluded that elevating the COMU to a Command or General Staff level would enable the more accurate and timely exchange of information among leadership and communications personnel that is needed to provide effective communications support during an incident. The RECCWG developed a white paper describing the challenges associated with the current structure and the proposed options for addressing these challenges. During CY2015, the RECCWG also began coordinating this white paper and its concepts with the other RECCWGs nationally, SAFECOM, and the National Council of

Statewide Interoperability Coordinators to obtain broader inputs and build a national consensus toward an effective solution.

REGION I RECCWG CY 2016 CHALLENGES

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

➤ **Challenge 1: Identifying a sustainable funding stream to upgrade or replace aging non-interoperable systems and equipment.**

Many of the enhancements to interoperability in prior years were achieved by leveraging grants programs—such as the Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program and Public Safety Interoperable Communications—but these programs are no longer available. The lack of grant funding, along with reduced availability of internal funding, is causing many States and their agencies to make tradeoffs among capabilities essential for operable and interoperable communications. As existing communications systems and equipment continue to age or become obsolete, these tradeoffs put these agencies at increasing risk of not being able to effectively exchange critical communications during event response.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Challenge 2: Facilitating IR cooperation/synergy of efforts.**

The RECCWG National Co-Chair conference calls that began near the end of 2015 represent a good forum for Regional leaders to share best practices and foster IR collaboration. Maintaining these calls and maximizing participation is key to advancement of RECCWG ideas and maturation of the RECCWGs as influential bodies. These calls will allow expertise, best practices, and lessons learned to be shared among Regions. Region I expects to benefit significantly by learning from Regions IV and VI about communications issues related to hurricanes and tropical storms, which can be applied to lessons learned from Hurricane Irene and Super Storm Sandy.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

➤ **Challenge 3: Leveraging State and local communications capabilities nationally for disaster response.**

The RECCWG believes that the Emergency Support Function (ESF)-2 community does not have a mechanism to effectively leverage State and local emergency communications capabilities nationally, in support of disaster operations. Other functions, such as ESF-9, created a mechanism to bring the State and local urban search and rescue teams under FEMA in times of emergency. ESF-8 has also established a mechanism for leveraging medical and mortuary personnel through the development of Disaster Medical Assistance Teams and

Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Teams, which can be federalized by the Department of Health and Human Services. The RECCWG believes it is worth exploring the possible creation of a similar national system for leveraging state and local emergency communications support following emergencies and disasters. Although the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) provides this capability, the function of providing emergency communications, as with medical and search and rescue, requires rapid deployment of assets to be effective. EMAC has proven to be too slow to effectively support the rapid deployment of communications assets across State lines.

REGION I RECCWG CY 2016 GOALS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

- Goal 1: Continue to develop or update regional emergency communications plans, State Emergency Communications Annexes, procedures, and support mechanisms that are based on anticipated impacts and operational capabilities.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

- Goal 2: Continue to collaborate with other RECCWGs and additional organizations on the evolution of the COMU under ICS.
- Goal 3: Use the National RECCWG Co-Chair teleconferences as a national forum for peer reviews of white papers and create national “buy-in” for efforts that would benefit multiple regions and increase national coordination.
- Goal 4: Develop a greater partnership with the private sector through the creation of a private sector telecommunications sub-working group in an effort to improve Region I’s ability to leverage, restore, and enhance private industry telecommunications networks following emergencies and disaster.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

- Goal 5: Leverage RECCWG expertise to support the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe as it works to establish an LMR communications system.
- Goal 6: Build an interoperable LMR network that enhances Federal communications interoperability in the vicinity of the State emergency operations centers through the use of IR frequencies.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

REGION I RECCWG CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The table below lists trainings, exercises, briefings, subcommittee activities, and other events hosted or promoted by the Region I RECCWG.

Table 2. RECCWG Events

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region I CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
1/15/2016	Plenary Meeting	Region I States, FEMA, OEC, and FBI	DoD Interoperability Letter, Improvised Explosive Device Tabletop Exercise, Safeguarding Critical Communications Infrastructure, and State/Federal Partner Updates, and Annual Report Input	1. Provide updates for ongoing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals 1 and 3 	Statutory Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided input to the CY 2014 Annual Report • Developed a consensus on the DoD Interoperability Letter and the path forward
3/26/2015	Teleconference	Region I States, FEMA, OEC, and TSA	DoD Interoperability Letter, RECCWG Annual Report, Mutual Link Demonstration, and State/Federal Partner Updates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide update on DoD Interoperability Letter 2. Finalize Annual Report Input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals 1, 2, and 3 	Statutory Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set date in April for Mutual Link demonstration • Finalized Annual Report input • Began planning for June Plenary Meeting

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region I CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
6/11/2015	Plenary Meeting	Region I States, FEMA , OEC, Tribal Members, FCC, NTIA, FBI, US Army Corps of Engineers, and US Coast Guard (USCG)	DoD Letter for law enforcement (LE)/IR interoperability frequencies, USCG Atlantic Mobile Contingency Communications, and State/Tribal Updates	1. Update on State Activities 2. Update on LE/IR interoperability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals 1, 2, 3, and 4 	Statutory Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forwarded DoD Letter to US-NORTHCOM and Joint Staff • Idea for white paper on moving COMU within ICS.
9/24/2015	Teleconference	Region I States, FEMA, OEC, and FCC	White Paper to the National Integration Center (NIC) about changes to ICS, and State/Tribal Updates	1. Brief membership on COMU White Paper to NIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 4 	Statutory Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open discussion on Integrated Public Alert and Warning System and Commercial Mobile Alerting System
11/19/2015	Teleconference	Region I States, FEMA, OEC, and FCC	State Updates, Planning for January 2016 Plenary Meeting	1. Recap 2015 and begin planning for 2016 activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals 2 and 4 	Statutory Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members to submit proposed agenda topics for January 2016 Plenary Meeting

CROSS-STATE AND CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The following list includes events in which multiple States or Regions worked together to coordinate strategies, collaborate on ideas, conduct training, or responded to real-world events together:

- New York and New Jersey SWICs were (and continue to be) included on all Region I RECCWG correspondence and re-invited to all meetings in an effort to enhance multi-Regional coordination.
- The New York Office of the FBI attended the Region I RECCWG to learn from and leverage best practices in an effort to assist in the development of a similar RECCWG forum in Region II.
- Region I participated in the National RECCWG Co-Chair teleconferences to foster IR collaboration efforts.

STATE CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The following list includes trainings, exercises, briefings, real-life response incidents, and other events sponsored or hosted by a particular State.

Connecticut

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Held its first FirstNet meeting in early 2015 and identified more than 50 groups and organizations as potential stakeholders.
- The Connecticut Maritime group is working on a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with USCG to establish a pre-determined Incident Radio Communications Plan (ICS-205). Held an exercise in September to validate the MOA.

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe winter storms and flooding (DR-4213), 4/8/2015.

Other

- Deployed VCALL and UCALL base stations, and crossband repeaters to improve interoperable communications.
- Amateur Radio Emergency Service Section Coordinator Wayne Grunland began work on a digital mobile radio project for amateur radio. This includes 30 ultra-high frequency repeaters linked over the State microwave system. There will be a presence in all five State emergency management regions.
- Initiated an upgrade on the statewide 700/800 megahertz system. This will be a major project over the next few years.

Massachusetts

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Continued working with Hanscom Air Force Base to increase interoperability among State, local, and DoD first responders.
- Worked with the USCG to establish Marine band channel 17 as the primary maritime interoperability solution for Massachusetts.

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe winter storms and flooding (DR-4214), 4/13/2015.

Other

- Completed the Massachusetts Interoperability Field Operations Guide and the Massachusetts Tactical Channel Plan second revisions.

Maine

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Held initial FirstNet consultation on May 20, 2015.
- Conducted a 2-day nuclear power plan exercise, called “Intrepid,” in New Brunswick.
- Held a COML course in December.

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe winter storms and flooding (DR-4208), 3/12/2015.

Other

- Began the rollout of the new LMR network, Maine State Communications Network (MSCommNet). The State spent much of 2015 working on memoranda of understanding with other agencies, which will be rolling onto the system at the end of 2015 and beyond.

New Hampshire

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Held initial FirstNet consultation June 9, 2015.
- Governor Hassan signed legislation on June 26 that legally gives the Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) authority over statewide interoperability.

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe winter storms and flooding (DR-4209), 3/25/2015.

Rhode Island

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe winter storms and flooding (DR-4212), 4/3/2015.

Other

- Completed an update of the Field Operations Guide in early 2015.

Vermont

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe winter storms (DR-4207), 2/3/2015.
- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe storms and flooding (DR-4232), 7/29/2015.

Other

- Obtained a license for VCALL 10 for statewide interoperability use.

Tribal

Other

- Nelson Andrews, Jr., from the Mashapee Wampanoag Tribe was added to the RECCWG membership. His presence will improve radio communications capabilities for the Mashapee Wampanoag Tribe.
- The Mashapee Wampanoag Tribe is in the initial planning stages of establishing a communications system and has begun coordination and outreach with State and Federal partners.

REGION II

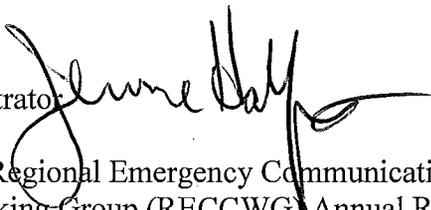
[This page intentionally left blank.]



FEMA

DATE: August 8, 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn
Assistant Administrator
Response Directorate

FROM: Jerome Hatfield
Regional Administrator 

SUBJECT: FEMA Region II Regional Emergency Communications
Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

As required by Title XVIII, Section 1805 of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2007, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in Title XVIII.

The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region II RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined calendar year (CY) 2015 RECCWG Annual Report that will be distributed to the Director for the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP)
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements
- Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region II RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for Federal, State, local, and

Tribal agencies to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region. The accompanying Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole of Community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Enclosed: Region II summary for the CY 2015 RECCWG Annual Report

www.fema.gov

REGION II
REGIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP
(RECCWG)

CY 2015 SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

During CY 2015 the Region II RECCWG continued to work through various existing State, Territory, Tribal, local and urban area working groups to share and gather information pertaining to emergency communications. With the lack of a dedicated Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC) in Region II, there were no formal RECCWG meetings held in 2015.

Region II stakeholders had several noteworthy accomplishments for the year, including multiple member agencies' successful planning and coordination of communications efforts for the New York City July 4th fireworks (a Special Event Assessment Rating [SEAR] 1 event), the Papal Visit and 70th General Assembly of the United Nations (National Special Security Event [NSSE]), and preparation for several forecasted major weather events, effectively ensuring that all members were informed of news and updates surrounding State, territorial, and Federal programs.

The RECCWG membership of Region II has remained consistent with a large roster comprised of numerous representatives from its States and territories, as well as partners from Federal agencies throughout the Region. Participation in RECCWG activities was minimal in CY 2015, but will be bolstered in the coming year with the anticipated appointment of a new RECC. Challenges anticipated to be encountered during 2016 by the Region II RECCWG include the following:

- Identifying and appointing a dedicated RECC;
- Minimal involvement of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands agencies in Region II RECCWG activities;
- Limited coordination with Tribal nations of the Region II area;
- Lack of planning/awareness to support communications restoration/recovery OCONUS; and
- Limited number of exercises for communications-related scenarios, or lack of emphasis on communications matters during exercises.

For additional information regarding these or other RECCWG activities, please contact Bryan Krane, at bryan.krane@fema.dhs.gov 540-532-0997 or John Alonso, at john.alonso@fema.dhs.gov 917-337-9057.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Table 1. RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2015

Name	Role or Agency
RECCWG Leadership	
Jerome Hatfield	RECCWG Chair, FEMA Region II, Regional Administrator
David Brady	RECCWG Co-chair, New Jersey State Police
Bryan Krane	FEMA Region II, Regional Emergency Communications / Disaster Emergency Communications, Response Division - Incident Management Assistance Team Branch
John Alonso	FEMA Region II, Regional Emergency Communications / Disaster Emergency Communications, Response Division - Logistics Branch
New York (NY) Representatives	
Bradley Becker	New York State Police (NYSP)
Matt Delaney	New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (NYS DHSES)
Toby Dusha	NYS DHSES
David Fields	City of New York Fire Department (FDNY)
Larissa Guedko	NYS DHSES
Brett Chellis	NYS DHSES
Steve Harte	City of New York Police Department (NYPD)
PJ Higgitt	NYS DHSES
John Howard	NYPD
Henry Jackson	New York City Emergency Management (NYC EM)
Peter Bojmal	NYC EM
Michael O'Neil	New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)
Gilbert Saez	NYS DHSES
Peter Bojmal	NYC OEM
Anthony Catalanato	FDNY
Paul Lucido	NYPD
Luis Valcarel	NYS Courts
New Jersey (NJ) Representatives	
David Brady	NJ State Police (NJSP)
Robert Komoroski	NJSP
James Griglio	Port Authority of New York & New Jersey (PANYNJ)
Scott Grilli	NJSP
John Miller	New Jersey Office of Information & Technology (NJ OIT) - SWIC
Dennis Quinn	NJ OHSP
Craig Reiner	New Jersey Office of Information & Technology (NJ OIT)
Andy Schwartz	NJ Transit
Ed Velez	NJ Transit

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
Puerto Rico (PR) Representatives	
Felix Garcia	Puerto Rico Emergency Management Agency (PREMA)
Luis Torres-Colon	FEMA Caribbean Area Division (CAD)
U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) Representatives	
Fred Kleber	Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA)
Adelle Williams	VITEMA
Tribal Representatives	
Mike Gates	Seneca Nation
Clint Halfgun	Cayuga Nation
Darwin Hill	Tonawanda Band of Seneca
Beverly Jensen	Shinnecock Nation
Art John	Seneca Nation
Edward Koorse	Seneca Nation
Neill Patterson, Jr.	Tuscarora Nation
Terry Winslow	Oneida Nation
Federal Partners	
Andrew Chen	U.S. Health & Human Services (HHS)
Mark Grabow	U.S. Secret Service (USSS)
Ravunda Graves	FEMA Defense Coordination Element (DCE)
Michael Eaton	FEMA Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS), Maynard Detachment
Eric Panketh	Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
Anthony Ruiz	US Customs & Border Patrol (CBP)
Gaetano Rumore	General Services Administration
Luis Salazar	FCC
Michael Schmidt	US Department of Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF)
Donald Shanly	Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
Christopher Tuttle	Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Office of Emergency Communications (OEC)
Steve Veader	National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
NGOs	
Laura Stockstill	Regional Catastrophic Planning Team (RCPT)

REGION II RECCWG CY 2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

➤ **Accomplishment 1: Discussed and analyzed results from After Action Reports (AARs) on recent events in the region.**

The RECCWG is an effective forum to discuss communications-related concerns from recent events. There was a lack of formal AARs from recent events that focus on communications, but interstate relationships enhanced via prior RECCWG forums and independent member networking have led to the resolution of issues within the Region, as well as the recognition of other potential problems. Although the RECC position was vacant in CY2015, members increased coordination with State and territory communications governance bodies, working groups, communications consortiums, and communications working groups to identify lessons learned and propose solutions.

The presentation of these concerns independently outside the official RECCWG elicited additional discussions among the members about the current state of Regional interoperability, communications during exercises, and the need to utilize annual pre-planned special events as venues to verify existing communication capabilities and plans.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment 2: Members continued information sharing via other forums, welcoming numerous Federal partners to participate in state sponsored recurring meetings.**

The RECCWG's Federal partners include the DHS Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the Department of Health and Human Service (DHHS), and others. These partners regularly participated in State meetings and teleconferences, often sharing valuable information which benefitted the general RECCWG membership. RECCWG members were also able to raise questions directly to these Federal partners, obtain support for joint ventures, and ensure the timely resolution of any open issues. Additionally, due to having a larger footprint across the country, the RECCWG's Federal partners frequently drew from discussions and experiences emanating from outside Region II, providing additional insight, making recommendations, and suggesting guidance regarding matters being reviewed.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Leveraged existing relationships and enabled interactions to prepare for pre-planned special events.**

In mid-September 2015, hundreds of thousands gathered in Washington, DC, New York City, and Philadelphia over six days to witness Pope Francis' first official U.S. visit. The significance

of the Papal visit prompted the DHS Secretary to declare it an NSSE. The 70th Annual United Nations General Assembly—held during the Pope’s New York City visit—further complicated emergency management planning efforts in New York City and made multi-agency collaboration even more vital to the safeguarding of all in attendance. Members from all levels of the RECCWG within the NYC metropolitan and Philadelphia metropolitan area led and participated in numerous meetings with emergency communications planners from Federal, State, and local public safety and emergency management agencies to outline available capabilities and requirements for the event. The result was a comprehensive Concept of Operations and Emergency Communications Plan, which included an Incident Command System (ICS) 205 form that outlined radio interoperability procedures for all participating agencies. In addition to supporting emergency communications planning, member agencies maintained a presence in several Emergency Operations Centers during the Pope’s visit. As a result of collaborative planning, emergency communications remained operable and interoperable throughout the events.

(Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this Report due to the number of RECCWG members who participated in it.)

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

➤ **Accomplishment 4: Ensured members were informed of updates to new and existing communications-related programs.**

RECCWG membership shared information regarding multiple training opportunities, to include Communications Unit Leader (COML) and Communications Unit Technician (COMT) training as well as Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) and Broadband workshops. This outreach and information sharing allowed the Region to leverage existing resources and training opportunities to meet its training goals in a restricted fiscal climate.

➤ **Accomplishment 5: Formed the Caribbean Federal Interoperability Working Group to foster interagency collaboration and communications asset sharing.**

Working directly with the OEC Regional Coordinator, FEMA Region II and FEMA Caribbean Area Division (FEMA CAD) brought together more than 40 federal agencies into this working group to enhance interoperability efforts within the Caribbean region. The working group has begun development of a TICP to catalog available communications assets and determine common procedures for sharing assets. Furthermore, through coordination with the Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation, working group members will have access to a new Federal interoperability communications system in Puerto Rico. The RECCWG will continue to support this effort by facilitating development of memoranda of understanding (MOU), SOPs, and training relative to the new capability. As a result of this system, all Federal emergency responders will have access to dependable, interoperable communications for the first time in Puerto Rico.

REGION II RECCWG CY 2016 CHALLENGES

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

➤ **Challenge 1: Continuing to develop Federal TICPs for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands**

Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands do not have Tactical Interoperable Communications Plans for Federal agencies. During CY 2015, a planning process was implemented to develop Federal plans for these locations including the involvement of agencies residing on the islands and those expected to be deployed during disasters. As the TICP effort continues for these Territories, coordinating the collection of information from nearly 50 Federal agencies will remain a challenge.

➤ **Challenge 2: Implementing exercises for communications-related scenarios and lack of emphasis on communications matters during exercises**

This challenge is reflected annually, as there have only been a limited number of exercises associated with communications failure scenarios in recent years in the Region. Additional exercises should be planned and scheduled based solely on communications-related topics. Greater emphasis should be placed on communications matters during other all-hazards scenario exercises. Membership of the Region II RECCWG will be required to put forth significant efforts in assisting with exercise planning at all levels to increase opportunities for involvement of communications entities.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Challenge 3: Gaining participation of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in Region II RECCWG activities.**

Due to their geographic locations, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are often unable to attend plenary meetings and participate in teleconference calls. Furthermore, topics of focus during the RECCWG meetings are often focused on CONUS issues. The Region II RECCWG should remain cognizant of the time difference between its members when scheduling calls, and should assist in the planning of training, events, and meetings in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands as much as possible.

➤ **Challenge 4: Increasing coordination with Tribal Nations of Region II.**

Although there are several Federally-recognized Tribes with in Region II, their presence and participation in Regional communications efforts has been limited. The RECCWG will work to improve coordination with the Tribes to increase their involvement, and continue to share information to ensure interoperability during disasters and other events.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

➤ **Challenge 5: Selecting a new RECC to guide the Region II RECCWG activities.**

As evidenced by the difficulties in coordination during CY2015, the RECC is instrumental in bringing members together as a cohesive body. The RECCWG will begin CY 2016 without a dedicated RECC to organize calls and meetings, and to maintain the RECCWG's direction. FEMA Region II has identified two Regional personnel and temporarily tasked them with the responsibilities of the RECC. These two personnel have established a rotation for attending the biweekly RECC meetings in order to stay informed of activities of the other RECCWGs, and to receive updates from FEMA Headquarters. They will also assume all other responsibilities ordinarily assigned to the RECC throughout the year, until a permanent RECC is appointed.

REGION II RECCWG CY 2016 GOALS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

- Goal 1. Support the continued buildout and use of National Interoperability Channels into current (and developing) communications systems at the State, Regional, and Federal levels to provide effective voice interoperability in the Region.
- Goal 2. Host and/or assist in the organization and delivery of training programs on topics associated with interoperability in the Region.
- Goal 3. Support exercise program management in the Region to include hosting and/or assisting in the organization and delivery of seminars, workshops, tabletop exercises, games, drills, functional exercises, full scale exercises and other Homeland Security and Exercise Evaluation Program (HSEEP)-compliant activities on interoperability related scenarios in the Region.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

- Goal 4. Adapt RECCWG meetings to be part of existing governing bodies, working groups, committees to promote greater inclusion of the membership from Regional stakeholders in scheduled RECCWG activities.
- Goal 5. Determine member needs and propose activities to support them in making RECCWG efforts more inclusive of other groups' activities in the Region.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

- Goal 6. Identify the availability of communications capabilities that can be utilized across jurisdictional borders. Focus on available State and Territory communications

consortiums, existing Tactical Interoperability Communications Plans (TICPs) and Field Operations Guides (FOGs). A listing of these identified capabilities will be made available for the awareness of RECCWG members.

- Goal 7. Continue to identify and track personnel available in the Region (by State/Territory) who are qualified as Communications Unit Leaders, Communications Unit Technicians, Communications Unit Managers, Communications Unit Dispatchers and other emergency telecommunications responder positions. Identify additional positions and personnel as necessary. (Note: this is in support of the records managed by DHS OEC. OEC secures records of trained personnel who are available to Statewide Interoperability Coordinators and those with access to the Communications Assets Survey and Mapping (CASM) Tool. The States of New Jersey and New York have adopted certification and accreditation procedures to assist with requests for qualified communications personnel.)
- Goal 8. Leveraging lessons learned from past Regional disasters, such as Hurricane Sandy, work with Regions I and III RECCWGs to identify COMU personnel and equipment throughout the northeastern U.S. that can be readily available through Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) during a major disaster. This should include State-qualified personnel and preplanning of communications equipment.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

REGION II RECCWG CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The table below lists trainings, exercises, briefings, subcommittee activities, and other events hosted or promoted by the Region II RECCWG.

Table 2. RECCWG Events

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/ nonprofit sector, etc.)	Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region II CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
July 2015	Independence Day Celebrations	Local, County, State and Federal, agencies, private/nonprofit sector	Communications support for Independence Day Celebrations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop integrated communications plan for all partners 2. Employ integrated communications plan 3. Identify and resolve any communications issues 	Goal 1	Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful development and employment of integrated communication plan <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor</p>
September 2015	Papal Visit and United Nations General Assembly	Local, County, State and Federal, agencies, private/nonprofit sector	Communications support for NSSE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop integrated communications plan for all partners 2. Employ integrated communications plan 3. Identify and resolve any communications issues 	Goal 1	Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful development and employment of integrated communication plan <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG</p>

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

							members that participated in the endeavor
December 2015	New Year's Eve Celebrations	Local, County, State and Federal, agencies, private/nonprofit sector	Communications support for New Year Celebrations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop integrated communications plan for all partners 2. Employ integrated communications plan 3. Identify and resolve any communications issues 	Goal 1	Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful development and employment of integrated communication plan <p>Note: This event was not hosted or coordinated by the RECCWG but is being included in this chart due to the number of RECCWG members that participated in the endeavor</p>

CROSS-STATE AND CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Below lists events in which multiple States or Regions worked together to coordinate strategies, collaborate on ideas, conduct training, or respond to real-world events together.

- Jarrett Devine, Region I's RECC, has provided an open invitation to Region II RECCWG membership from New York and New Jersey to attend Region I RECCWG meetings for Regional situational awareness.
- The New York City Interagency Communications Committee (NYCICC) continues to meet quarterly and is comprised of Federal, State, local and private agencies from New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.
- Federal agencies, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and numerous local agencies conducted planning efforts for over six months on communications matters associated with the Papal Visit in Philadelphia and New York City (along with the United Nations General Assembly in New York City). Planning and overall communications operations were identified as major successes.
- A regional interoperability email distribution list continues to be operated/maintained by the Connecticut State Police. This "email reflector" is now used throughout the Northeast, and is consistently leveraged by stakeholders in New York and New Jersey.

STATE CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

Below lists trainings, exercises, briefings, real-life response incidents, and other events sponsored or hosted by a particular State.

New Jersey

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- DHS OEC and the NJSWIC Office hosted an Auxiliary Communications Workshop in October, 2015
- DHS OEC and the NJSWIC Office hosted a Communications Unit Integration into the National Incident Management System/Incident Command System Seminar in October, 2015
- DHS OEC and the NJSWIC Office hosted an All-Hazards Communications Unit Technician Course in April, 2015
- DHS OEC, in conjunction with the NJSWIC office, completed a Statewide Interoperable Communications Plan (SCIP) workshop in October 2015. This resulted in an updated SCIP that is being used for strategic planning by the NJSWIC.

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration - Severe storms (DR-4231), 6/23/2015.
- DHS OEC and the NJSWIC Office, in conjunction with the Miss America Pageant Communications Working Group coordinated communications capabilities of multiple

agencies and private wireless carriers to ensure public safety access for command, coordination and control purposes.

- Coordinated through NJSWIC Office and NJ State Police, personnel and assets were deployed to Philadelphia in support of the Papal visit. This included contingency planning for mass evacuation/mass casualties along the bridges from New Jersey into Pennsylvania, including maritime assets on the Delaware River.

Other

- Ongoing Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) proof of concept work in conjunction with FirstNet.

New York

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- DHS OEC and the NYSWIC Office completed two workshops for Regional Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan development, finalizing two plans.
- DHS OEC and the NYSWIC Office hosted an Auxiliary Communications Workshop in July, 2015
- DHS OEC and the NYSWIC Office hosted a Communications Unit Integration into the National Incident Management System/Incident Command System Seminar in November, 2015
- DHS OEC and the NYSWIC Office hosted a Next Generation 911 Strategic Planning Workshop in November, 2015
- DHS OEC and the Papal/UNGA Communications Working Group completed the Special Event Planning Support for the development of a Communications Plan and Concept of Operations for the Papal visit and United Nations General Assembly in September, 2015.

Real-life events

- SEAR 1 – July 4th Fireworks, NYC, 7/4/2015
- NSSE – Papal Visit and United Nations General Assembly – September 2015

Other

- On September 9-10, 2015, The Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES), Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications (OIEC) held its first Statewide Communications Consortium Symposium. There were over 60 participants representing every communications consortium/region throughout the State.

Puerto Rico

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- DHS OEC and the PRSWIC Office hosted Interoperability for Dispatchers training in September, 2015
- DHS OEC and the PRSWIC Office hosted Incident Communications Center Manager training in October, 2015

Other

- DHS OEC, in conjunction with the PR SWIC office, completed a Statewide Interoperable Communications Plan (SCIP) workshop on April 14 in San Juan. This resulted in an updated SCIP that is being used for strategic planning by the PR SWIC.
- DHS OEC, in conjunction with USCG Sector San Juan and Homeland Security Investigations, San Juan Field Office, continue to hold quarterly meetings of the Caribbean Area Federal Interoperability and Communications Working Group.

U.S. Virgin Islands

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- DHS OEC and the USVI SWIC Office hosted a Mobile Data Survey Data Analysis workshop in August, 2015.
- DHS OEC and the USVI SWIC completed a data import/update of the Communications Asset Survey and Mapping tool with relative territory data in August, 2015.

Other

- DHS OEC, in conjunction with the USVI SWIC office, completed a Statewide Interoperable Communications Plan (SCIP) workshop on April 9 in St. Thomas. This resulted in an updated SCIP that is being used for strategic planning by the USVI SWIC.

[This page intentionally left blank.]

REGION III

[This page intentionally left blank.]



FEMA

DATE: April 20, 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn
Assistant Administrator
Response Directorate

FROM: MaryAnn Tierney 
Regional Administrator

SUBJECT: FEMA Region III Regional Emergency Communications
Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

As required by Title XVIII, Section 1805 of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2007, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in Title XVIII.

Attached you will find Region III's RECCWG annual report developed by the FEMA Region III RECCWG membership with FEMA support. This annual report will serve as the our submission to the calendar year (CY) 2015 RECCWG Annual Report that will be distributed to the Director of the DHS Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP)
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements

- Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region III RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region. The accompanying Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole of Community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Enclosed: Region III CY 2015 RECCWG Annual Report

REGION III
REGIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP
(RECCWG)

CY 2015 SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

The Region III RECCWG experienced a revitalization through the exceptional participation of its members in CY 2015. The new Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC) joined Region III in April 2015, and immediately began working to rejuvenate the membership through a focused and concerted effort to revalidate the important and differentiating efforts of the Working Group. Monthly teleconferences were instrumental in the sharing of information about the challenges of each State and jurisdiction, including the standardization of Communications Unit Lead (COML) and Communications Unit (COMU) training programs, challenges with land mobile radio (LMR) interoperability and required system upgrades, and the planning of future events such as workshops, State Annex updates, and Regional and statewide exercises. The Region III Plenary session that was held in August brought together State and Local representatives, Federal stakeholders, and private sector partners to share perspectives from their jurisdictions and areas of expertise. The group collaboratively determined several areas of focus for the Region going forward:

- Funding for Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) program activity and steady state interoperability activities
- Exercise schedules of interest/regionally based exercises
- Improved awareness of emergency communications capabilities—mobile platforms/ Strategic Technical Reserve/State Emergency Operations Center and Points of Contact information (regional assets, caches)
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) best practices and policies
- Technology upgrades/network connectivity (Inter Radio Frequency Subsystem Interface (ISSI)/Patching): both existing and future, and updates on State and Federal capabilities
- Lessons learned/after action reports (AAR) on communications related topics for incidents
- Updates on legislative actions at State and Federal levels.

Strengthening relationships with Federal partners, the private sector, and amateur radio community, whose expertise and equipment are an essential part of the communications landscape, is also a priority and will be another focus of the RECCWG in 2016.

For additional information regarding the Region III RECCWG, please contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region III RECC, Judith (Jamy) Lomento, at judith.lomento@fema.dhs.gov or (215) 931-2892.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Table 1. RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2015

Name	Role or Agency
RECCWG Leadership	
MaryAnn Tierney	Regional Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region III, Chair
Mark Wrightstone	Pennsylvania State Police, Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), Co-Chair
Jamy Lomento	Region III Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator
District of Columbia (DC) Representatives	
Todd Bianchi	DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
Joshua Jack	DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency
Jeffrey Wobbleton	DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, SWIC
Teddy Kavaleri	DC Office of Unified Communications
Larry Schaefer	US Capitol Police, Communications
Delaware (DE) Representatives	
Mark Grubb	Delaware Department of Safety & Homeland Security
Maryland (MD) Representatives	
Ross Coates	Department of Emergency Services, Harford County
John Freeburger	Montgomery County Fire & Rescue
Ken Hasenei	Maryland State Police, SWIC
Jack Markey	Division of Emergency Management, Frederick County
Patrick J. Walsh	Baltimore City Fire
Gary Zamerski	Maryland Emergency Management Agency
Pennsylvania (PA) Representatives	
Robert Mateff	Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, Deputy Director, 911
Richard Harrison	Lancaster County, Operations Manager, Communications
Tim Baldwin	Lancaster County, Deputy Director, 911
Don Schmidt	Amateur Radio Emergency Service Emergency Coordinator. Adams County, PA
Virginia (VA) Representatives	
Mike Keefe	Virginia Department of Emergency Management
Adam Thiel	Virginia Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinator's Office, SWIC
Shawn Talmadge	Virginia Commonwealth Homeland Security and Resiliency Office
Michael Newburn	Department of Information Technology, Fairfax County
Charlie Locke	Communications Officer, Fairfax County
Tom Gagnon	Virginia Interoperability Program Manager
West Virginia (WV) Representatives	
Rodney Evans	Greenbrier County 911 Communications Division
R.C. Faulk	WV Statewide Interoperable Executive Committee (WV Emergency Managers Representative)
Jimmy Gianato	WV DHSEM, Director

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
Sonny Jordan	Harrison-Taylor Emergency Communications, Technical Specialist
Lt. G.E. McCabe	WV DHSEM, SWIC
Steve Vititoe	Cabell County Emergency Medical Service
Bill Wood	WV DHSEM, Communications Officer
Federal/Private Sector Partners	
David Adsit	FEMA Frequency Manager
Tom Brown	FEMA Incident Management (IM) Core
Rodney Cooper	Sprint
JB Cuartas	Operational Planning Branch Chief, FEMA Region III
Scott Jackson	National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
Steve Veader	NTIA
Craig C. Johnson	Office of the National Capitol Region, FEMA
Mary McKenna	Deputy Director, Response Division, FEMA Region III
Marty McLain	US Department of Homeland Security, Office of Emergency Communications
Jim Miller	Frederick Mobile Emergency Response Support/System, Telecommunications Manager
Tim Perrier	Federal Communications Commission
Nelson Torres	Office of the National Capital Region Coordination, FEMA
Chris Watson	Federal Aviation Administration
Nathan Sanders	National Geospatial Intelligence Agency

REGION III RECCWG CY 2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

➤ **Accomplishment 1: Leveraged in-person meetings and teleconferences to collaboratively assess communications interoperability within States and across the Region.**

Recurring meetings held by the RECCWG provided a forum for sharing the progress being made in State and Regional interoperable communications, along with best practices and lessons learned from the year's events, workshops, and exercises. This enabled the group to identify common challenges and opportunities where regional collaboration could provide the most substantial improvements to the survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of emergency communications systems. For example, members participated in a workshop to review planning for a large-scale National Special Security Event (NSSE) prior to the Papal visit in Washington, DC, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Sharing details regarding their respective communications plans enabled both planning teams to consider new solutions to meet their respective challenges. In addition, understanding capabilities and limitations of other emergency communications systems in the Region can help RECCWG members better

account for interoperability in system planning and when providing assistance across jurisdictions.

Accomplishment 2: Increased RECCWG membership by 34 percent.

In 2015, the RECCWG increased its membership through the addition of representatives from Federal, State, and local agencies who have a direct role or input into interoperable or emergency communications systems and their inherent challenges. The 13 new RECCWG members (6 State, 5 local, and 2 Federal) bring new perspectives, knowledge, and technical expertise to an already well-versed and experienced working group, and enhance the need and desire to share and exchange information to drive an inclusive approach to tackling interoperability challenges and the need to work across regional boundaries.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Increased information sharing among members by revamping the Region III Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) site and setting up a mass e-mail and posting service.**

HSIN is the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) secure network for sharing Sensitive But Unclassified information that is used for both daily and emergency operations. In CY 2015, the Region III RECC led an initiative to revamp the Region III RECCWG HSIN site to allow more effective document sharing among RECCWG members. It is now the primary repository for State Emergency Communications Plans, Statewide Communication Operations Plans (SCIP), Tactical Interoperable Communications Plans, and other documents that may be used to improve planning and increase cross-jurisdictional information sharing. To augment this capability, the Maryland Emergency Management Agency's Joint Operations Center (24/7 State Warning Point) also successfully established a mass e-mail and posting service for quickly distributing unclassified information among the RECCWG's members when expediency is essential. In addition to mass email and texts, this system will also make automated telephone calls to Region III RECCWG members in the event that a State has emergent need for support from a regional partner.

Accomplishment 4: Planned and executed an in-person plenary meeting in August to establish future priorities for the RECCWG.

The two primary objectives of the face-to-face plenary in August were (1) strengthen the relationships and communication channels among RECCWG members, Federal partners, the private sector, and nongovernmental agencies to enable enhanced information sharing, mission execution, and the development of a comprehensive interoperable communications exercise program and (2) promote the awareness and value of the RECCWG program by exploiting the niche it fills in addressing emergency communications needs and priorities to ensure operability, interoperability, and survivability of communications capabilities during an incident throughout the Region.

At the meeting, the membership validated their Charter and governance structure, including the proposal for staffing the four existing subcommittees (Policy and Procedures, Technical, Outreach, and Private Sector/Critical Infrastructure). These subcommittees would focus on reviewing current and emerging technology, reviewing and improving the RECCWG's current private partnerships, providing training and exercise education and validation, and other topics as determined by the RECCWG.

Federal partners in the DHS Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) gave a presentation on the Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program, and the National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center (NCCIC) provided information on Emergency Support Function (ESF) 2 industry and partner engagement.

Members also shared information, best practices, and challenges, and brainstormed topics of interest and potential ways to ensure interoperability. States provided updates on their LMR systems, completed/updated plans, projects that are currently underway, and upcoming events/exercises. Challenges as well as best practices from recent events were also shared during State updates. For example, as a result of having a home team competing in the Little League World Series, Pennsylvania representatives shared how they managed the issue of moving a large volume of traffic through smaller roads in the rural area where the event took place. Maryland representatives discussed how they coordinated channel assignments during the Baltimore civil unrest to minimize chatter, and West Virginia representatives discussed issues with restrictions to communication in the US National Quiet Zone, which covers 13,000 square miles in West Virginia and Virginia.

➤ **Accomplishment 5: Planned and executed an Information Sharing Workshop as the first step in a full-scale exercise development program for the RECCWG.**

During the August plenary, the RECCWG held a workshop designed to start the information sharing process by encouraging conversation on cooperative partnerships, best practices, and multi-agency, multijurisdictional interoperability challenges. Using an exercise scenario of a large NSSE involving a head-of-state visit to multiple cities in the Region, RECCWG members prepared for the possible communications challenges of the upcoming Papal visit. Federal partners in the NCCIC Special Events Program gave a presentation on how they plan and position themselves to support NSSEs.

RECCWG members have continually expressed a desire to share information and exercise their interoperable communications assets and capabilities, and the workshop was the first step in what will be a full exercise cycle built on Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) standards and guidance.

➤ **Accomplishment 6: Reestablished Federal and private partnerships.**

In the CY 2014 Annual Report, the RECCWG stressed the importance of reengaging the Federal partners in the Region and inviting them to join the RECCWG. Therefore, the RECCWG used existing relationships with Federal/private partners to reengage and invite them to RECCWG meetings and events. Federal partners provide critical input from their respective agencies about policy and Federal assistance, and the integration requirements for their

organizations. Representatives from Sprint, OEC, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration were regular attendees at the RECCWGs meetings, providing important perspective and sharing updates from their agencies.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

➤ **Accomplishment 7: Increased Amateur Radio support and representation.**

The RECCWG actively supports the goals and intent of the FEMA Administrator and the execution of the 2014 MOA between the American Radio Relay League and FEMA by recognizing the importance of amateur radio operators in supporting public safety, emergency response, and disaster operations efforts. Members have continually expressed a desire to include these organizations in the RECCWG as valuable and knowledgeable resources. The RECCWG developed and vetted criteria by which an amateur radio operator could become an active participant in the Working Group. In many jurisdictions, amateur radio operators are activated by their State or local emergency operations center (EOC) and may work in the field supporting responders, shelter operations, or evacuations. They may also have a seat in the local and/or State EOC where they provided augmented messaging or communications support between field operatives and EOC personnel.

It is unfortunate that the public safety benefits of amateur radio organizations are being threatened by efforts of the National Forest Service (NFS) to remove amateur radio antennas that are erected on the lands it governs. Currently, amateur radio antennas are permitted to exist on NSF land because they specifically serve public safety. In this capacity, they are exempt from paying service fees to the NFS and power generation companies that provide service to those towers. Membership in the RECCWG would provide amateur radio operators the Regional voice and visibility they need to raise such issues and concerns to the national level for continued dialog and resolution.

REGION III RECCWG CY 2016 CHALLENGES

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

➤ **Challenge 1: Managing and maintaining critical public safety LMR resources as funding is diverted to broadband and Internet Protocol based systems.**

With much of the focus on communications being directed toward the planning and implementation of FirstNet and Next Generation 911, funding for maintaining, upgrading and using LMR systems has been reduced. LMR will remain a vital part of the emergency communications landscape for the foreseeable future, and member States will have to find ways of preserving and updating their current systems while implementing the new programs. It should be noted that grant funding has been used for many of these systems, and the RECCWG encourages the Federal Government to maintain the current level of financial support by not decreasing funding amounts in certain grant programs.

➤ **Challenge 2: Acquiring necessary funding to maintain a robust SWIC program and relevant interoperability activity in member States.**

Funding for the SWIC positions and related activities, such as statewide interoperability conferences, training, and exercises, has been drastically cut from State budgets. The SWIC position is critical in the effort to maintain the advances in coordination of interoperability and operability governance, training, and performance during critical response and recovery operations following disasters. The lack of dedicated grant funding for interoperable communications activities could hasten the demise of advances made in this area since the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act was passed to correct these deficiencies. We encourage the Federal Government to maintain the current level of financial support by not decreasing funding amounts in these grant programs.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Challenge 3: Addressing the decline in performance of first responders during the use of emergency communications in the field for large events and real world.**

RECCWG members have reported that first responders and public safety officials have faced challenges in their use and knowledge of fundamental emergency communications networks and procedures. Every effort should be made to ensure training and exercises are planned and executed to improve their capability to plan for and communicate effectively during response and recovery operations when primary systems become degraded and/or congested. Additional efforts to optimize and focus communications training while maximizing the opportunities for realistic scenarios should be an area of focus for the RECCWG.

➤ **Challenge 4: Improving State-to-State and regional communications connectivity to ensure seamless interoperability during multi-State operations.**

Incidents and disasters routinely involve operations that cross State and Regional borders. Member States have disparate LMR networks to coordinate operations and activities of public safety and law enforcement officials. New technologies and system upgrades underway in several member States are becoming available to help responders communicate more efficiently and effectively. Emerging technologies such as ISSI, along with governance solutions (MOUs/MOAs), provide opportunities to improve interoperability between statewide and/or local/regional networks if coordinated effectively.

➤ **Challenge 5: Increase insufficient all-hazards COML/Communications Technician (COMT) training.**

RECCWG members have stated that the available COML/COMT training is insufficient in helping to fully credential communicators as National Incident Management System compliant COMLs or COMTs. The COML heads the COMU and is responsible for integrating communications and ensuring that operations are supported by communications. The COMT

supports the COMU and communications operations. The existing training is redundant in that it spends considerable time reviewing the information delivered in the prerequisite courses but does not address the specific needs of State radio networks on which the students will eventually work. Upon completion, students are given 3 years to complete their Position Task Books (PTB) as developed by the DHS OEC; however, few students are ever able to fully complete a PTB to earn their credentials. Many States have developed their own supplemental COML/COMT courses to certify and credential students to work on their own organic networks; however, this provides no value if a COML/COMT is dispatched to another State jurisdiction in support of emergency response efforts. Several RECCWG members have indicated that they would not permit an out-of-State and credentialed COML or COMT to work on their radio systems because of the lack of knowledge of State-specific radio systems and institutional knowledge of State operational response processes.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

➤ **Challenge 6: Strengthening relationships with the amateur radio community.**

The FEMA Administrator has emphasized engaging amateur radio operators in every Region, considering them to be the “eyes and ears” within a disaster area. The RECCWG and its leadership recognize the benefit of adding the amateur radio community to its membership and discussions regarding the proper vetting process for these members have occurred. A major challenge inherent in working with private sector groups/organizations is the protection of sensitive information. Moving forward into 2016, the RECCWG should formally implement the established vetting and invitational processes for inclusion of amateur radio operators and continue to grow their membership and reach within the Region through engagement of the amateur radio community. While the RECCWG lists this as a challenge, it have also listed engagement with the amateur radio community as an accomplishment.

➤ **Challenge 7: Improving awareness of neighboring State and Federal emergency communications capabilities, which hinders effective planning for interoperability with incoming responders and support staff from Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) and Federal support teams.**

The lack of awareness of neighboring State and Federal capabilities in emergency communications during response operations slows response times and effectiveness of assistance being delivered to affected areas. RECCWG members want to increase their awareness of Regional capabilities at the State and Federal levels to more effectively plan for their all-hazard response activities. Members desire to look at both the technical and governance systems in place that are likely to be used by incoming EMAC teams and Federal supporters.

➤ **Challenge 8: Address the lack of a designated Federal interoperability coordinator for large-scale, multijurisdictional events, incidents, and activations, which confuses communications response efforts by State and local jurisdictions.**

Many State and local jurisdictions develop extensive plans to prepare for events, incidents, and activations that require a full-scale response effort by multiple entities. In cases where there is a Federal communications presence participating in or responding to those efforts, each Federal agency is coordinating its own response effort, which is not done in coordination with other Federal, State, or local agencies. Interoperability challenges and conflicts are addressed as they arise, often during the incident. RECCWG members want to have a more fully integrated planning approach that includes Federal communicators participating in the planning efforts to mitigate on-scene issues and challenges.

REGION III RECCWG CY 2016 GOALS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

- Goal 1. Leverage AARs and lessons learned to strengthen preparedness for disasters and NSSEs.
- Goal 2. Review current and emerging technologies, produce and respond to industry position papers, and find cost-saving solutions through the staffing of a Technical Subcommittee.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

- Goal 3. Staff a Policies and Procedures Subcommittee to focus on the development of Region III RECCWG's Charter and membership criteria, develop a list of best practices from the experience of RECCWG members, and review grant opportunities applicable to RECCWG members.
- Goal 4. Develop a full-scale exercise program that follows HSEEP guidance, and selectively focuses on issues that have a cross-regional impact and highlights real-world interoperability challenges. Staff an Outreach Subcommittee and program that incorporates planning and training best practices for members and testing of plans and procedures.
- Goal 5. Conduct interregional exercises to enhance disaster preparedness.
- Goal 6. Reach consensus among members on the Incident Command System (ICS) structure, for a proposed move of Communications from its current position under Logistics to the command level, to help drive improvements in Regional and National standard operating procedures and enable more effective emergency communications coordination during disasters.
- Goal 7. Engage with Region I and II RECCWG by attending each other's meetings and inviting them to exercises to promote cross-Regional engagement and sharing of best practices.

- Goal 8. Staff a Private Sector/Critical Infrastructure Subcommittee to review the RECCWG's current private partnerships that are integral to emergency communications as well as those affecting public safety when private critical infrastructure is affected by disaster.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

- Goal 9. Update State Annexes and Regional Emergency Communications Plan to reflect developments in capabilities and potential requirements in both technology and RECCWG membership.
- Goal 10. Enhance relationships with amateur radio organizations/clubs to better prepare for an emergency event that requires auxiliary communications support.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

REGION III RECCWG CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The table below lists trainings, exercises, briefings, subcommittee activities, and other events hosted or promoted by the Region III RECCWG.

Table 2. RECCWG Events

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Description/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region III CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
6/19/2015	RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership	Re-introduce/welcome to the RECCWG, State updates, 2014 Annual Report, Direction of RECCWG, Planning a plenary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reengage the membership 2. Discuss goals and objectives 3. Review information from the 2014 Annual Report 	Goal 3	Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members discussed the focus of the RECCWG on interoperability, planning exercises, and discussing lessons learned from recent events. • Members want to plan a tabletop exercise (TTX).
7/15/2015	RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership	Discuss areas of interest for the RECCWG to focus on in the coming months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss goals and objectives 2. Review information from conference call summary 3. Discuss agenda for upcoming Plenary 	Goal 7	Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members discussed the focus of the RECCWG on interoperability, planning exercises, and discussing lessons learned from recent events. • Members wish to plan a TTX.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Description/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region III CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members hope to work on resource tracking and ICS 205 creation.
8/25/2015– 8/26/2015	Plenary Meeting in Frederick, MD	RECCWG Membership	Areas of concern for the RECCWG	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Share information on challenges, innovative ideas, and best practices on interoperable communications through encouraged conversation Strengthen relationships Promote awareness and value of the RECCWG 	Goals 3, 5, and 7	Statutory Duties 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representatives from each State in the Region reported on recent events and exercises, and shared best practices and lessons learned from each. The RECCWG discussed the revitalization of the subcommittees (Policy, Technical, Outreach, and Private Sector/Infrastructure). Updates by various Federal partners were given. The RECCWG conducted a workshop for a foreign dignitary scheduled to visit the United States.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Description/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region III CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members closed the plenary by identifying the top seven topics for future discussion.
9/16/2015	RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership	Review of August Plenary, Membership Review, State/Region Updates, Region I RECCWG Department of Defense Interoperability Frequency Initiative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Bring members up to date on what was discussed at the plenary Notify members that some RECCWG memberships expire soon Discuss relevant initiatives of other RECCWG groups 	Goals 4 and 8	Statutory Duties 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members discussed the possibility of inviting amateur radio operators to the RECCWG and possibly establishing a standardized vetting process for them.
10/21/2015	RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership	Review of September teleconference call, upcoming plenary, upcoming exercises and events in the region, State Emergency Communications Annex updates process, State updates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss potential dates for 2016 Plenary Receive feedback on upcoming Pennsylvania Command and Communications Rally Reach consensus on ICS letter 	None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia were supportive of changes to the ICS structure and would support communications being under operations.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Description/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region III CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
11/20/2015	RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership	State Emergency Communications Plan Updates, State Updates, February Plenary Session, Exercise Progression, NCSWIC and ICS Revision, Pennsylvania Command and Communications Rally	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide more details on the 2016 Plenary 2. Make announcement and inform members on upcoming updates to their State annexes 3. Discuss the progression of a potential Regional exercise and involving other Regions/States nearby 	Goals 7 and 8	Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members discussed the AAR and lessons learned from the Papal visit. • The RECC discussed plans to engage with neighboring Regions I and II RECCWGs for 2016.
12/14/2015	RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership	RECCWG Membership review, RECCWG Notification Drill, 2016 Pennsylvania Command and Communications Rally Update, Amateur Radio Membership Requirements, State Updates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inform States of exercises and events occurring in other States in the Region 2. Provide information on the 2016 Plenary 	Goal 4	Statutory Duty 2	It was decided that SWICs would manage the State and local members that can join the RECCWG.

CROSS-STATE AND CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The following list includes events in which multiple States or Regions worked together to coordinate strategies, collaborate on ideas, conduct training, or responded to real-world events together.

- West Virginia and Maryland signed an MOU for the Washington, Allegany, and Garrett Interoperability Network System in Maryland.
- Joint Maryland and Federal Partnership for Interoperable Communications Encrypted Emergency Communications Exercise at Communications Rally in Maryland.
- Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the District of Columbia all attended planning meetings and provided communications support for the Papal visit in September.
- State police agencies in Maryland and Virginia are developing radio interoperability solutions via Maryland FiRST that will enable each agency radio penetration into each State by 25 to 30 miles. The same solution already exists with and between West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Delaware and provides the same 25- to 30-mile radio penetration capability.
- Maryland completed development of an air-to-ground radio solution that will allow Delaware to fly into Maryland and communications via Maryland First Responders Interoperable Radio System Team (FiRST). The same solution also allows Maryland State Police (MSP) to fly into neighboring Region III States for up to 25 to 30 miles for law enforcement support and medivac missions. This provides for overall radio interoperability and replaces the currently used system. This is a significant addition to the communications interoperability capabilities within the States' Region III footprint.
- The 2015 World Police and Fire Games (WPFPG) were hosted by Fairfax County, Virginia, from June 26, 2015, to July 5, 2015. More than 9,000 athletes competed in more than 60 separate events at 30 venues spread throughout the National Capital Region (NCR). Fairfax County Department of Information Technology (DIT) Radio Services personnel worked together with Motorola Solutions to provide MCC 7100 dispatch consoles to the Reston Unified Command, and also provided communications support to the WPFPG command staff. With assistance from Prince William and Loudoun counties in Virginia and Charles County, Maryland, Fairfax DIT Radio Services personnel configured two Raytheon JPS ACU 1000 gateways and control stations that were used to create a four-talk group Regional WPFPG Command Overlay for the entire NCR. Each ACU-1000 configuration consisted of an ACU-1000 gateway device and eight 800 megahertz (MHz) mobile subscriber units. The two gateway systems were used to patch together four talk groups from the four different jurisdictions during the course of the games. The linked talk groups were used to create wide-area nets for Command, Security, Medical, and Logistics. One of the ACU-1000 systems is owned by Fairfax County, Virginia, and situated at a fixed tower location in Fairfax, Virginia. The other ACU-1000 system is owned by Prince William County, Virginia, and installed in its Public Safety Communications Support Trailer, which was positioned at the top of a landfill located west of Fairfax City. Both units operated flawlessly and provided necessary

communications to support the WPFG command staff before, during, and after the event.

- The DC Fire & EMS Department provided personnel to the Fairfax County, Virginia, logistics section for the events leading up to and including the Opening Ceremonies at RFK Stadium and throughout the duration of the games. Coverage testing was performed in specific venues and radio/battery charging stations were deployed and supported across the Region. The NCP's Communications Interoperability Group and the Virginia State Communications Cache were fully used.
- Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) responded to an EMAC request made by the Governor of Maryland to support the State and Baltimore City during the civil unrest that occurred during April 2015. Three hundred PSP troopers were deployed with Harris P7200 portable radios with 8TAC93 off network, allowing interoperability with the MSP and Baltimore City Police Department on its 700 MHz radio system. PSP deployed a Mobile Command Post and portable cell tower (cell-on-wheels). It should also be noted that while not part of the Region III footprint, the New Jersey State Police also sent a large contingent of troopers to Baltimore City via EMAC. Advanced planning and coordination prior to their arrival led to a successful response by pre-programming subscriber radios.
- A brush fire in Morgan County, West Virginia, grew into a multicounty, multistate response effort. The incident was located on Householder Road, which is close to Morgan County, West Virginia, and Washington County, Maryland, line along the Potomac River, and almost in the middle of Sidling Hill and Fairview Mountain. Units from Morgan and Berkeley (West Virginia); Washington, Frederick, and Allegany (Maryland); Franklin and Fulton (Pennsylvania) were all on the scene. All of these units were being patched into the West Virginia Statewide Interoperable Radio Network via Washington County 911 center. Radio patches to 8TACS, UTACS, and Washington County Interoperable trunked talk groups were made and patched to MORTAC 1 for operations. Washington County, Maryland, combined radio frequencies to better communications between Maryland and West Virginia, without which all of the responding units could not have had radio communications.

STATE CY 2015 ACTIVITIES TO DATE

The following list includes trainings, exercises, briefings, real-life response incidents, and other events sponsored or hosted by each Region III member State.

District of Columbia

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Supported and participated in the 2015 Sovereign Guardian exercise.
- Supported and participated in 2015 Thunderbolt exercise.

Real-life events

- Provided communications support for the Marine Corps Marathon on October 25, 2015.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

- Provided communications support for the Papal visit. One hundred fifty radios were used from the NCR cache, and 2 amplifiers were used to extend communications to a remote command post.
- Provided communications support for the 20th Anniversary of the Million Man March on the National Mall, October 10, 2015.
- Provided communications support for the 2015 State of the Union Address, January 20, 2015.
- Provided communications support for 2015 4th of July events (National Parade, Fireworks display).
- The DC Fire & EMS Department provided personnel to the Fairfax County, Virginia, logistics section for the events leading up to and including the Opening Ceremonies for the World Police & Fire Games at RFK Stadium and throughout the duration of the games.
- Provided support for the Papal visit during week of September 22–26, 2015.
- Responded to and provided communications support for multiple severe weather events that affected the District.

Other

- Migrated its fire department to a district-wide Project 25 (P25) partially encrypted network. The District of Columbia updated its fleet map, and is fully interoperable with encryption, Intergraph CAD 9.3, and new computers.
- Conducted the Metro Communications study in which the District of Columbia looked at communications systems underground. This resulted in 21 recommendations and 14 findings for the 9-1-1 system.
- Held a FirstNet consultation visit on March 26, 2015.

Delaware

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Completed a full-scale cyber security exercise.
- Division of Communications created a comprehensive curriculum to explain the full range of options on 800 MHz system including practical exercises.
- **Kent County Communications Tabletop Exercise and Drill** - Kent County Communications Tabletop Exercise and Drill—Division of Communications participated in pre-planning, table-top training session and drill July 7, 2015. The Delaware Emergency Management Agency sponsored exercise provided practical experience in simulating a radio system failure and having to use 8TAC channels.

Real-life events

- Catastrophic switching failure that required New Castle County agencies to use pre-assigned 8TAC channels. The problem was rectified in less than 45 minutes.

Other

- Delaware Division of Communications signed a contract with Motorola for refresh of 800 MHz statewide radio system.
- Held FirstNet consultation visit February 19, 2015

Maryland

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- **Mobile Communications Exercise** - The Baltimore Urban Area Security Initiative sponsored the 2015 Mobile Communications Command Vehicle Rally, which was held in October at Baltimore-Washington International Airport.
- **Private Sector Support** - Provided communications support for Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plan REP Plume Exercise.
- **ICS Training** - Held ICS-400: Advanced ICS training in Stevensville and Baltimore.
- **OEC Technical Assistance Offering** at which the basics of LTE Design and Coverage training were presented at the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).
- **OEC Technical Assistance Offering** where they presented a workshop on Current Emergency Communications and Interoperability Trends at the SEOC.
- **Amateur Radio Technician Course** – Held at the SEOC and 12 of 13 students passed this intense 2-day course.
- **COMT** - Sponsored a COMT Course at the SEOC.

Real-life events

- **Dignitary Visit**—Provided support for the Papal visit during week of September 22–26, 2015.
- **Baltimore City Response**—Civil unrest in Baltimore resulted in a multijurisdictional response and interoperability challenges; the City patched to 8TAC91 and 8TAC92 while State operations patched to 8TAC93. Gary Davis served as the State’s COML, SWIC Role. Maryland FiRST provided new communications capabilities that had never been available to the State. One thousand affiliated radios on the system while scanning BPD Tac 1 and Tac 2.
- **Equipment Installation**—In October, the Maryland Joint Operations Center placed into service an MCC7100 portable dispatch console. This capability will now allow the center “on the road” access back to their main console system which increases continuity of operations capabilities. The system has been successfully tested and field deployed twice for remote operations.

Other

- **Coverage Testing** — Conducted testing on the State Radio System in the central part of the State.
- **Plans Improvement** —Finalized the SCIP (ref: Telecon 11/20)
<http://doit.maryland.gov/marylandfirst/Documents/Statewide%20Communications%20Interoperability%20Plan%202015.pdf>

- **Statewide Radio System**—Phase III of Maryland FiRST network enhancement: the central Maryland counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Cecil, Harford, and Howard cells are expected to be operational; 13 of 23 Maryland FiRST simulcast cells will be on-the-air. Eastern Shore fully operational for all State agencies. Phase IV will focus on western Maryland. Subsequent phases of the Maryland FiRST network buildout will move into the counties in southern Maryland and the NCR, where they are currently in the design phase.

Pennsylvania

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- **Spring Weather Exercise**—The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS) and several county ACS/Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES) groups participated by passing weather-related messages and simulating loss of communications from county EOCs.
- **Three Mile Island (TMI) Nuclear Power Plant Exercise**—PEMA ACS and several county ACE/RACES groups participated in the TMI Exercise. They passed messages from local EOCs to county EOCs to the State EOC. Some critical information was captured and passed on through the ACES/RACES units.
- **All-Hazards COML Course**—A COML course was held at PEMA and in Somerset County. It was open to communications personnel from across the State.
- **All-Hazards COMT Courses**—A COMT course was held at PEMA and in Pike and Butler counties. It was open to communications personnel from across the State.
- **Auxiliary Communications (AUXCOMM) Courses**—AUXCOMM Courses were held at PEMA and in Pike and Butler counties. They were open to amateur radio operators from across the State.
- **Communications Test**—PEMA ACS and Sullivan County traveled through several areas of Worlds End State Park checking the efficacy of using different amateur radios for emergency communications at different locations throughout the park.
- **Communications Exercise**—PEMA ACS participated in a Communications Exercise with Sullivan County. They used a variety of communications methods (amateur radio and 800 MHz radio) to pass real-life safety and welfare related messages during an 18-hour marathon. Communications in this area of the State have historically been a challenge. They used several different bandwidths to determine what worked best in the area. Testing will continue in 2016.
- **WinLink2000 Training**—A WinLink 2000 training was held in Johnstown (Cumberland County).
- **Iron Response Exercise**—PEMA's Bureau of Technical Services and PEMA ACS, along with several county COMUs and ACS/RACES units, participated in Iron Response, which was an exercise in which the Pennsylvania National Guard practiced working with State and local governments.
- **PaNBEMS Exercise**—PEMA ACS facilitated an exercise in transferring data messages through the PaNBEMS software program. Several county ACS/RACES Units participated.

- **South Central Task Force (SCTF) Amateur Radio Working Group (AWRG) Hospital Communications Exercise**—ACS/RACES Units from Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry and York counties participated in a hospital communications exercise using amateur radio to pass emergency messages from hospitals to local and county EOCs.
- **Frosted Fury**—PEMA ACS and ACS/RACES units from Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry and York counties participated in the SCTF AWRG Fall Exercise (Frosted Fury) using amateur radio to pass emergency messages from hospitals to local, county, and State EOCs.
- **Limerick Nuclear Power Plant Exercise (Dress Rehearsal)**—PEMA ACS and several County ACE/RACES groups participated in the Limerick Exercise. They passed messages from local EOCs to county EOCs to the State EOC. Some critical information was captured and passed on through the RACES/ACS units.
- **Communications Exercise at FEMA’s Emergency Management Institute (EMI)**—PEMA ACS joined Adams and York counties’ ACS/RACES units at EMI where they assisted with a Communications Exercise for EOC staff from Calhoun County, Alabama. ACS/RACES personnel participating in this event worked as part of an extended SIMCELL for the exercise, providing injects of both voice and data via amateur radio. The exercise included a loss of power to the simulated EOC.
- **Limerick Nuclear Power Plant Exercise**—PEMA ACS and several county ACS/RACES Units participated in the Limerick Exercise. They passed messages from local EOCs to county EOCs to the State EOC. Some critical information was captured and passed on through the RACES/ACS units.
- **Military Amateur Radio (MARS) Exercise**—PEMA ACS and several county ACS/RACES units participated in a nationwide Interservice Exercise conducted by MARS.

Real-life events

- **2015 Papal NSSE**—Pennsylvania provided support for the Papal visit during week of September 22–26, 2015; PEMA’s Bureau of Technical Services and PEMA ACS participated, along with several county communications and ACS/RACES groups, to provide emergency communications for the World Meeting of Families and the Papal Visit.
- **Winter Storms**—PEMA ACS and several county ACS/RACES units provided updates on snow and ice accumulation. Several county ACS/RACES units located personnel in neighborhood fire stations to pass on emergency messaging to the local EOCs during power outages.
- **Hershey Marathon**—PEMA’s Bureau of Technical Services and PEMA ACS helped to provide video and voice communications during the Hershey Marathon. This allowed them to test sending video to a remote EOC and to use amateur radio from within the communications trucks.
- **Weather Event**—PEMA ACS and several county ACS/RACES units provided updates on water levels during severe weather.

- **MSA-100**—PEMA ACS and several county ACS/RACES Units provided emergency communications for the MSA-100. The MSA-100 is a 2-day bike race that travels through several counties. This was used as an exercise in unified command.
- **Mason-Dixon Challenge**—ACS/RACES volunteers from Adams, Blair, Franklin, Lancaster and York counties worked together to provide emergency communications for a 2-day bike race that traveled through several counties. This exercise provided a chance to practice unified command and to work in austere conditions. They were able to get assistance to several riders who ran into problems along the route.
- **Red Lion Street Fair**—York County ACS/RACES provided emergency communications for the community of Red Lion during its street fair. They assisted with locating three lost children and one lost senior citizen. They also assisted with having emergency medical services dispatched for a medical emergency.
- **Little League World Series of Baseball**—PEMA's Bureau of Technical Services assisted the North Central Task Force with providing emergency communications capabilities during the Little League World Series of Baseball held in Williamsport (Lycoming County).
- **Hurricane Joaquin**—PEMA ACS and several county ACS/RACES Units monitored the air for emergency messages during Hurricane Joaquin.
- **Boy Scout Jamboree**—PEMA ACS participated in the Boy Scout Jamboree. Representatives taught communications skills to Boy Scouts to promote the use of amateur radio as a good means of communicating during emergencies. This increases public awareness of the value that amateur radio brings during disasters and allows the volunteers the opportunity to practice working in austere conditions.
- **Wizard Safari**—PEMA ACS participated in the Boy Scouts' Wizard Safari Event. Representatives taught communications skills to Boy Scouts to promote the use of amateur radio as a good means of communicating during emergencies. This increases public awareness of the value that amateur radio brings during disasters and allows our volunteers the opportunity to practice working in austere conditions.

Other

- Held a SCIP workshop in December.
- **Equipment Installation**—Amateur radio equipment was installed into both PEMA satellite trucks.
- Held FirstNet consultation August 4, 2015.
- Submitted RFP to migrate PA-STARnet radio network to a P25-compliant system.

Virginia

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Conducted quarterly Communications Cache drills.
- Completed COMT and COML training.
- **Search and Rescue Training**—Hungry Mother State Park, Marion—October 15–19, 2015, and October 29 to November 2, 2015.
- **Airport Crash Exercise**—Shenandoah Valley Airport, Augusta County—October. 1, 2015.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

- **Search and Rescue Exercise**—Blueridge Parkway, Rocky Knob Recreation Area—May 15–17, 2015.

Real-life events

- **Missing Person Search**—Pulaski County—March 23–25, 2015.
- **Communications Support to NASCAR Sprint Cup STP 500 at Martinsville Speedway**—Martinsville—March 27–29, 2015.
- **2015WPFG**—hosted by Fairfax County from June 26 to July 5, 2015. More than 9,000 athletes competed in more than 60 separate events at 30 venues spread throughout the NCR.
- **MTU deployment**—performed for a tower site failure, Town of Warsaw, Richmond County—July 7–10, 2015.
- COML staffing ESF2, Virginia EOC—September 29–October 3, 2015.
- Tower site failure, Sussex County—October 2, 2015–present.
- Tower site failure, Cedar Bluff, Tazewell County—October 28, 2015–present.
- **UHF radios Support to NASCAR Sprint Cup Relief Shot 500 at Martinsville Speedway**—Martinsville—October 30, 2015–November 1, 2015.

Other

- Held FirstNet consultation on September 30, 2015.
- Identified radio cache locations and LMR resources throughout the State.

West Virginia

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- **Operation Hole in One**—Communications Exercise performed during the Greenbrier Classic on June 27 and July 5, 2015.
- **Water Hazard Communications Drill**—West Virginia Health Services (WVHS) Region-2 County EOCs and Health Departments—September 12, 2015.
- **Bundle Team Communications Exercise**—WVHS Region-6 Health Department—May 13, 2015.
- **Cabell County/Rotary Park Drill**—Communications Exercise for Cabell County—August 6, 2015.
- **Mason/Cabell County Communications Exercise** (counties, amateur radio, 911, EMA, Pleasant Valley Hospital and Health Department)—May 13, 2015.

Real-life events

- **Major Disaster Declaration(s)**
 - Severe Storms, Straight-line Winds, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (DR-4236), August 7, 2015.
 - Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (DR-4221), May 5, 2015.
 - Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (DR-4220), May 18, 2015.
 - Severe Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (DR-4219), May 14, 2015.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

- Severe Winter Storm, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (DR-4210), March 31, 2015.
- **Communications Support for 2015 Greenbrier Classic**—Official PGA Tour event, Greenbrier—July 7–10, 2015.
- **Communications Support for 2015 Bridge Day Festival**—Annual event that draws tens of thousands of visitors to the West Virginia New River Gorge, Fayetteville—October 17, 2015.
- Responded to and provided communications support for multiple severe weather events

Other

- Completed Statewide Interoperability Conference in October.
- Held FirstNet consultation May 5, 2015.

[This page intentionally left blank.]

REGION IV

[This page intentionally left blank.]

APR 29 2016



MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon C. Penn
Assistant Administrator
Response Directorate

FROM: Gracia B. Szczep
Regional Administrator 

SUBJECT: FEMA Region IV Regional Emergency Communications
Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

As required by Title XVIII, Section 1805 of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2007, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in Title XVIII.

The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region IV RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined calendar year (CY) 2015. The report will be distributed to the Director for the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP);
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements;
- Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region IV RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region. The accompanying Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole Community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Enclosed: Region IV summary for the CY 2015 RECCWG Annual Report

**REGION IV
REGIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP
(RECCWG)**

CY 2015 SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

The Region IV RECCWG had a productive CY 2015. Key accomplishments include provision of assistance with communications-related resources during response and recovery operations in South Carolina following the severe flooding incident in October, creation of additional information-sharing capabilities through a dedicated Region IV RECCWG Adobe Connect page, update of the Region’s Emergency Communications Plan and associated State and Tribal Annexes, expansion of the use of SHARed RESources (SHARES) throughout the region as part of the transition and consolidation of the Military Auxiliary Radio System (MARS) program, executed a regional table top exercise (TTX) involving a hazardous material accident on a rail line, and the addition of additional Tribal members from the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. Through the efforts of the RECCWG members and their participation on the monthly teleconferences, attendance at their annual face-to-face meetings, and involvement in real-life incidents, the Region IV RECCWG was also able to identify several key findings that will shape its direction for CY 2016 and beyond.

The following list includes challenges the RECCWG will face and work through to improve its effectiveness in Region IV in CY 2016: improving coordination with the Whole Community, including the private sector and nongovernmental organizations (NGO) to improve situational awareness of their plans and capabilities; addressing the lack of available funding for the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) and associated activities related to training and exercises for interoperability; improving connectivity among statewide LMR networks in the Region; improving connectivity among the State Emergency Operations Centers (SEOC) and the FEMA Regional Response Coordination Center; and increasing overall Tribal involvement with the RECCWG.

For additional information regarding these or other RECCWG activities, please contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region IV Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), Donnie Monette, at Donnie.Monette@fema.dhs.gov or (770) 220-5361.

Table 1. RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2015

Name	Role or Agency
RECCWG Leadership	
Bobby Brown	RECCWG Co-Chair, IT &Infrastructure Service Manager for Seminole Tribe
Alabama Representatives	
George Grabryan, Jr.	Florence County Emergency Management Agency (EMA), EMA/ 9-1-1 Director
Jeb Hargrove	Communications & Technology Director Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA)

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
Chuck Murph	AL Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—Interoperable Communications Coordinator
Greg Sarratt	American Radio Relay League—SE Division
Wesley Martin	
Florida Representatives	
Phil Royce III	SWIC, Florida Division of Emergency Management - Communications Division Director
Cynthia Cast	Miami Dade County—Radio Systems Manager
Greg Holcomb	Florida SWIC, Lake County Public Safety/Enhanced 9-1-1 (E-911) Coordinator—Division Manager
Danette McBride	Department of Management Services (DMS), Emergency Support Function 2 (ESF-2) Lead
Robert Little	Florida Department of Emergency Management—IT
Georgia Representatives	
Charlene Ruple	State Warning Officer
Woody Radcliffe	Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) Communications Manager—ESF-2 Lead
Jim Millsap	GEMA
Hal Waters	GEMA—Emergency Management Technician
Robert "Bob" Johnston	Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)/Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) Emergency Coordinator—Cherokee County
Kentucky Representatives	
Drew Chandler	Department of Public Health (DPH)—IT/Communications Manager
Derek Nesselrode	Kentucky Division of Emergency Management (KYEM)—SWIC
Dave Barker	Kentucky Division of Emergency Management (KYEM)
Mississippi Representatives	
Robert (Gil) Bailey	Harrison County Emergency Communications—Deputy Director
Dent Guyes	Mississippi Wireless Communications Commission (WCC)
Donald Loper	Mississippi Highway Patrol Department of Public Safety
Susan Perkins	Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)—Communications Branch Director
North Carolina Representatives	
Clay Benton	North Carolina Department of Public Safety (NCDPS)
Jason Boggs	Catawba County Emergency Services—Deputy Fire Marshal
Jeffrey Childs	North Carolina Division of Emergency Management (NCDEM)—SWIC
Mike Montague	NCDEM—Communications Lead ESF 2
Chris Tant	NCDPS
South Carolina Representatives	
George Crouch	Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO)—South Carolina Division of Technology

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
Joseph Farmer	South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD)—Public Information Director
Bob Steadman	South Carolina Division of Technology and SWIC
Tennessee Representatives	
Jody Clinard	Nashville Metro Radio—Radio System Manager
Jesse Griggs	Tennessee Department of Corrections—Correctional Program Support Coordinator
Arnold Hooper	Tennessee Department of Safety & Homeland Security Coordinator—Wireless Communications Director- Regional Interoperability
Billy Freeman	Memphis Fire Department, Tennessee Task Force 1
John Moyers	Tennessee Department of Health—Telecom Manager Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
Howard "Jelly" Thompson	Germantown Fire Department
Tribal Members	
Jeff Kozdron	Seminole Tribe (Florida)—Security Systems Analyst
April Sells	Poarch Creek Indians (Alabama)—Tribal EMA Director
Chris McGhee	Poarch Creek Indians (Alabama)
Federal / Private Sector Partners	
Kevin Holland	National Guard Bureau (NGB), J-6
Steve Waterman	SHARES
Pam Montanari	Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), Regional Coordinator
Steve Veader	National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
Scott Jackson	NTIA
John McLean	DHS OEC
Joel Katz	Civil Air Patrol (CAP)—Deputy Chief of Staff A6 Communications
Donnie Monette	Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region IV—Telecom Specialist
Jo Robichaud	FEMA Region IV Telecommunications Specialist

REGION IV RECCWG CY 2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

➤ **Accomplishment 1: Updated the Region IV Regional Emergency Communication Plan (RECP) and associated State/Tribal Annexes.**

The updated Annexes and the RECP provide insight to emergency communications leaders across the Region with regard to State and Tribal capabilities and potential requirements for communications support in response and recovery operations. Updates included analytics on

the impact on communications critical infrastructure, review of State and Tribal communications capabilities for response and recovery, and review of all communications networks and mobile communications resources likely to be used.

➤ **Accomplishment 2: Increased Tribal engagement through emergency communications planning and data collection.**

Regional Tribal engagement was expanded to include participation by two Tribes in the RECCWG Plenary and interaction with the remaining four to learn more about their communications capabilities, plans, and potential requirements. Additional RECCWG members were added from the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. Efforts to recruit additional members and include Tribes in future exercises and training continue. CY 2015 strides for increased Tribal participation resulted in improved awareness of Tribal issues by all members and improved coordination with Tribal emergency managers and communications staff.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Coordinated support and assistance for emergency communications to five Region IV States during response and recovery operations for eight Major Disaster Declarations in CY 2015.**

Members used relationships and coordination processes established through RECCWG engagement to provide mutual support during disaster response and recovery operations throughout the Region. Frequent RECCWG response coordination calls, understanding of neighboring capabilities, and awareness of key leadership in the Region enabled swift and effective support for communications challenges and improved the effectiveness of the response. Preexisting relationships enabled rapid deployment and communications coordination for Helicopter Rescue Teams from North Carolina to support response to flooding in South Carolina. Kentucky and Alabama coordinated communications-related Emergency Mutual Aid Assistance Compact (EMAC) support for response activity with FEMA Region IV and neighboring States via group calls with RECCWG members.

➤ **Accomplishment 4: Established a Region IV RECCWG Adobe Connect platform to share relevant information quickly at any time.**

The RECCWG worked together to establish an Adobe Connect platform to which members, partners, and invited guests can quickly gain access. It is used to share information pertaining to lessons learned, EMAC requests and resource availability during State/Regional response operations, and State Annexes to coordinate exercises and routine activities. The platform improves resource coordination and situational awareness in times of disaster. This solution was established to meet a stated challenge for CY 2015.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

➤ **Accomplishment 5: Expanded use of SHARES and Amateur Radio in the Region.**

As a result of the recent transfer of the High Frequency (HF) Radio Contingency Communications Program from the Department of Defense (DoD) MARS to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) National Coordinating Center for Communications (NCC) SHARES, RECCWG members have expanded the use of the SHARES program in their States under the direction of SHARES. DHS has provided several briefings on SHARES, including a presentation at the RECCWG Plenary in July, on how the program is evolving. Members have engaged their amateur radio partners to assist with the transitioning to SHARES. State responders have also expanded their own efforts with the program as well as encouraging their county agencies, and critical infrastructure partners, to become involved in taking advantage of the changes. The Region now has an active SHARES group that conducts regularly scheduled radio checks and exercises. Through this expansion in capability, and member state participation, SHARES provides an additional means of backup communication for both voice and data for use on all geographic levels, nationwide, in times of crisis as well as on a day-to-day basis.

REGION IV RECCWG CY 2016 CHALLENGES

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

➤ **Challenge 1: Emergency Communications leadership in States do not always have complete situational awareness of private sector and NGO status and capabilities. This lack of awareness has a negative impact on response effectiveness.**

Members feel they lack complete understanding of Whole Community plans and capabilities during response and recovery operations. Consensus was reached for establishment of a Whole Community Sub-Committee to improve awareness and coordination with the private sector and NGO community.

➤ **Challenge 2: Funding shortfalls caused by communications-specific grant reductions have affected SWIC staffing and interoperability activities such as training and technical enhancement/upgrades in every State in the RECCWG.**

Members desire to find alternative funding sources for SWIC and interoperability training/exercises in their States. A lack of funding is degrading State/local capabilities and will affect future interoperability across all jurisdictional levels.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Challenge 3: Day-to-day communications between member SEOCs lack the necessary redundancy to be reliable when primary means of communications fail or become congested during a major incident response.**

Members enjoy good connectivity with primary methods of communications and partner in exercises and tests whenever possible. However, when traditional methods of communications are not operable, members have some difficulty communicating. There is a lack of connectivity in the Region between statewide networks and backup means of communications. Only a few States have begun linking their systems for interoperability during an event, so throughout most of the Regions the State radio networks cannot communicate, leaving the States with limited or no methods for communication with each other if traditional communications are affected.

➤ **Challenge 4: Day-to-day LMR communications between statewide/primary land mobile radio (LMR) networks are not currently established region-wide.**

States have disparate LMR networks and/or conventional repeater systems that are used during emergency response operations. Members hope to increase interstate connectivity through linkage of statewide LMR networks through the use technical (Inter RF [Radio Frequency] Subsystem Interface [ISSI]/patching) and governance (memorandum of understanding [MOU]/memorandum of agreement [MOA]) solutions.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

➤ **Challenge 5: Tribal engagement in the RECCWG is not at desired levels.**

Although Tribal participation increased from one Tribe to two in 2015, members hope to increase Tribal participation through engagement with the remaining four Tribal authorities in the Region.

REGION IV RECCWG CY 2016 GOALS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

Goal 1. Develop and conduct an annual communication exercise (TTX, functional, or full-scale exercise) to assess communications interoperability and survivability.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

Goal 2. Establish resource typing standards for communications-related items in the Region.

Goal 3. Explore ways to expand connectivity between statewide LMR networks within the Region, wherever technically possible, through the use of technology (ISSI), agreements (MOAs/MOUs) or yet to be determined options.

Goal 4. Update the Region IV Strategic Interstate Communications Resource Allocation Plan (SIC-RAP) and continue to evolve Communications Strike Teams and/or EMAC support processes for communications.

Goal 5. Connect SEOCs in the Region via secondary and backup modes of communications such as satellite talk groups, LMR, and HF and amateur radio

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

Goal 6. Expand Tribal participation in the RECCWG beyond current levels.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

REGION IV RECCWG CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The table below lists trainings, exercises, briefings, subcommittee activities, and other events hosted or promoted by the Region IV RECCWG.

Table 2. RECCWG Events

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region IV CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
1/6/2015	January RECCWG Teleconference	Region IV States and Tribal and Federal partners	State/Tribal Updates, Federal and Private Sector partner Updates, Schedule review	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. RECP and State/Tribal Annex review 2. State, Tribal, and Federal/Private partner Reports 3. Upcoming Schedule review 	Goals 2, 4, and 5	Duties 1,2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefed state/Tribal and partner updates • Coordinated State/Tribal event schedules
2/3/2015	February RECCWG Teleconference	Region IV States and Tribal and Federal partners	State Annex Updates, State Brief Outs, North Carolina Department of Emergency Management (NCDEM) activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. RECP and State/Tribal Annex review 2. State, Tribal, and Federal/Private partner Reports 3. Upcoming Schedule review 	Goals 2, 4, and 5	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established contacts to begin RECP and State/Tribal Annex Updates • Coordinated State/Tribal event schedules

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region IV CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
3/3/2015	March RECCWG Teleconference	Region IV States and Tribal and Federal partners	State Annex Updates, State Brief Outs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State, Tribal and Federal/Private Sector Updates 2. Tennessee lessons learned from recent ice storms and Governor's Inauguration 3. State/Tribal/Federal/Private Sector Updates and schedule review 	Goals 2 and 6	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generated discussions about incident response and event planning • Coordinated State/Tribal event schedules
4/7/2015	April RECCWG Teleconference	Region IV States and Tribal and Federal partners	State Annex Updates, State Brief Outs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Upcoming State/Tribal Schedule review 2. Annual Report discussion 3. State Annex progress review 4. State/Tribal/Partner briefs 	Goals 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated State/Tribal event schedules • Provided updates to ongoing efforts in Region
4/20/2015–4/30/2015 No notice Event	Eagle Horizon 2015	National Guard, DHS, FEMA, and other Federal agencies	DHS/FEMA no notice continuity exercise, readiness for continuity programs, relocation to alternate site and verification of backup communications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Test backup communications capabilities at alternate site locations 	Goals 2, 4, and 6	Duties 1 and 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verified capabilities at backup facilities

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region IV CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
5/5/2015	May RECCWG Teleconference	Region IV States and Tribal and Federal partners	State Annex Updates, State Brief Outs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plenary agenda discussion 2. State Updates on activities, training, and exercises 3. Open discussion period covered Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) and 9-1-1 topics 	Goals 2, 6	Duties 1,2, 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated state/Tribal events/schedules • Held IPAWS Discussion regarding recent testing in North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and Georgia. • Held discussion on 9-1-1 fees and areas of concern for legislation pertaining to those fees.
6/2/2015	June RECCWG Teleconference	Region IV States and Tribal and Federal partners	State Annex Updates, State Brief Outs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plenary discussion 2. Delivery.gov discussion 	Goals 1, 2, 3, and 6	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalized Plenary agenda and plans • Initiated delivery.gov effort to increase ease of information sharing
6/5/2016–6/7/2015	Southeast Region Civil Air Patrol (CAP) Conference	CAP personnel	Region communications seminar and seminars in other areas of CAP operations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish standardized communications procedures across the Region for CAP staff 2. Increase familiarity with regional interoperability procedures with State/Federal partners 	Goals 2, 6, and 8	Duties 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved interoperability between CAP and first responder community

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region IV CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
7/7/2015–7/8/2015	Summer Plenary Meeting	Region IV States and Tribal and Federal partners	State and Tribal Updates, Comments from Regional Administrator (RA), Motorola Brief, SHARES update, FirstNet Update	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inform members of existing actions and future plans for Region IV States and Tribes 2. Provide members with updated input from FEMA Region IV RA 3. Private sector Updates 4. SHARES Update from OEC 5. FirstNet Update from National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) 6. TTX on hazardous materials incident on railway 	Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased member awareness of ongoing actions in neighboring States and Tribes • Updated members on FirstNet progress and future initiatives • Updated members on SHARES evolution • Private sector update from Motorola • TTX for railroad incident • Updated members on FCC and NTIA topics
8/4/2015	August RECCWG Teleconference	Region IV States and Tribal and Federal partners	State Annex Updates, State Brief Outs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of Plenary actions and topics 2. Proposed changes to Incident Command System (ICS) structure for the Communications Unit 3. Discussed upcoming Central U.S. Earthquake Consortium (CUSEC) Communications exercise and the use of mobile satellite (MSAT) CUSEC 1 Talk Group 	Goals 2, 4, 6, and 8	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtained feedback on proposed ICS changes for Communications Unit • Discussed potential goals for 2016, which included connecting all SEOCs via multiple modes of communications for disaster response communications when primary means are degraded/congested.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region IV CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
10/6/2015	October RECCWG Teleconference	Region IV States and Tribal and Federal partners	State Annex Updates, State Brief Outs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State/Tribal and partner briefs 2. National Co-Chair Update 3. Schedule review 4. Response Update for South Carolina Declared Disaster due to storms and flooding 	Goals 2, 3, and 6	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members conducted discussion on after-action report from Delta State College shooting incident in Mississippi • Discussion on the need for resource typing for communications-related equipment used in EMAC • Members discussed the national co-chair call in order to inform the Region IV Co-chair of issues concerning interoperability • Members discussed response operations and communications challenges during ongoing response and recovery operations in South Carolina

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region IV CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
11/3/2015	November RECCWG Teleconference	Region IV States and Tribal and Federal partners	State Annex Updates, State Brief Outs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Calendar review 2. State/Tribal and partner updates 3. October Co-Chair call review 4. RECP Goal #4 discussion 5. South Carolina response After-Action Report Update 6. Shares Update 	Goals 2, 6, and 8	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members were able to discuss lessons learned from the South Carolina flood response and topics that affect communications • Members discussed the proposal to change the ICS structure for the communications group and support elevating the group to a higher level in ICS • Members agreed to form a Whole Community subcommittee to address coordination with NGOs and Volunteer Organizations Aiding in Disasters in the Region
12/1/2015	December RECCWG Teleconference	Region IV States and Tribal and Federal partners	State Annex Updates, State Brief Outs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adobe Connect Working Group page to enable real-time communications for response operations and/or exercises 2. Active Shooter planning 3. 2016 Plenary scheduling 	Goals 1, 2, 6, and 8	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member discussions on information sharing via Adobe Connect • Member discussions on Active Shooter Planning— all States present had mature plans in place and communications is addressed by all

CROSS-STATE AND CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The following list includes events in which multiple States or Regions worked together to coordinate strategies, collaborate on ideas, conduct training, or responded to real-world events together:

- Region IV RECCWG began using a dedicated Region IV RECCWG Adobe Connect page for information sharing throughout the Region.
- Kentucky and Tennessee public health agencies formed a communications committee to improve interoperability and coordination between the States.
- Southeast Regional Civil Air Patrol Conference on June 5–7 included regional communications seminars.
- Central Gulf Coast Hurricane Conference occurred, with participation by Alabama and Mississippi emergency management personnel and included emergency communications interoperability training and discussions.
- Duke Energy Robinson Nuclear Plant Exercise occurred, with participation from North Carolina, South Carolina, U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), DHS, FEMA, Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), and South Carolina State and county officials. The exercise included private industry and public emergency planning for safety and emergency communications held on July 21–23.
- Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program (REPP) Exercise was held at Shearon Harris Plant in Bonsal, NC, and included participants from DHS, FEMA, NRC, and North and South Carolina emergency management staff from State/local levels held on October 26–30.
- OEC meeting was held with Region IV States on mission-ready packages for communications in Chattanooga, TN, on October 27–29.
- SHARES radio exercise was held on November 9 involving the use of SHARES and MARS radios in FEMA and Region IV States between registered critical infrastructure/key resources stations and any MARS stations in the Region. Goal of the exercise was to improve interoperability over amateur radio within the Region.
- REPP Exercise was held at the Watts Bar nuclear plant in Spring City, TN, on November 16–20. The event included participants from DHS, FEMA, NRC, and Tennessee State and local emergency management officials. The event included exercise play on emergency communications.
- Seminole Tribe of Florida deployed communications teams to forest fires in the western United States several times to assist with communications requirements during response activities in California and Oklahoma.
- RECCWG Conference calls were held with Emergency Communications leaders from all Region IV States to determine potential requirements for EMAC.

STATE CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The following list includes trainings, exercises, briefings, real-life response incidents, and other events sponsored or hosted by a particular State.

Alabama

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- The Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) winter weather exercise on October 15, 2015, in Tuscaloosa, AL
- Participated in the Great Shake Out October 15, 2015
- COMM-T class October 19–23, 2015.
- Alabama Governors Preparedness Conference, June 24, 2015
- Auxiliary communications class February 29, 2015

Real-life events

- Provided support for the Alabama 500 on October 25, 2015, part of the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series.

Florida

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Hosted the Governors Hurricane Conference from May 10–15, 2015
- Held a three-phase exercise called the “Florida Statewide Hurricane Exercise”
 - Phase I was on May 4, 2015
 - Phase II was on May 6, 2015
 - The Statewide Hurricane Exercise was held May 19–21, 2015.
 - Phase III was on June 6, 2015.

Georgia

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Conducted a Mobile Communications Vehicle Exercise May 4–8, 2015
- Held the Georgia Nuclear Communications exercise on May 5, 2015
- The Annual State Hurricane exercise (HURREX 2015) was held in Savannah May 11–13, 2015. It focused on response and recovery actions, including evacuation of vulnerable needs population.
- The Georgia Regional Interoperable Communications Planning Meeting was held in Atlanta, GA, on May 14, 2015 with a focus on interoperability and spectrum management.
- The State completed the FEMA Regional Emergency Communications Plan and State Annex Update. The Stakeholder Meeting was held on May 26, 2015

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

- There was a Hurricane Response Discussion with State partners and Georgia Power held June 16, 2015.
- The Severe Weather Annex to the GA Emergency Operations Plan was completed in August 2015.
- An Alternate State Operations Center Exercise (GPSTC) was held December 8–9, 2015.
- A REPP Exercise was conducted at the Edwin I Hatch Nuclear Plant, Baxley, GA; FEMA Region IV December 7–11, 2015.

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration for Severe Winter Storm (DR-4215) in February, declaration made in April.

Kentucky

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Held a Communications Leader (COML) Class February 17–19, 2015
- Hosted a COML Train-the-Trainer Class April 21–23, 2015
- Completed Annual Statewide Communications Exercise June 22–26, 2015, which included interoperability training and exercise play
- Statewide Military Affairs Tactical Communications Exercise (COMEX), June 6, 2015
- Seismic Exercise May 11, 2015
- Region IV TA, Interstate asset deployment September 21–23, 2015.
- Auxiliary communications (AUXCOM) class held October 16–18, 2015.

Real-life events

- Severe Winter Storms, Snowstorms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (DR-4216) in February with Major Disaster Declaration made on April 30.
- Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (DR-4217) in April with Major Disaster Declaration made on May 1.
- Severe Winter Storm, Snowstorm, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (DR-4218) in March with Major Disaster Declaration made on May 12.
- Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-line Winds, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (DR-4239) in July with Major Disaster Declaration made on August 12.

Mississippi

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Annual State Emergency Management Conference held the week of June 1 included an Introduction to Interoperability class for attendees and advanced training for communications specialists.
- Interoperability for Public Safety Communicators training class the week of July 13 to coincide with Statewide 9-1-1 Conference.
- GGNS HAB 7/22/15 Dress Rehearsal with Full Scale Evacuation on October 20, 2015.
- Mississippi nuclear hazardous material exercise involving State and local officials, which required deployment of a portion of the Mississippi Wireless Information Network radio cache and assignment of special event talk groups held on October 21.

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration (DR-4205) for Severe Storms and Tornado in January

North Carolina

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- A COML Class was held February 24–26, 2015.
- A COMT Class was held May 18–22, 2015.
- NCDDEM Central Branch held an Interoperability Communications Exercise on April 9, 2015, with a Communications Rally held on April 10, 2015. Events included COM-U, VIPER system, ACU-T, and deployable communication asset refresher training.
- A nuclear plant exercise was held for Duke Energy's Robinson Nuclear Plant July 22, 2015.

South Carolina

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Held a Vigilant Guard Exercise March 9, 2015.
- Attended a FirstNet Consultations April 30, 2015.
- South Carolina National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) had an exercise on May 12–13 with a focus on increased understanding of NDMS for SC emergency medical services and public health personnel.
- The South Carolina Governor's Hurricane TTX was held May 15, 2015.
- The Region IV RECP State Annex Update meeting was held May 29, 2015.
- The South Carolina Governor's Hurricane Exercise was held in June 2015.
- A full-scale Hurricane Evacuation Exercise was conducted June 6, 2015 and included planning and training for communications.

Real-life events

- Bike Week in Myrtle Beach, SC, was May 22–31 and required deployed communications resources.
- South Carolina Severe Storms and Flooding (DR-4241) in October with a Major Disaster Declaration made on October 5

Tennessee

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- A COML Class was held February 17–20, 2015.
- An East Tennessee Regional FirstNet Conference was held March 11–12, 2015.
- The Tennessee statewide IPAWS test was conducted March 18, 2015.
- The State hosted the RECP State Annex update meeting April 10, 2015.
- The AUXCOM Spring Training Event, held April 30–May 3, included field deployment of communications resources, WINLINK testing and training, ICS training and emergency communications training/exercises.
- A COML Class in Nashville, TN, was held the first week of June.
- COMU Class held May 30–June 2, 2015.
- A REPP exercise was held at Watts Bar Nuclear Plant in Spring City, TN, in November 2015.
- A Tennessee COML course was held December 3–4, 2015.

Real-life events

- Severe Winter Storm and Flooding (DR-4211), Major Disaster Declaration declared on April 2, 2015.
- Provided communications support to local officials for Mule Day events April 6–12, 2015.

Other

- FirstNet Outreach meetings were held across the State in March 2015.

Tribal

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Meetings on July 29 with the Seminole Tribe of Florida Emergency Management and communications staff to collect data for the Tribal Annex to the Region IV RECP
- Tribal Nations and FEMA Region IV 2015 Gathering held September 22–23 in Atlanta, GA. FEMA Disaster Emergency Communications staff met with Tribal representatives from most of the Region IV Tribal entities to begin data collection for the Region IV Tribal Annex to the RECP. FEMA Region IV staff briefed all attendees on the process and background for the effort.

Real-life events

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

- Seminole Tribe of Florida used supplemental communications resources to support the South Eastern Motorcycle Rodeo held at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Orlando, FL.
- Seminole Tribe of Florida deployed members of its communications teams to forest fires in the Mud Lake Complex Incident at the Big Cypress National Preserve (National Park Service) in Ochopee, FL, and in response to fires in Montana. Tribal authorities frequently provide support to local fires in the vicinity of Tribal territory.

[This page intentionally left blank.]

REGION V

[This page intentionally left blank.]



FEMA

AUG 18 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn
Assistant Administrator
Response Directorate

FROM: 
Andrew Velasquez III
Regional Administrator

SUBJECT: FEMA Region V Regional Emergency Communications
Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

As required by Title XVIII, Section 1805 of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2007, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in Title XVIII.

The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region V RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined calendar year (CY) 2015 RECCWG Annual Report that will be distributed to the Director for the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP);
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements;
- Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region V RECCWG membership achieved in meeting the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report, as attached,

wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region. The accompanying Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related "Whole of Community" efforts are moving forward as embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Enclosed: Region V summary for the CY 2015 RECCWG Annual Report

REGION V
REGIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP
(RECCWG)

CY 2015 SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

The Region V RECCWG had a productive CY 2015. Key accomplishments include improving the effectiveness and reliability of a major backup means of emergency communications by sharing organizational data on each member State's Amateur Radio Auxiliary Emergency Communications (AUXCOMM) organization and creating an AUXCOMM Working Group; increasing mutual awareness and engagement of military, emergency response, and public safety resources in Region V by opening dialogue across State boundaries and engaging respective National Guard and Civil Air Patrol (CAP) staffs to create working groups for both entities; improving linkage and connectivity between statewide land mobile radio (LMR) networks to improve operation effectiveness of law enforcement and public safety responders via Inter-RF Subsystem Interface (ISSI) technologies and member interaction; increasing understanding and operational effectiveness of the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) in Region V States by consistently meeting in the IPAWS Working Group to share best practices and concerns within the Region to find potential solutions that increase reliability and maximize public notification for citizens in every State. Through the efforts of our RECCWG members and their participation on the monthly teleconferences, attendance at semi-annual face-to-face meetings, and involvement in real-life incidents, the Region V RECCWG was also able to identify several key issues while establishing goals and objectives that will shape its direction for CY 2016 and beyond.

The RECCWG will face and work through numerous challenges to improve the group's effectiveness. These challenges include finding ways to quickly identify and effectively share critical resources during response and recovery operations through continued development of Region-wide protocols for Communication Assets Survey and Mapping Next Generation (CASM-NG); establishing long-term solutions for the National Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) and meeting each State's fiduciary responsibilities through continued monitoring and Regional coordination with members regarding First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) implementation; improving Regional situational awareness through establishment of reliable command and control links between the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) and State Emergency Operations Centers (SEOC); overcoming a lack of awareness of best practices and increasing procedural consistency through increased usage and information sharing via Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN); expanding member knowledge of national best practices and improving coordination across all RECCWGs; addressing technical shortfalls and operational effectiveness of IPAWS while simultaneously expanding its use throughout Region V; increasing Tribal engagement to expand awareness by Tribal entities on the efforts of the RECCWG and its members; and increasing State, local, and Tribal understanding of Federal and nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and private sector capabilities to better use every available resource during response and recovery operations.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

For additional information regarding the Region V RECCWG, please contact FEMA Region V Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), Alan Choutka, at alan.choutka@fema.dhs.gov or (312) 408-4418.

Table 1. RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2015

Name	Role or Agency
RECCWG Leadership	
Dave Dato	Region V RECCWG Chair, Wauconda Fire District, Chief
Brad Stoddard	Region V RECCWG Vice-Chair, Michigan Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)
Illinois (IL) Representatives	
Joe Galvin	Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA), Illinois SWIC
Stephen Jackson	Illinois Department of Transportation, Communications Manager
Walt Lewis	IEMA, Communications Manager
Paul Maplethorpe	Greater Round Lake Fire Protection District, Chief
Daniel Casey	Chicago Office of Emergency Management and Communication, Deputy Director—Public Safety Information Technology
Indiana (IN) Representatives	
Steve Skinner	Integrated Public Safety Commission, Indiana SWIC
John Thompson	Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS)
Michael Watkins	Johnson County, 9-1-1 Director
Don West	IDHS, Communications Director
Michigan (MI) Representatives	
Bernard Alexander	Detroit Homeland Security & Emergency Management
Donald Bouffard	Michigan State Police, Emergency Management Division Engineering Specialist
Minnesota (MN) Representatives	
John Dooley	Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Emergency Management Communications & Warning Officer
Jim Stromberg	Minnesota SWIC/Allied Radio Matrix Emergency Response, Program Manager
Ohio (OH) Representatives	
Rick Schmahl	Ohio SWIC/Multi-Agency Radio Communications System Program Manager
Brian Castner	Ohio Emergency Management Agency (OEMA), Telecommunications Branch Supervisor
Ronald “Dave” Ford	OEMA, Telecommunications Branch Chief
Wisconsin (WI) Representatives	
Paul Hughes	Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM), Assistant Communications & Warning Officer
Jennifer Lord	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Radio Communication Specialist
Jim Meilahn	WEM, State Communications & Warning Officer

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
Gene Oldenburg	Wisconsin SWIC/Wisconsin Department of Justice
Tribal Representatives	
Monte Fronk	1855 Mille Lacs Reservation, Department of Public Safety
Robin Arunagiri	Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission
Commercial Representatives	
Hope Peterson	AT&T
Rodney Cooper	Sprint
Federal Partners	
David Adsit	Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Spectrum Manager
Brian Carney	DHS FEMA Disaster Emergency Communications (DEC), Communications Integration Branch (CIB) Chief
Alan Choutka	DHS FEMA Region V, Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator
Scott Hansen	DHS FEMA DEC CIB
Dennis Huntley	DHS FEMA DEC Denver Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS), Telecommunications Manager
James Jarvis	DHS Office of Emergency Communications, Regional Coordinator
Lt. Col. Richard King	Civil Air Patrol, Great Lakes Region Homeland Security
Mike Moffitt	Federal Communications Commission
Tim Pierce	First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet), Region V Consultation/Outreach Lead
Paul Preusse	DHS FEMA Region V, Response Division Director
Daniel Roberts	DHS FEMA DEC Denver MERS, Radio Frequency Communications Manager
Scott Stemmen	General Services Administration, Emergency Support Function-2 Regional Manager
Josh Tidey	DHS United States Coast Guard (USCG) District 09, CWO2/ Communications Officer
Galen Varon	USCG District 09, Lieutenant/C4&IT Branch Chief
Steve Veader	National Telecommunications & Information Administration (NTIA)
Scott Jackson	NTIA
Gus Wulfschuhle	DHS FEMA Region V, Response Division, Operational Planning Branch Chief
Other Participants—Subject Matter Experts (SME)	
John Cheney	Strategic Technology Reserve Coordinator, Illinois
Bill Springer	Illinois FirstNet, System Architect
Kelly Castle	Ohio FirstNet

REGION V RECCWG CY 2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

➤ **Accomplishment 1: Improved the effectiveness of amateur radio resources in the Region.**

The RECCWG collected data for AUXCOMM organization and resources in each of the Region V States to improve awareness and effectiveness of the primary backup emergency communications mode on a Regional basis. The group laid the groundwork for an expanded Regional AUXCOMM presence in exercises and regularly scheduled testing of amateur circuits in Region V. Amateur radio remains the most survivable means of communication during response and recovery operations following catastrophic incidents.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment 2: Strengthened the RECCWG as the Regional coordinating body for multijurisdictional interoperability through effective use of existing and new working groups.**

The SOP & Usage, Training and Exercise, and IPAWS subcommittees engaged members and subject matter experts from member States to address areas of concern within the Region. The working groups focus on creating agreements for resource sharing, statewide network linkage, and emergency alerting protocols and execution. The RECCWG also established additional working groups to improve awareness of mutual capabilities and resource coordination between military and public safety responders with the National Guard, CAP, and AUXCOMM organizations in every State. The working groups have helped improve interstate coordination and sharing of best practices for improving interoperability when standard modes of communications become degraded or unavailable.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Leveraged Training Opportunities.**

RECCWG members shared information regarding available training opportunities in their respective States, including Communications Unit Leader (COML) and Communications Unit Technician (COMT) training as well as Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan and Broadband workshops. This outreach and information sharing allowed States in the Region to leverage existing resources and training opportunities to meet training goals in multiple States in a restricted fiscal climate. Responders attended training in neighboring States by using open seats to attain the necessary training to begin COML and COMT certification in their home State, thus saving time and funds when that training was not available in their home State.

- **Accomplishment 4: Enhanced interoperability through the establishment of cross-border memoranda of agreement (MOA) and technical cooperation to link neighboring statewide LMR networks.**

Region V States have been working together to establish interstate connectivity between States that have compatible networks and infrastructure. These connections enable users in disparate systems to communicate seamlessly when incidents requiring cross-jurisdictional communications occur. Working group member interaction resulted in all six Region V States establishing preliminary connectivity for coordination on a daily basis with hopes to expand to other States in other Regions as the process and technological challenges are addressed. While the process of establishing broader connectivity with neighboring States is ongoing, strides in terms of technical requirements and governance have been made by several partner States.

REGION V RECCWG CY 2016 CHALLENGES

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

- **Challenge 1: Address CASM-NG's lack of Region-wide protocols for listed resources, which makes it difficult and time consuming when using the tool to locate needed resources for Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) situations.**

The latest version of CASM, CASM-NG, has enhanced data sharing features as well as additional datasets that can be used to capture the various interoperable communications assets and capabilities of local systems. Developing standardized terminology and methodology will streamline the ability of a State to assess and understand the capabilities of its neighboring States to ascertain whether those assets would meet the host State's needs during response operations.

- **Challenge 2: Implement the ISSI between Project 25 (P25) statewide radio systems in a consistent manner across the Region.**

A number of ISSI implementations have already occurred across the Region. These are generally between a local system and the statewide system or between a local system and a cross-border local system (US-Canada). Protocols, common talk path naming conventions, and operating procedures should be developed models for implementers to use.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

- **Challenge 3: Address Region V RECCWG States' concerns and questions about their forthcoming FirstNet decisions and enhance collaboration with other member States to ensure each State's individual solution will also enable Regional interoperability.**

FirstNet Request for Proposals, Build Out plans, and Opt-In or Opt-Out decisions for each State are due in CY 2016. Individual members desire collaboration with neighboring States to

ensure informed recommendations can be made to their State leaders. Members of the RECCWG FirstNet/ Long-Term Evolution (LTE) Subcommittee will coordinate with FirstNet board to get pertinent information on the build-out and integration of FirstNet in the Region.

- **Challenge 4: Address the lack a national and/or Regional standard for documenting the capability of available communications resources utilized in response and recovery operations to temporarily replace or supplement existing communications critical infrastructure, which hinders the EMAC effort.**

States in the Region V RECCWG agree that they need to establish a format and standards for deployable communications assets, which will enable more rapid selection for suitability and improved tracking once deployed out of its home area. State emergency management and Emergency Support Function 2 personnel intend to work through the SOP and Usage subcommittees to establish a format for a Region-wide tracking tool for deployed assets during response and recovery operations.

- **Challenge 5: Address the lack interoperable LMR connectivity between FEMA Region V personnel and interim facilities (when established) and State partners on the six statewide radio systems.**

RECCWG members would like to establish interoperable radio communication between FEMA Region V RRCC, Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) and/or Joint Field Office (when established) and the Region V States on their respective six statewide LMR systems. Members need to establish governance (memoranda of understanding/MOAs) and technical solutions to connect all seven relevant command centers.

- **Challenge 6: Make information regarding lessons learned, best practices, sample governance and various interoperability related plans easier to locate and access to improve communications operability and interoperability in each of the member States and individual jurisdictions.**

The RECCWG aims to increase information sharing via the HSIN by establishing active accounts for members and subcommittees. The group will need to find a way to encourage State and Tribal representative to post relevant data for the widest possible dissemination and engagement.

- **Challenge 7: Increase the standardization and national continuity of major processes for emergency communications such as EMAC typing, resource coordination, asset classification, use of national interoperability channels/frequencies, and operational procedures.**

The RECCWG needs to establish mechanisms for sharing of best practices, areas of concern, and topics of interest, such as standardization/process improvement, pertaining to emergency communications on a national level. The group will need to do this to minimize duplication of effort on similar topics and reduce future conflicts in procedures for operations and processes that are executed nationally.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

- **Challenge 8: Increase the understanding and use of IPAWS by communications leaders in most member jurisdictions. Address existing technical issues with the integration of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) into the IPAWS system.**

Members aim to expand member understanding and optimize the utilization of the IPAWS and Emergency Alert System (EAS) tools in emergency response through engagement by members and subject matter experts via the IPAWS subcommittee. Desired outcome is for subcommittee members to share their expanded knowledge and expertise with home State users of IPAWS as well as working to find technical solutions to fully integrated NOAA into the system.

- **Challenge 9: Increase Tribal engagement in the RECCWG.**

The RECCWG should work to improve coordination with the Tribes to increase their involvement and continue to share information to ensure interoperability, if needed, during a disaster or other incident or event. Region V wants to recruit and engage additional Tribal representation in the RECCWG through outreach, training, exercise, and event activities.

- **Challenge 10: Increase State, local, and Tribal members understanding of Federal and NGOs and private sector capabilities to achieve optimal efficiency and maximum effectiveness during response and recovery operations for real world incidents and major events.**

Members do not fully understand the capabilities of their Federal, NGO, and private sector partners. This stems partially from a lack of interaction and involvement of these partners in RECCWG activities, as well as State and Regional exercises and trainings. The RECCWG should look to increase interaction with amateur radio, National Guard, Federal partners, NGO entities, and the private sector within the RECCWG to enhance the Whole Community approach for response and recovery operations during incident response.

REGION V RECCWG CY 2016 GOALS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

- Goal 1. Improve operational performance of first responders and public safety officials with regard to communications interoperability by enhancing the realism and effectiveness of communications-related injects during statewide, Regional, and national level emergency management exercises to more effectively assess capabilities and gaps. Potential courses of action to attain this goal include ensuring relevant scenarios are included in statewide, Regional, and national level exercises; reaching out to State emergency management agency (EMA) directors via letters to emphasize the influence of realistic training scenarios on long-term emergency communications capabilities. Share After-Action-Reports

(AAR)/Improvement Plans and planning procedures to ensure more realistic and valuable training is attained at every jurisdictional level.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

- Goal 2. Improve interstate and Regional interoperability through the continued development and execution of SOPs between State, Federal and Tribal entities; expanded efforts on connecting Statewide radio networks via technical means (ISSI and patching solutions); and continued evolution of the Region V Interoperability Matrix by creating procedures to integrate it with the EMAC and/or CASM-NG.
- Goal 3. Hold regular training and exercises on topics that promote statewide communications interoperability for emergency response personnel to ensure consistent knowledge among response personnel during standardized disaster operations.
- Goal 4. Improve the availability of funding for critical interoperability staff positions (Statewide Interoperability Coordinators) and related activities (Statewide/Regional interoperability training and exercises) that affect interoperability at a State and Regional level. Create and deliver white papers on relevant topics, including the return of focused grant funding for emergency communications-related efforts and concern for future technology upgrades to national communications critical infrastructure that may affect public safety.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

- Goal 4. Enable consistency and efficiencies in NPSBN planning through sharing of information and best practices among Regional stakeholders.
- Goal 5. Improve IPAWS by finding solutions to fully integrate NOAA into the system.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

REGION V RECCWG CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The following table lists trainings, exercises, briefings, subcommittee activities, and other events hosted or promoted by the Region V RECCWG.

Table 2. RECCWG Events

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region V CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
1/27/2015	Monthly RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership, guests from the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC)	State and subcommittee reports, Regional and national updates, presentation from OEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive NECP update briefing • Address 2015 goals and challenges. • Coordinate activities of members, working groups, and subcommittees. 	Goals 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learned about the communications ecosystem and 2015 emergency communications governance guide updates.
2/24/2015	Monthly RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership and new guests from CAP, Amateur Radio, and the National Guard	State and subcommittee reports, Regional and national updates, changes/edits to the draft Annual Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address 2015 goals and challenges. • Coordinate activities of members, working groups, and subcommittees. 	Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made edits to the Annual Report. • Made a plan to start three new working groups involving partners in the National Guard, CAP, and the amateur community.
3/31/2015	Monthly RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership	State and subcommittee reports, Regional and national	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address 2015 goals and challenges. • Coordinate activities of 	Goals 2, 3, 5, and 7	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed action items

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region V CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
		and Federal Partners	updates, Annual Report update	members, working groups, and subcommittees			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized tasks and assigned to members to subcommittees. • Initiated planning for the Plenary meeting in May.
4/28/2015	Monthly RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership and Federal Partners	State and subcommittee reports, Regional and national updates, Annual Report update, plenary reminder, presentation from CAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address 2015 goals and challenges. • Coordinate activities of members, working groups, and subcommittees. 	Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learned about the capabilities and resources CAP can offer.
5/20/2015	Government Emergency Telecommunications Service and Wireless Priority Service User Council Webinar	RECCWG Membership	Updates on priority telecommunications programs, information on related emergency communications programs, and tips on emergency preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide update on priority services. 	Goal 3	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisted priority telecommunications service users and their organizations in preparations for emergency events.
5/26/2015–5/27/2015	Summer Plenary	RECCWG Membership and Federal Partners	Presentation on Galina train derailment, Public Telephone Switched Network/Time Division Multiplexing (TDM) Data-Voice Circuit Sunset Plan, DHS FEMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address 2015 goals and challenges. • Coordinate activities of members, working 	Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received a presentation and then participated in a discussion on the train derailment that included an oil spill and trains that caught on

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region V CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
			Region V Consequence Management, Region V IMAT, FEMA Mobile Emergency Response Support detachment, Disaster Emergency Communications Group Supervisors, and National Response Coordination Center, National Coordinating Center, and OEC	groups, and subcommittees.			<p>fire in Galina, Illinois. Discussed challenges and lessons learned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learned about the impending transition away from TDM and what it means for emergency communications. • Acknowledged that there are not enough communications-focused exercises and decided that someone should draft a letter to send to the six State directors regarding this issue. • Learned about all the different areas in which the RECCWG members can receive support at the local, State, Regional, and Federal level and the roles of various agencies during an emergency (this was done through various presentations by Regional and Federal staff on day 2).

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region V CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
6/30/2015	Monthly RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership and Federal Partners	Open Action Items; Federal, State, and Tribal updates; Subcommittee reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address 2015 goals and challenges • Coordinate activities of members, working groups, and subcommittees. 	Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed the merits of the topic of industry abandonment of copper technology. • Formed working groups for AUXCOMM, National Guard, and CAP.
8/25/2015	Monthly RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership and Federal Partners	Open Action Items, CY 2014 Annual Report Status, 2015 Plenary scheduling, Federal and State updates, Subcommittee Reports, Galena train derailment AAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address 2015 goals and challenges. • Coordinate activities of members, working groups, and subcommittees. 	Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed action items. • Organized tasks and assigned them to subcommittees.
9/29/2015	Monthly RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership and Federal Partners	Open Action Items, CY 2014 Annual Report Status, 2015 Plenary scheduling, Federal and State updates, Subcommittee reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address 2015 goals and challenges. • Coordinate activities of members, working groups and subcommittees. 	Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed that there was a need for a national system with standardized typing and information sharing. • Discussed the lack of a standardized definition of COML from State to State. • Decided that sharing/EMAC should be explored at all levels—

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region V CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
							equipment, personnel, and information.
10/27/2015	Monthly RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership and Federal Partners	National RECCWG Co-Chairs Teleconference, Federal and State updates, Subcommittee reports, Region V 2016 Plenary, Presentation on "IL LE Officer Shooting Communication Activities"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address 2015 goals and challenges. • Coordinate activities of members, working groups, and subcommittees 	Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were informed of the national RECCWG effort discussed during the co-chair call in which the co-chairs are recommending that the Communication Unit be moved within the Incident Command System (ICS) structure. • Received briefings from subcommittee groups on their recent activities.
11/24/2015	Monthly RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership and Federal Partners	Report on National RECCWG Co-Chair teleconference, Federal, State, and Tribal updates, ICS Communications Group Discussion, Committee reports, State updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address 2015 goals and challenges. • Coordinate activities of members, working groups, and subcommittees. 	Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learned about upcoming activities/exercises within the Region. • Briefed on the recent National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators meeting and topics discussed.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region V CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
12/29/2015	Monthly RECCWG Teleconference	RECCWG Membership and Federal Partners	March Plenary Agenda; Federal partner, State and Tribal reports; Committee reports, Bylaw discussion, Nominations for RECCWG Co-Chair, Calendar Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address 2015 goals and challenges. • Coordinate activities of members, working groups, and subcommittees. 	Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7	Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learned about an initiative to develop a Radio 101 course. • Announced the official 2016 Plenary date and potential topics.

CROSS-STATE AND CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The following list includes events in which multiple States or Regions worked together to coordinate strategies, collaborate on ideas, conduct training, or responded to real-world events together.

- Michigan and Ohio participated in an IPAWS testing on March 18, 2015, with Iowa, Kentucky, and Tennessee.
- Minnesota and Wisconsin participated in an IPAWS test on November 17, 2015, with Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah.
- Ohio and Michigan made an ISSI connection between Ohio's Multi-Agency Radio Communications System and Michigan's Michigan Public Safety Communications System. There are four talk groups in Ohio (the Toledo area) and Michigan.
- An OEC-facilitated communications exercise was held on May 5–7, 2015, with participants from Illinois and Iowa.
- CAP flew several missions in Illinois and Ohio to demonstrate airborne repeater capabilities.
- Minnesota and Ontario are working on an interoperability project.
- Wisconsin hosted SIMCOM '15 on May 15–17, 2015—groups from several States and Federal agencies participated. The event is a major interoperability exercise with capability demonstrations of mobile command vehicles, portable communications technologies, and long-range communications resources.
- Minnesota hosted the Vital Connections exercise with participation from several States.
- Illinois and Missouri held a training exercise in the St. Louis area in November 2015. Agencies that participated in the exercise included the US Coast Guard (USCG), Missouri National Guard, Illinois State Police, and others. They tested the maritime security plan. A number of interoperable communications were set up, and overall it was a success.
- Cook County, MN, and Grand Portage Band—Chippewa held an Integrated Emergency Management Course exercise at Grand Portage Reservation—also involved Canadian interoperability with Great Lakes, USCG, etc.
- Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact formed a radio communication committee to enhance radio communications among Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Ontario, and Manitoba.
- Wisconsin and Michigan National Guard held communications exercises. Arctic Eagle was at Camp Grayling, MI, and Patriot 15 was at Volk Field, WI.
- Military Auxiliary Radio Service (MARS) held a communications exercise November 7–10, 2015, focusing on coronal mass ejection with failure of power grid; several Region V States participated.

STATE CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The following list includes trainings, exercises, briefings, real-life response incidents, and other events sponsored or hosted by a particular State.

Illinois

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Held two COML classes in January.
- Held AUXCOMM class October 17–19 in Wheaton.
- Held COMT class October 26–30 in Joliet.
- Held COML class November 17–19 in Wheaton.
- Held COML class December 1–3 in Effingham.
- Although not a formal DHS class, conducted three Introduction to Starcom classes at the IEMA Training Summit in September.
- Hosted an exercise with a Bakken crude oil transportation scenario.
- Held Illinois Plan for Radiological Accidents Hostile Action Based Exercise April 9.
- Conducted training for the four Illinois Transportable Emergency Communications System (ITECS) teams based in the northern part of the State. Also inspected and validated their ITECS trailers. Same training will be conducted for the remaining five teams in 2016.
- Completed a major communications exercise in the southern portion of the State. The scenario was a 7.7 earthquake with terrestrial communications down. It included State, county, and local emergency response communication players and amateur radio operators. The exercise also included the CAP flying airborne repeaters and personnel from the Illinois Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce.

Real-life events

- March—BNSF Bakken crude oil train derailment—Jo Daviess County.
- April 10, 2015—Tornado(s)/Rochelle (Ogle County) and Fairdale (DeKalb County).
- June 25, 2015—Tornado/Sublette (Lee County). Interesting twist to this response was that most damage occurred on private property (Woodhaven Campground).
- June 25, 2015—Tornado/Coal City (Grundy & Will Co) plus areas in Kankakee County.

Other

- Developed a pilot program for a beta test of a Motorola Solutions product called WAVE (wide area voice environment) to put P25 over smartphones.
- Developed a playbook for a Type 1 disaster scenario and set up a subgroup to work on communications after finding strong deficiencies in the communications portion of exercises.
- Updated the State's Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan and Field Operations Guide.
- Wrote the official communications-specific AAR for the Bakken crude oil incident.
- Held FirstNet Initial Consultation meeting on July 14.

Indiana

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Held a statewide EAS test on March 18.
- Conducted an earthquake exercise in southern Indiana to test amateur radio between that area and the rest of the State. Participants attempted voice communications on the high-frequency band. Also tested Winlink email and successfully sent data back and forth.
- Conducted a drill in July for digital-only amateur radio with packet, Winlink, and MT63.
- Held a COML exercise with 10 people in November.
- Held full scale exercise (8.4 Earthquake damaging Evansville) June 22–26.
- Held Winlink AUXCOMM Exercise with Tennessee October 1–3.

Other

- Held Technical Assistance workshop from October 6–9.
- Received State authorization for a new fire/emergency medical services/EMA training academy for public safety groups with telecommunicators incorporated.
- Held FirstNet Initial Consultation meeting on August 26.

Michigan

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Held a statewide interoperable communications conference on February 2–5.
- Participated in the FEMA EAS test on March 18.
- Michigan Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) held a full scale exercise on September 6.
- Held a large annual exercise in conjunction with the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) Simulated Emergency Test on September 26. The State activated the SEOC amateur radio station and included Army MARS.
- Hosted a large-scale Aviation tabletop exercise (TTX) April 30–May 1.
- Held the Cyber Guard Prelude TTX June 1–5.
- Held the Northern Exposure event, which is a large-scale full-scale exercise focused on National Guard capabilities primarily concentrated on the west side of the State. It involved statewide communications and SEOC activation for 3 days. The event occurred June 22–26.
- Conducted an alternate SEOC exercise on September 1.
- On three separate dates in September and October, held the D.C. Cook REP Exercise (which consists of two drills and one full-scale exercise) occurred. Activated the SEOC RACES and MARS stations for all dates.
- Held the State of Michigan Cyber TTX in October.
- Conducted a Broadband Technology Opportunities Program exercise in August.

Other

- Formed an EAS policy group with the Michigan Broadcasters Association and other representatives. The reason for the group is that there is a lot of information out on practice, but not as much on policy.
- Developed a means of issuing State IDs to AUXCOMM volunteers.
- Held FirstNet Initial Consultation meeting on September 1.

Minnesota

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Held statewide interoperable communications conference on April 27–29.
- Conducted a TTX on August 26 sponsored by OEC and a local fire department. Discussed data needs related to trains transiting across the State with hazardous material cargo. The focus of the exercise was on LTE needs to acquire the necessary data for situational awareness.
- Held COMT course in Rochester September 21–25.

Other

- Received help from Minnesota Emergency Communication Networks to coordinate an interstate interoperability connection between Polk County, MN, public safety and Grand Forks County, ND public safety. The dissimilar radio systems were linked by installing a Grand Forks, ND, very high frequency law enforcement radio in the Polk County, MN, public safety answering point and tying it to Minnesota's statewide 800 megahertz trunked Allied Radio Matrix Emergency Response system using a dispatch resource.

Ohio

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Participated in the FEMA EAS test on March 18.
- Deployed mobile assets to Defiance County on October 28 for a communications TTX. The State discussed what could be brought to the Region during a disaster, and the EMA displayed its equipment.

Other

- Held FirstNet Consultation meeting on June 11.
- Held a demonstration of capabilities at Buckeye Lake in central Ohio May 30.
- Deployed some of its mobile assets to the northwest region of the State for a mobile asset display of capabilities and tabletop discussion for local agencies. This event showed the local agencies what different levels of government can bring in support of a disaster.

Wisconsin

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Held SIMCOM 2015 May 5–7.
- Conducted a 36-hour exercise based on a tornado incident, which began on August 28, in Waukesha. The exercise had a significant communications component.
- Held an EAS test on November 17.

Other

- Held a FirstNet consultation meeting June 18 in Madison.
- Held the Governor’s Emergency Management Conference March 11–12.
- Achieved National Weather Service StormReady certification for Wisconsin State EMA.
- Hosted a COMT course in Dane County.
- Held a communications exercise train-the-trainer September 24.
- Held a mass casualty training exercise in August that featured a large communications component.

Tribal—1855 Mille Lacs Reservation

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Participated in the State Interoperability Conference in St. Cloud April 27–29.
- Participated in SIMCOM 2015 May 5–7.
- Conducted an interoperability exercise with Aitken County in September
- Participated in a TTX in Minnesota September 10. The exercise was based on a Bakken crude oil-type event.

Other

- Held discussions of interoperable communications at the National Congress of American Indians in St. Paul August 9–11.

[This page intentionally left blank.]

REGION VI

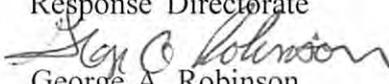
[This page intentionally left blank.]



FEMA

April 26, 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn
Assistant Administrator
Response Directorate

FROM: 
George A. Robinson
Regional Administrator

SUBJECT: FEMA Region 6 Regional Emergency
Communications Coordination Working Group
Annual Report

As required by Title XVIII, Section 1805 of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2007, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in Title XVIII.

The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region 6 RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is our submission for the combined calendar year (CY) 2015 RECCWG Annual Report that will be distributed to the Director for the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

FEMA Region 6 Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group
(RECCWG) Annual Report

April 26, 2016

Page 2

- Coordinate the establishment of federal, state, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region 6 RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for federal, state, local, and tribal agencies to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region. The accompanying Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this whole of community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Enclosed: Region 6 summary for the CY 2015 RECCWG Annual Report

**REGION VI
REGIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP
(RECCWG)**

CY 2015 SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

In CY 2015, the Region VI RECCWG worked diligently to increase interoperability opportunities and awareness. Some accomplishments for the year include increased collaboration and coordination of intrastate and interstate emergency communications efforts, as well as group efforts and outreach to increase the diversity of the membership and include multiple disciplines and whole-community partners. Including partners from additional disciplines will aid in the interoperability efforts of the group and build new partnerships that can strengthen the communications response to an incident. In 2015, the RECCWG members were able to use the bi-monthly teleconferences and face-to-face meetings to build new partnerships, identify common communications issues, share best practices, and coordinate responder communications between the States and across Regional boundaries.

In addition, the RECCWG members aided in the completion of the Arkansas and New Mexico Disaster Emergency Communications (DEC) Annexes, thus completing the updates for all of the Region's States. (Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana were completed in 2014.) The DEC Annexes for each State and for the Region are a comprehensive collection of communications assets, capabilities, technologies, and threats that are specific to the Region. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) then uses these data for business intelligence for a more timely and efficient response to an event. The updated Annexes include new analytics for enhanced awareness for interstate and intrastate disaster communications planning, which also aid States in preparing for an event.

The RECCWG worked to address concerns regarding interference on interoperability channels. In at least two States in the Region, legacy very high frequency (VHF) interoperability channels that were licensed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as National Interoperability Field Operations Guide (NIFOG) channels are being used by some local agencies as daily work channels. This practice creates interference in operations for all other response agencies that need to use these channels. The RECCWG drafted a letter to the FCC outlining the problem and requesting immediate action to rectify the situation to avoid interference on the interoperability channels to ensure emergency responders have a clear channel for critical public safety transmissions. The RECCWG intends to continue to address this issue in CY 2016.

Moving into CY 2016, the RECCWG will continue to work toward diversifying its membership to include increased participation of Tribal entities. In addition, the group will continue to focus on improving continuity of communications within the Region and between Regions and resolving frequency coordination issues with use of NIFOG interoperability frequencies in the VHF and ultra-high frequency bands.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

For additional information regarding the Region VI RECCWG, please contact the FEMA Region VI Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), Greg Boren at Gregory.Boren@fema.dhs.gov or (940) 235-5636.

Table 1. RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2015

Name	Role or Agency
RECCWG Leadership	
Wynn Brannin	RECCWG Co-Chair, New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management
Aaron Miller	RECCWG Vice Co-Chair, Office of Homeland Security, City of New Orleans
Arkansas (AR) Representatives	
Marshall Watson	Benton County, Administrator of Public Safety
Penny Rubow	Arkansas Wireless Information Network, Director
Franklin Andrews	Arkansas Wireless Information Network
Louisiana (LA) Representatives	
Ben Burgoyne	LSU Stephenson Disaster Management Institute, IT Program Manager
Travis Johnson	Louisiana Dept of Public Safety, Radio Manager
Andress Knox	Louisiana Region 7 Hospital Preparedness, Regional Coordinator
Aaron Miller	Deputy Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, City of New Orleans
Sammy Williams	Louisiana Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)
New Mexico (NM) Representatives	
Gary Surad	Bernalillo County Homeland Security/Emergency Management
Oklahoma (OK) Representatives	
Nikki Cassingham	Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security, SWIC
Donald Lynch	Shawnee/Pottawatomie County, Emergency Manager
Jamie Ott	Tulsa Area Emergency Management Agency, Deputy Director
Putnam Reiter	Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management, Information Technology (IT) Officer
Matt Stillwell	City of Edmond, Director—Central Communications and Emergency Management
Texas (TX) Representatives	
David Abernathy	Texas Forest Service (Retired)
Todd Early	Texas Department of Public Safety Law Enforcement Support Division Deputy Assistant Director Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)
Lee Cooper	American Radio Relay League (ARRL), State and Section Manager

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
C.J. Holt	City of Dallas, Radio Communications Manager
Paul Gilbert	Traffic Engineering & Radio Operations, Texas Department of Transportation
Brian Attaway	Director J6 Command & Control Communications, Texas National Guard
Casey Stansbury (for Todd Early)	Texas DPS
Mike Simpson	City of Austin, IT Program Services Manager—Wireless Communications
Jonathan Holt	Manager Radio Network, City of Dallas
Todd Johnson	Assistant Director IT, City of Houston
Federal Partners	
Kenneth Born	Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications, Regional Coordinator Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region VI
Nicole Hudnet	Sprint, Strategy and Operations
Al Kenyon	Integrated Public Alert and Warning System
John Powell	National Public Safety Telecommunications Council
Louis Sigalos	Federal Communications Commission
Roger Jones	American Red Cross
Brad Wagoner	American Red Cross
Steve Veader	National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
Scott Jackson	Spectrum Manager, NTIA
Jacque Miller-Waring	Consultation Lead, FirstNet Region 6
FEMA	
Greg Boren	FEMA Region VI, Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator
Jerry Holmes	FEMA Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS), Denton, Communications Manager

REGION VI RECCWG CY 2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

- **Accomplishment 1: Increased diversification of the RECCWG membership to include emergency management and response agencies from all disciplines and the Tribal nations.**

As members retired and changed positions during CY 2015, it became vital to find replacements for them in the RECCWG while maintaining the knowledge base. For instance, when Louisiana had a member retire from the group, to strengthen participation from the

State, the membership identified two potential members from differing communications disciplines. They were invited to the RECCWG meetings to gain an understanding of the group's purpose and goals. In addition, looking to gain more members and representatives from other disciplines, and the private sector, New Mexico members met to establish a list of potential members from the State and discuss ways of recruiting new members with knowledge areas that would be useful to the RECCWG. Through the various efforts of the RECCWG members, several new members from various areas were added, including Volunteer Agencies Active in Disaster, the amateur radio community, and a representative of the 9-1-1 collaborative operating group. Members continue to engage private sector communications partners, such as AT&T, Verizon, and Sprint, to participate in the RECCWG and bring an industry perspective. The group has been working closely with the FEMA Region VI Tribal Liaison and Tribal liaisons in the States to find ways to involve the Tribes in the RECCWG.

➤ **Accomplishment 2: Reviewed progress on the Region's land mobile radio (LMR) systems and received briefings on best practices for establishing interoperability and operability among State, local, and Tribal governments.**

Throughout CY 2015, the RECCWG has been working to address interoperability between States within the Region, and with neighboring States. In addition, the RECCWG is working to aid member States in building interoperability into new systems developed or upgrades to existing LMR systems. RECCWG members received reports from Oklahoma on efforts underway to establish a statewide LMR network and discussed the challenges and solutions faced during establishment of other systems. The discussions included best practices for State, local, and Federal interoperability, and development of partnerships to ensure interoperability communications needs are met as plans move forward. The establishment of a statewide LMR system in member States will strengthen interoperable communications for responders across their States and across the Region as member States find ways to bridge into the new system. Oklahoma also hosted an annual Radio Rodeo and briefed the members on lessons learned, channeling changes, and the creation of an interoperability plan that includes Federal agencies and neighboring States that want to participate.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) aided member States by providing a briefing on LMR best practices for covering large and diverse land areas. The briefing reviewed the TxDOT system, which has more than 16,000 subscriber units and base stations, and uses 393 remote sites and more than 500 unique frequency pairs. The briefing included lessons learned on developing partnerships with local and regional systems and using different bands to connect in these areas. TxDOT also discussed and received feedback on its plans for moving toward an Internet Protocol (IP)-based high frequency (HF) system for backup communications. Overall, the TxDOT discussions provided the membership with a view of the process required, cost and unique issues in establishing the system, as well as the cybersecurity issues associated with moving toward IP-based LMR.

In addition, the City of Dallas outlined best practices for transition from legacy microwave to an upgraded system. These best practices were discussed with the membership and include developing requirements, setting expectations, managing the contract, conducting

acceptance testing, and handling a change order to expand system capability. The City outlined the importance of working with the vendor to allow the new system to come online without any interruption during the shutdown of the old network. The City's new network provides increased reliability, adds capacity, and updates the technology to the current standard. The topic of microwave systems is important to the RECCWG members because it is commonly used as backhaul for LMR systems in Region VI and can be used to transition public safety answering points to Next Generation 9-1-1. The importance of microwave systems to public safety will most likely increase as the National Public Safety Broadband Network is built and additional data capacity is needed to support it.

New Mexico has successfully conducted three radio drill exercises. One involved the National Interoperable frequencies across disciplines and jurisdictions, with findings that some radio users need to load in the National Interoperable frequencies. Another exercise was conducted involving a regional communications plan with findings that the majority of the participants were able to communicate successfully on the regional plan system; just a few did not have any of the regional channels, but they were able to get into the system with a bridge. Finally, an HF exercise was held involving the entire State; local emergency operation centers (EOC) were requested to communicate with the State EOC during an earthquake drill. HF is a "new but old" way of communications, and only recently has the State started to use this system regularly. The update and buildout of LMR systems is being coordinated to increase the Regional capability for daily and emergency communications.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Evaluated continuity of communications within the Region and across Regional borders.**

As part of the effort to improve continuity of communications within the Region, New Mexico and Arkansas updated their DEC Annexes to the Region VI Regional Emergency Communications Plan. The other Region VI States completed their annex updates in 2014, and with all of the States Annexes completed, there is now an accurate representation of all means of communications and methods of interoperability within the Region. These Annexes provide a view of the primary, secondary, and tertiary communications used during disaster or major events, including voice and fixed and mobile data, as well as how each State operates on a day-to-day basis. In addition, these annexes document potential communications needs during an event so that FEMA and the States can better prepare to respond to these shortfalls during an event. Another way in which these annexes are useful is that the Region's States can share annexes to enhance readiness for interstate mutual aid and resource management.

States also took on the task of testing the backup communications available to them. Texas shared the outcomes of an exercise it held with the RECCWG so that everyone could benefit from the lessons learned. The TxDOT exercise was conducted to determine the readiness of the existing backup communications. Without notification, TxDOT districts were asked to send a report to another district using radio only. (The exercise had various other

components, but testing the backup radio communications was the main goal.) The after-action report showed that many of the districts were unable to send the message on to another regional office, and therefore communications would have failed had it been a real event. The results were shared with other TxDOT districts, and radio operators were retrained in the operation of the backup HF radio system. Subsequent exercises showed that the retraining allowed the districts to succeed in sending the report. Through this briefing, members of the RECCWG gained an understanding of the importance of training renewal and methods of exercising backup communications systems.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

- **Accomplishment 4: Held open discussion on preparation for hurricane season in Texas and Louisiana and how other States and Regions could assist them should a disaster occur.**

The RECCWG began preparation for hurricane season during its June plenary. Discussion included the preparations underway in Texas and Louisiana to provide alert and warning and public information; handle evacuation, sheltering, and feeding of survivors; and define communications capabilities needed to support critical functions. The discussion also included the extent of interstate assistance anticipated. The completion of the DEC Annex updates assisted in providing situational awareness to the membership.

- **Accomplishment 5: Researched the possibility of programming of the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) cache radios with national interoperability frequencies.**

Region VI has numerous wildland fires annually; many require mutual aid response from other States and Federal responders. A very significant communications resource for battling these wildland fires is the NIFC radio cache located in Boise, ID. These radios are also used for other disasters if requested. RECCWG members noted that the NIFC radios do not have the common civil authority interoperability frequencies programmed into them. Investigating further, the Technology Sub-Committee learned that the radios are licensed through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) not the FCC, which prevents the radios from being preprogrammed with FCC transmitting frequencies. During 2015, the RECCWG worked with the NTIA and FCC to reach an agreement that allows civil first responders to program NTIA-issued frequencies into their radios, which may provide a solution to the issue.

REGION VI RECCWG CY 2016 CHALLENGES

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

- **Challenge 1: Continued revitalization of the RECCWG membership may be problematic.**

The RECCWG wants to revitalize membership, including participation and involvement of Tribal entities in CY 2016. Oklahoma RECCWG members have conducted outreach to their

State Tribal counterparts. Those introductions led to Tribal discussions for inclusion with the FEMA Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) program. Tribal information sharing has expanded, leading to the Texas Ysleta del Sur Pueblo Tribe learning about IPAWS and beginning its participation plans with the IPAWS program. Cross-member information sharing between Region VI RECCWG and the Southwest Border Communication Working Group has led to increased participation discussions with Bureau of Indian Affairs, including New Mexico and Texas Tribal entities. Although some progress and outreach efforts have been made with the Tribes, the RECCWG also aims to add more State, local, and private partners in the upcoming year as well. Successfully increasing and revitalizing the membership will be a big obstacle in CY 2016.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

- **Challenge 2: Lack of uniformity in typing and describing communications equipment and personnel makes it difficult to specify mutual aid and Emergency Management Assistance Compact resources.**

The RECCWG plans to address the establishment of Regionwide protocols for communications resource typing. Discussions include using the latest version of Communication Assets Survey and Mapping (CASM) tool, CASM NextGen, which has enhanced data sharing features as well as additional datasets that can be used to capture the various interoperable communications assets and capabilities of local systems. Developing standardized terminology and methodology will streamline the ability of a State to assess and understand the capabilities of its neighboring States.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

- **Challenge 3: Exercises in the Region do not normally include communications.**

In the past, exercises that occurred in Region VI have not included a large communications component. Recent efforts have been made to forge a partnership between the FEMA Region VI Exercise Planning Office and the Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC). The RECC will now be included in regular planning meetings, and State counterparts have expanded discussions to include communications in future exercise scenario planning. Arkansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas State communications leads have all conducted outreach to their State operation components to encourage inclusion of emergency communications for more realistic scenarios in both State and Regional exercise planning. Through these efforts and partnerships, the RECCWG hopes to see an increase in the inclusion of communications in exercises in 2016.

REGION VI RECCWG CY 2016 GOALS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

- Goal 1. Make inroads into the recruitment of representative membership from State, local, and Tribal governments that will set and accomplish meaningful goals for the RECCWG

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

- Goal 2. Examine programming Federal (NTIA) interoperability frequencies into State and local responders' radios to ensure interoperability with the NIFC radios when they are used to support the Region's disaster responses.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

No goals that align to Statutory Duty 3

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

REGION VI RECCWG CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The table below lists trainings, exercises, briefings, subcommittee activities, and other events hosted or promoted by the Region VI RECCWG.

Table 2. RECCWG Events

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VI CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
2/5/2015	Region VI Teleconference	Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies	Discussions and presentations regarding developments, trends, and efforts in emergency management in Region VI States	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share Regional successes and best practices. 2. Discuss goals and objectives for the year. 3. Plan for future events and exercises. 	Goals 1 and 2	Statutory Duties 1 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned the direction of the RECCWG for the upcoming year.
4/2/2015	Region VI Teleconference	Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies	Discussions and presentations regarding developments, trends, and efforts in emergency management in Region VI States	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share regional successes and best practices. 2. Discuss NIFOG channels. 3. Plan for future events and exercises. 	Goals 1 and 2	Statutory Duties 1 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gained an understanding of the NIFOG channels. • Shared best practices covering the coordination of interoperability between the Region's States and States outside the Region.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VI CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
4/8/2015– 4/10/2015	ITEMA Tribal Emergency Management Conference	Tribal nation emergency management from around the country	Discussions and presentations regarding developments, trends, and efforts in emergency management and preparedness for the Tribal nations	Tribal relations and communications interoperability.	Goal 2	Statutory Duties 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built new and strengthen existing Tribal relations.
4/28/2015– 4/30/2015	FEMA Regional Interagency Steering Committee (RISC) Meeting in Denton, TX	Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies	Meeting to discuss hurricane preparedness, response, and recovery	Discuss best practices and lessons learned.	Goals 1 and 2	Statutory Duties 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened partnerships with State, Local, and Tribal leaders. • Shared lessons learned and identified areas for coordination.
6/3/2015	Region VI RECCWG Plenary	Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies	Discussions and presentations regarding developments, trends, and efforts in emergency management in Region VI States	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share regional successes and best practices. 2. Share communications lessons learned. 3. Plan for future events and exercises. 	Goals 1 and 2	Statutory Duties 1 and 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed a National RECCWG forum to share best practices from around the country. • Viewed presentation on amateur radio capabilities during an emergency in the Region.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VI CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Viewed a Red Cross presentation on the technology capabilities it provides during a disaster and interoperability capabilities.
8/6/2015	Region VI Teleconference	Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies	Discussions and presentations regarding developments, trends, and efforts in emergency management in Region VI States	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify communications issues for mitigation by the RECCWG. Report on current activities within the member States. Share communications best practices. 	Goals 1 and 2	Statutory Duties 1 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed the FEMA Region I, RECCWG Incident Command System (ICS) letter to move the Communications Unit Lead (COML) position to the command level. Shared best practices for coordination between States.
10/4/2015	Region VI Teleconference	Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies	Discussions and presentations regarding developments, trends, and efforts in	1. Share regional successes and best practices.	Goals 1 and 2	Statutory Duties 1 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared best practices covering the coordination of interoperability at the State EOC

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VI CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
			emergency management in Region VI States.	2. Discuss current interoperability efforts between States. 3. Discuss the role of COML within the ICS Structure and the letter written by the FEMA Region I RECCWG. 4. Plan for future events and exercises.			(SEOC) levels between the Region's States and States outside the Region. • Agreed to support the FEMA Region I RECCWG ICS letter.
12/6/2015	Region VI Teleconference	Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies	Discussions and presentations regarding developments, trends, and efforts in emergency management in Region VI States	1. Members share regional successes and best practices. 2. Discuss current interoperability efforts between States.	Goals 1 and 2	Statutory Duties 1 and 3	• Discussed challenges and lessons learned from real-world events. • Discussed the status of the FEMA Region I RECCWG ICS letter. • Discussed the need for communications resource typing and the current method that FEMA

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VI CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
							Region IV has begun to adopt.

CROSS-STATE AND CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The following list includes events in which multiple States or Regions worked together to coordinate strategies, collaborate on ideas, conduct training, or respond to real-world events together.

- Region VI RECCWG understood the importance of cross-border issues and solutions and requested FEMA to reestablish the National RECCWG meeting to share best practices, lessons learned, and issues across the Regions. The Region VI Co-Chair has been active in the meetings.
- Region VI RECCWG Co-Chairs attended the SAFECOM and National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators meetings, where the FEMA Region I RECCWG proposed that the COML be elevated to the Section or Command Staff level in the ICS.
- Region VI coastal States Texas and Louisiana conducted cross-State hurricane season preparedness planning.
- Colorado and New Mexico jointly participate in a communications exercise partnership to improve interoperability, identify capability and policy issues, and make corrections before a major event.
- The Navajo Nation does not have licensing for the NTIA interoperability frequencies. The RECCWG discussed the interoperability issues and plans to include them in an upcoming exercise in an effort to determine a solution to the interoperability problem.

STATE CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The following list includes trainings, exercises, briefings, real-life response incidents, and other events sponsored or hosted by a particular State.

Arkansas

Trainings, exercises, etc.

Real-life events

- Arkansas Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-line Winds, and Flooding (DR-4226), Major Disaster Declaration declared on June 26, 2015

Other

- Arkansas Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials-International (APCO) Conference was held in Little Rock April 19–21, 2015.

Louisiana

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- The Louisiana Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee meeting was held on February 28, 2015.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

- The Louisiana National Guard participated in a statewide disaster response exercise (DRX) designed to test the capabilities of various local, State, and Federal agencies on April 18, 2015. The exercise, organized by the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, involved training missions that took place simultaneously at Acadiana Regional Airport in New Iberia, Camp Villere in Slidell, Naval Air Station—Joint Reserve Base New Orleans in Belle Chasse, and a warehouse facility in Roseland. The DRX is an annual exercise, but this year's instance had a new component; it was tied into a multistate military exercise called Ultimate Caduceus 2015.

Real-life events

- Louisiana Severe Storms and Flooding (DR-4228), Major Disaster Declaration declared on July 13, 2015.

Other

- The Louisiana APCO Conference was hosted in Lake Charles April 13–15, 2015.

New Mexico

Trainings, exercises, etc.

Real-life events

- Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta will offer an avenue to train, exercise, and evaluate new COML and Communications Technician (COMT) students during a multiday event held in October each year.
- On January 18, 2016, Goliath snow storm Disaster Declaration declared.
- Bataan Memorial Death March, March 22, 2015, and March 20, 2016 involves Texas disaster teams and active duty military on an interoperability coordination platform.

Other

- A COMT class was held in Albuquerque, NM, on August 31, 2015.

Oklahoma

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Oklahoma SEOC held the Statewide Earth, Wind, and Fire exercise on November 18, 2015. This event used amateur radio and public safety systems. It was a success, with lessons learned and best practices documented for both systems. State Homeland Security, Office of Emergency Management, and many amateur radio volunteers worked together on this to facilitate interoperability between State, Regional, and local emergency communication users during a wide-scale incident. Improvements to communication operations for future events will be refined as a result of this collaborative effort.

Real-life events

- Oklahoma Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-Line Winds, and Flooding (DR-4222), Major Disaster Declaration declared on May 26, 2015.

Texas

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- The Texas Emergency Management Conference was held May 12–15, 2015.
- The APCO Emerging Technology Conference was held in Dallas, TX, March 10–11, 2015.
- The Texas APCO Conference was held in Galveston April 19–22, 2015.

Real-life events

- A FEMA RISC Meeting was hosted in Denton, TX, April 28–30, 2015.
- Texas Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-Line Winds, and Flooding (DR-4223), Major Disaster Declaration declared on May 29, 2015.
- Texas Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-Line Winds, and Flooding (DR-4245), Major Disaster Declaration declared on November 25, 2015.

REGION VII

[This page intentionally left blank.]



FEMA

April 27, 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn
Assistant Administrator
Response Directorate

FROM: Beth A. Freeman
Regional Administrator

BETH A
FREEMAN

Digitally signed by BETH A FREEMAN
DN: cn=US, o=U.S. Government,
ou=Department of Homeland Security,
ou=FEMA, ou=People, cn=BETH A FREEMAN,
0.9.2342.19200300.100.1.1=0107914895.FEMA,
Date: 2016.04.28 08:05:35 -0500

SUBJECT: FEMA Region VII Regional Emergency Communications
Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

As required by Title XVIII, Section 1805 of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2007, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in Title XVIII.

The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region VII RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined calendar year (CY) 2015 RECCWG Annual Report that will be distributed to the Director for the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.
- Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region VII RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region. The accompanying Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole of Community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Attachment

Region VII summary for the CY 2015 RECCWG Annual Report

**REGION VII
REGIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP
(RECCWG)**

CY 2015 SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

Over the course of CY2015, the Region VII RECCWG brought together Federal, State, local, and Tribal public safety entities from four States to coordinate progress on interoperability solutions across Regional borders. Interoperability solutions included the continued migration to a single shared system in Missouri and Nebraska, as well as the interfacing of disparate systems with statewide systems in all four States through the use of gateways and console patching. In addition, RECCWG members shared best practices to advance public safety communications in both the voice and data arenas. They made significant advances in cross-State communications by establishing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) among the States, sharing of frequencies used along State borders, and bringing all four States' Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) National Radio Network (FNARS) back online to provide backup communications with other States and national-level response agencies.

Significant factors contributing to the RECCWG's success included sharing of best practices, reviewing of exercises and events' After Action Reports (AAR), and conducting open discussions on technological advances at the teleconferences and plenary meetings.

While significant strides have been made in communications, several key issues face emergency managers and response personnel. These include—

- Identifying a sustainable funding stream to bring aging land mobile radio (LMR) infrastructure up to modern standards, fund expansion for additional subscribers, and the integration of data into public safety answering points and vehicles
- Receiving insufficient information regarding the National Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) makes strategic planning for integration of LMR communications, Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) services in public safety answer points (PSAP), and the use of data (both fixed and mobile) difficult
- Obtaining and maintaining representation of all emergency management and response disciplines from all levels of government, the private sector, and the Tribal Nations in the RECCWG
- Providing educational outreach and overall coordination of public safety communications technology.

For additional information regarding the Region VII RECCWG, please contact the FEMA Region VII RECC, John Myers, II at John.MyersII@fema.dhs.gov or (816) 283-7090.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Table 1. RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2015

Name	Role or Agency
RECCWG Leadership	
Beth A. Freeman	Chair, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region VII Regional Administrator
Matthew May	Co-Chair, Winnebago Nebraska Emergency Management Agency
Randy Goddard	Vice Chair
Iowa (IA) Representatives	
Craig Allen	Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System Board, Iowa Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)
Tom Boeckmann	Iowa Department of Public Health
Randy Goddard	Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management
Thomas Lampe	Iowa Highway Patrol
Thomas Reis	Iowa Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service Officer
Curtis Walser	Cedar Rapids Fire Department Urban Search and Rescue Task Force 1
Kansas (KS) Representatives	
Jason Bryant	SWIC
Scott Ekberg	9-1-1 Coordinator
Marlo Tangney	Kansas Emergency Management
Missouri (MO) Representatives	
Dan Busse	Eureka Fire Department
Bryan Courtney	Department of Public Safety—Interoperability, SWIC
J.D. Simmons	Department of Public Safety—Interoperability
David Sterman	Department of Public Safety
Nebraska (NE) Representatives	
Pam Kemper	Office of Chief Information Officer, Systems Coordinator for Nebraska Statewide Radio System
Mark Conrey	Douglas County Communications
Troy Harris	Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
Mike Jeffres	Office of the Chief Information Office (OCIO)
Sue Krogman	NEMA
Matthew May	Winnebago Emergency Management Agency
Neil Miller	Buffalo County Sheriff's Office
Jeff Pelowski	Nebraska State Police (NSP)
Tom Perez	Thurston County Emergency Management
Pete Peterson	Keith County 911
Thomas Schwarten	NSP
Bryan Tuma	NEMA
Bob Wilhelm	OCIO, State FirstNet Coordinator
Industry Partners	
Ryan McGill	Sprint

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
Todd Preston	Verizon Wireless
Beth Canuteson	AT&T
Federal Partners	
Dan Best	FEMA Region VII Response Division Director
Alex Bishop	FEMA Disaster Emergency Communication Incident Management Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery Employment
Tyrone Davis	General Services Administration (GSA)
Tom Gray	FEMA Mobile Emergency Response System, Denton (MERS)
Jerry Holmes	FEMA MERS, Denton
Larry Jackson	GSA
James Lundsted	Department of Homeland Security, Office of Emergency Communications, Region VII
John Myers, II	FEMA Region VII Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator
Karen Raines	Federal Communications Commission—Kansas City
Steve Veader	National Telecommunications and Information Administration

REGION VII RECCWG CY 2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

- **Accomplishment 1: Enhanced collaborative relationships among emergency communicators likely to engage during a disaster by designing and implementing a minimum of two emergency communications specific exercises.**

RECCWG member States held multiple exercises to improve relationships, test and integrate equipment, and improve operational efficiency for actual events. The State of Iowa held two interoperability exercises that involved 20 State and local agencies, as well as the military. Upon completion of each exercise, representatives from Iowa provided an overview of the AAR and invited all Region VII States to participate in the follow-up exercise scheduled for fall 2015. In addition, Missouri held a 3-day exercise in September 2015 to test governmental and amateur radio command vehicles, deployable communications assets, and personnel. Missouri also participated in a communications exercise, hosted by the State of Kansas, to test cross-border interoperability with the adjacent States and with local response agencies located in the Kansas City area. The AAR and exercise scenario and Master Scenario Events List were shared with RECCWG membership during the November monthly RECCWG teleconference.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of

terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment 2: Advanced a certification process to build core capabilities for communications personnel throughout the Region.**

Communications personnel across the Nation have varying levels of expertise, making it difficult to obtain qualified personnel to exercise and respond to various disaster situations. The Region VII RECCWG recognized the issue and sought to rectify it by establishing best practice standards for communications personnel within the Region. Missouri was the first State to establish minimum standards for certifying Communications Unit Leaders (COML), and any communications personnel in the State who meet these standards receive a formal COML certification. Requiring communications personnel to meet specific standards ensures that communicators have the same level of technical skills required to perform the essential functions of a COML. Missouri provided the RECCWG with a briefing on the certification standards process and offered its assistance in establishing the program in other RECCWG member States.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Conducted monthly status briefings on Region VII's major statewide interoperable emergency communications assets and infrastructure to ensure RECCWG members have a comprehensive understanding of the resources available for mutual aid in the Region.**

The RECCWG membership receives regular briefings on the status of the emergency communications infrastructure and assets within the Region. For example, Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska briefed on efforts to build out and/or transition agencies to statewide LMR systems. They also discussed specific solutions for enabling interoperability between statewide systems and legacy systems and among neighboring States. In addition, Federal RECCWG participants provided technical and operational information on nationwide networks such as the Shared Resources and FNARS high-frequency (HF) networks. This information assisted RECCWG participants in understanding technical specifications necessary for interoperating with and/or leveraging these systems during emergencies, as well as lessons learned that can be applied to new buildouts.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

➤ **Accomplishment 4: Created subcommittees within the RECCWG to guide interoperable emergency communications goals and initiatives in the Region.**

The RECCWG established several subcommittees to guide their goals. Examples include implementing a RECCWG membership subcommittee to accomplish Goal 4 and a RECCWG communications unit credentialing subcommittee to accomplish Goal 2. The Region VII RECCWG Committees are in their infancy but anticipate making additional progress in 2016.

- **Accomplishment 5: Developed a strategic plan with initiatives and completion dates outlining the process to link all four States to one interoperable network.**

The RECCWG member States have begun work on establishing interoperability among the Region's States using a Project 25 (P25) Inter RF Subsystem Interface (ISSI); however, technical challenges have prevented it from becoming operational. Once they overcome these technical difficulties, work will begin on the strategic plan and policy segment for interstate interoperability. Additional work is being done in the Region to prepare a regional operations common plan with Nebraska's local dispatch centers, public safety agencies and public utilities. This step will prepare the Region to develop a comprehensive strategic interoperability plan.

REGION VII RECCWG CY 2016 CHALLENGES

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

- **Challenge 1: Identify a sustainable funding stream to bring aging LMR infrastructure up to modern standards, fund expansion for additional subscribers, and integrate data into PSAPs and response vehicles.**

Acquiring funding for communications equipment maintenance, upgrades, and personnel remains a challenge for Region VII RECCWG States. Much of the communications success in prior years was built on grant programs such as the Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program and Public Safety Interoperable Communications Grant; however, these grant programs are no longer available. The lack of grant funding specifically earmarked for emergency communications is causing many States and their agencies to make difficult choices regarding resources and staffing. For example, the Iowa State Patrol (ISP) LMR system is out of date and will need to be replaced in the immediate future. With limited funding resources, the ISP purchased radios from public auction sites to ensure compliance with the Federal Communications Commission's narrowband requirements. As other States in the country began updating their antiquated 9-1-1 technology to NG9-1-1 technology, the Iowa State Legislature used \$4 million of Iowa's 9-1-1 service fund to begin updating the State's LMR system. The ISP radio system is now able to support most State agencies' LMR requirements as well as some local and Federal agencies; however, the State is now at risk of not having the funding needed to begin updating its own 9-1-1 system to NG9-1-1 technology.

- **Challenge 2: Overcome limited information on the NPSBN's communications capabilities to facilitate strategic planning to fully integrate LMR communications, NG9-1-1 services in PSAPs, and voice and data usage (both fixed and mobile).**

Challenges remain with receiving consistent updates regarding the rollout, services, and scope of the First Responder Network Authority's (FirstNet) NPSBN, thus impeding the strategic and budgetary planning efforts of the Region VII RECCWG. Successful strategic planning and budgeting for public safety communications requires RECCWG members to consider all available communications technologies, including LMR, landline, mobile, and portable voice and data resources, and all forms of backup communications, such as satellite

and HF radio. Planners, public officials determining funding streams, emergency managers, and responders need a clear vision of how the NPSBN will integrate into PSAPs, emergency operations centers, field command centers, and response vehicles to provide a cost-efficient and comprehensive strategic plan for the future of communications in Region VII.

➤ **Challenge 3: Provide educational outreach and overall coordination of public safety communications technology.**

The forward march of communications technology is outpacing the capabilities, time, budgets, and personnel of the majority of the public safety agencies. They need an outreach/educational overall champion that can help them sort out what all the different public safety projects mean for their operational planning for the short term and the long term. Many are receiving end-of-life notices on their radio systems and are being marketed systems by their local radio shops that are not in the best interest of statewide and local interoperability into the future. The Region needs a strategy to regularly communicate with the agencies in the member States on a non-vendor basis so they do not buy into a communications system that will make them an “island unto themselves” for interoperability, 9-1-1 backup support, and dispatch backup support. It is very confusing and overwhelming for agencies to sort through all the technology and equipment choices presented to them by myriad groups: their local radio shops give them advice on what to buy; their State radio system group encourage them to upgrade to a system that is compatible with the statewide radio system; local and regional project groups talk about consolidating 9-1-1 and dispatch; and the Federal Government agencies define grant requirements and send FirstNet news. The agencies need one overall coordinator to explain how it all ties together and relates or could relate to their operations, statewide interoperability, national interoperability, and resilience.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Challenge 4: Obtaining and maintaining representation of Tribal Nations in the RECCWG.**

Recent amendments to the Stafford Act allow Tribal Nations to request support directly from the Federal Government for incident response rather than requiring requests to go through the State. It is critical, however, that Tribal Nations, States, and FEMA collaborate prior to an incident to ensure all entities understand what emergency communications resources are available in the Region, where and how to acquire them, and any existing communications needs or requirements. Emphasis on obtaining representation from Tribal Nations would benefit the RECCWG’s ability to meet communications needs during time of disaster; however, securing and maintaining consistent Tribal participation in the Region VII RECCWG remains a challenge. Many of the Tribal Nations have small populations or land areas and do not have full-time emergency managers or dedicated first response personnel. Many rely on local jurisdictions to provide emergency services and therefore, are not actively involved in the planning for disaster response. Participation of Tribal Nations in the Region VII RECCWG

would ensure that all entities in the Region understand what communications resources are available to them and what resources will likely be needed during emergency responses.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

➤ **Challenge 5: Develop personnel typing standards for Federal, State, and local public safety communications personnel to avoid a potential competency gap in personnel assigned to manage communications on a daily basis and at incidents, or to provide support communications through MOUs and the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.**

Inconsistencies in the levels of skill and competency among public safety communications personnel throughout the Region were revealed during several communications exercises in fall 2015. Common issues included lack of knowledge regarding how to establish communications on mobile repeaters and patching channels via gateways to provide operational interoperability. The day-to-day management of subscriber units was also identified as a challenge. Subscriber units from multidisciplinary and multijurisdictional public safety personnel were not programmed with standard naming conventions, thus impeding the transfer of talk groups to specific interoperability and tactical channels. Typing of communications personnel, enhanced training, and regular exercises can help address both issues.

REGION VII RECCWG CY 2016 GOALS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

Goal 1. Develop a strategic plan for interstate and cross-regional communications, including LMR, landline, and both mobile and fixed data resources.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

Goal 2. Continue to nurture developed relationships with local, State, Regional, and Tribal communications personnel to advance the Region VII RECCWG's effectiveness and diversity.

Goal 3. Continue to engage private sector partners, vendors, and subject matter experts on leading emergency technologies to educate and inform the RECCWG membership, without listening to a sales pitch.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

Goal 4. Conduct regular trainings via Internet, webinars, and/or video teleconferences on the various topics involved in emergency communications response to ensure all

participants will be drawing from similar, current knowledge of disaster operations.

Goal 5. Enhance the training and readiness of Federal, State, local, and Tribal communications support personnel and maintain skill sets through communications exercises.

Goal 6. Develop a typing system for communications personnel to specify skill and training levels required to support an incident.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

REGION VII RECCWG CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The table below lists trainings, exercises, briefings, subcommittee activities, and other events hosted or promoted by the Region VII RECCWG.

Table 2. RECCWG Events

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
2/9/2015	RECCWG Monthly Teleconference	Region VII Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies	State and Federal updates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Announce upcoming trainings/events 2. Update status of communications technology in the State 3. Discuss any relevant communications issues 	Goal 4	Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed upcoming plenary date and monthly teleconference schedule • Established dates of Iowa Communications exercises • Established mutual aid agreements between Colorado and Kansas • Learned about Missouri PSAP cut-over
3/10/2015	RECCWG Monthly Teleconference	Region VII Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies	Plenary dates, election of Co-Chairs for each RECCWG, Federal and State updates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Announce upcoming trainings/events 2. Update status of communications technology 	Goal 4	Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed plenary dates and sessions • Set monthly teleconference schedule • Provided Annual Report updates

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
				updates in the State 3. Discuss any relevant communications issues			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met new Nebraska Radio Communications Specialist • Held FirstNet consultation
3/31/2015–4/1/2015	RECCWG plenary	Federal, State, local, Tribal, and private entities	Introduction of Region VII’s Regional Administrator, NECP update, cellular technology, RECCWG elections	1. Allow Region VII RECCWG members to meet in person and discuss interoperability among States in the Region 2. Discuss the development of public/private partnerships	Goals 4 and 6	Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborated in-person to improve interoperability among Region VII States
5/3/2015–5/7/2015	Vibrant Response 15 (VR15)	Region VII Federal, State of Missouri, and local agencies	VR15 is a U.S. Department of Defense U.S. Army North sponsored Functional Exercise. FEMA and the Federal agencies participated for 4 days at the Capitol Plaza Hotel and the Missouri State Emergency Management Operations Center	1. Assess the integration of a liaison with the Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) structure to mobilize, establish, and maintain communications necessary to support IMAT	Goal 5	Statutory Duty 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met exercise support expectations • Identified protocols for properly requesting communications assets for deployment • Established effective coordination with Logistics Section Chief

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
			located in Jefferson City, MO, in support of the State of Missouri conducting operations during an 8-hour window each day (8:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. Central Daylight Time).	communications requirements. 3. Assess the ability of MERS to establish sufficient communications infrastructure to ensure the capacity to communicate with the emergency response community to support ongoing operations based on a comprehensive plan for the deployment of interoperable systems.			
6/16/2015	RECCWG Monthly Teleconference	Region VII Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies	Discussion on September plenary dates and sessions, State updates, COML/ Communications Technician (COMT) training	1. Discuss challenges ongoing in each Region VII State and determine potential solutions 2. Share information and learn from members’ response experience	Goal 2	Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announced upcoming trainings/events • Updated status of communications technology updates in the State • Discussed any relevant communications issues

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
7/14/2015	RECCWG Monthly Teleconference	Region VII Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies	Discussion on plenary dates and session topics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Announce upcoming trainings/events 2. Update status of communications technology updates in the State 3. Discuss any relevant communications issues 	Goals 1, 3, and 4	Statutory Duty 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received updates on successes and challenges pertaining to emergency communications • Discussed expanding RECCWG membership and electing Co-Chairs • Discussed topics for the next plenary
8/18/2015	RECCWG Monthly Teleconference	Region VII Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies	Topics and presenters for plenary sessions, Region I RECCWG letter to National Integration Center (NIC), lessons learned from Typhoon Soudelor in Saipan, Iowa NG9-1-1 Strategic Plan, and the Missouri Communications Drill	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learn about the successes and challenges of response operations to Typhoon Soudelor 2. Determine whether Region VII RECCWG will support the Region I RECCWG letter to NIC 3. Gain an awareness of upcoming exercises within the Region 	Goals 1 and 6	Statutory Duty 1 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announced upcoming trainings/events • Updated status of communications technology updates in each State • Discussed any relevant communications issues such as the Region I RECCWG letter requesting the elevation of the Communications Unit in the Incident Command System (ICS)

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
9/1/2015– 9/2/2015	RECCWG Plenary Meeting	Federal, State, local, Tribal, and private entities	Updates regarding emerging communications technology, cellular technology, FirstNet, alerts and warnings, and new RECCWG member introductions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allow RECCWG members to meet and discuss interoperability issues 2. Resolve interstate interoperability issues 	Goals 3, 4, and 5	Statutory Duty 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debated Interoperability • Discussed new cellular technology • Discussed FirstNet and the NPSBN • Relayed information about alerts and warning systems in the Region • Introduced new RECCWG members
10/20/2015	RECCWG Monthly Teleconference	Federal, State, local, Tribal, and private entities	Interoperability, State updates, very high frequency (VHF) Channel 155.370, interstate collaboration efforts, and ICS Communications Unit	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop partnerships among RECCWG members 2. Learn from other members' experience 3. Engage the private sector and encourage collaboration 	Goal 3	Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed inter- and intra-State collaborative efforts and opportunities • Supported elevation of Communications Unit in ICS • Discussed interference issues on VHF channel 155.370
11/10/2015	RECCWG Monthly Teleconference	Federal, State, local, Tribal, and private entities	Upcoming COML courses, communications exercises, governance body meetings, and State updates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop partnerships among RECCWG members 2. Exchange information about 	Goals 1, 2, 4, and 5	Statutory Duty 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared dates of upcoming training and exercises • Received updates on emergency

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
				upcoming trainings and exercises 3. Discuss ongoing meetings with Statewide interoperability Governance Boards (SIGB)			communications landscape
11/17/2015	Nebraska COML course (open to RECCWG members)	Nebraska communications personnel, plus any interested participants from the Region VII RECCWG	Certification of COMLs for Region VII	1. Train emergency responders on practices/procedures to manage the Communications Unit	Goals 1 and 2	Statutory Duty 1 and 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received COML training and had task books signed
12/8/2015	RECCWG Monthly Teleconference	Federal, State, local, Tribal, and private entities	Upcoming COML courses, communications exercises, governance body meetings, and State updates	1. Engage in inter- and intra-State collaboration in interoperable emergency communications	Goals 1, 2, and 3	Statutory Duty 1 and 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed upcoming training and exercises open to all Region VII RECCWG members • Received updates on SIGB meetings • Received status and progress reports on each State's communications goals

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
12/9/2015	National RECCWG Co-Chair Teleconference	Co-chairs from each RECCWG and Federal entities	Introduction of Co-Chairs around the country, best practices and lessons learned in RECCWG meetings	1. Engage co-chairs and allow sharing of communications information throughout the country	Goal 3	Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed to hold monthly meeting among co-chairs to discuss best practices and lessons learned in RECCWG meetings
Spring 2016	Kansas-Missouri auxiliary communication (AUXCOMM) course and Communication Exercise	Federal, State, local, Tribal, and private entities	AUXCOMM certification, participation in Kansas-Missouri Communications Exercise, Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP) and Field Operations Guide (FOG) application	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Certify personnel in AUXCOMM 2. Engage members to participate in upcoming communications exercise 3. Update participants about new TICP FOG application 	Goals 1 and 2	Statutory Duty 1 and 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified personnel in AUXCOMM • Exercised communications technology • Learned about the unique collaboration between Kansas and Missouri

CROSS-STATE AND CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The following list includes events in which multiple States or Regions worked together to coordinate strategies, collaborate on ideas, conduct training, or responded to real-world events together

- Iowa collaborated with Illinois in May 2015 to conduct a functional exercise focused on a train derailment scenario in which most of the train cars fell into the Mississippi River.
- Kansas and Colorado communications authorities developed interagency cooperative agreements to ensure interoperability between Colorado and Kansas-based licensees.
- Missouri implemented an ISSI to link multiple P25 systems together from surrounding States.
- Region I RECCWG letter was sent to the NIC that referenced the ICS and requested the NIC to elevate the ICS Communications Unit to ICS Section status, instead of maintaining it under the Logistics Section.
- Nebraska developed an interoperability initiative to provide regional operations common talk groups that allow non-users of the Nebraska Statewide Radio System (SRS) to have interoperable communications with those on the SRS network.
- Missouri, Iowa, and Minnesota are collaborating to determine a solution to the interference on VHF channel 155.370.
- Information sharing among Region VII States greatly improved, especially with the sharing of best practices and lessons learned from the Ferguson civil unrest.
- FEMA Region VII has been assigned two common talk groups on the Missouri Statewide Interoperability Network (MOSWIN).
- The Region has been very proactive in sharing certified Instructors with other States for COML, COMT, and AUXCOMM courses.
- Missouri granted the State of Tennessee access to MOSWIN.
- Kansas will host a communications exercise with Missouri in early spring in Kansas City. The exercise will be modeled after the hazardous materials exercise that was held at the Kansas City Speedway this past year.
- Kansas and Missouri are working together to develop Kansas's TICP FOG application.
- The Nebraska Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) Public Safety Communications Team was asked to help provide communications support for the Missouri River Outdoor Expo held at Ponca State Park. Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has hosted this expo for 11 years as a 3-day family fun outdoor event with food vendors, sporting activities, nature shows, displays, and much more. The event ran September 18–20 from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Last year, the event brought in 40,000 people a day, and this year attendance was estimated at 20,000 people a day. Coordinators of the expo asked the State OCIO Public Safety Communications SRS Team to help alleviate communication issues experienced in previous years. The SRS team assisted by setting up the newly completed mobile SRS site. The team assisted during the event with the logistics of issuing cache radios and updating the radios in the area that were already on the SRS. Also, the team trained the users of the cache radios who had never operated on a trunked radio system. Communications groups included

emergency medical services/fire, Ponca State Park Services, Law Enforcement, Dixon County Sheriff's Office, parking operations, and trolley operations. Communications were greatly improved, and the SRS team has been invited to participate in next year's event.

- Nebraska will host a TERREX 2016 planning, exercise, and training event April 2016 in northwestern Nebraska involving several agencies: multiple local law enforcement, fire and ambulance responders; the Nebraska State Patrol, State Fire Marshal, Nebraska Game and Parks, Nebraska National Guard civil support (ground and air operations), and Federal agencies that operate in the area.

STATE CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The following list includes trainings, exercises, briefings, real-life response incidents, and other events sponsored or hosted by a particular State.

Iowa

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Iowa held an Interoperability Exercise with the Iowa National Guard on April 17, 2015.
- A Cross Border Interoperability Exercise was conducted with Illinois on May 6-7, 2015.
- Iowa hosted a COMT Course on September 12, 2015.
- A COML Course is scheduled for late February/early March 2016.

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-line Winds, and Flooding (DR-4234), 7/31/2015.

Other

-

Kansas

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Kansas participated in a FirstNet Consultation on June 16–17, 2015.
- A COML course was conducted at the end of June 2015.
- An AUXCOMM course was held in winter 2015.
- A Statewide Interoperability Executive Council (SIEC) Meeting was held on December 3, 2015.

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-line Winds, and Flooding (DR-4230), 7/20/2015.

Other

- Kansas hosted a cross-border collaboration workshop with Colorado to test the operation of radios across State lines.
- An SIEC Meeting was held in Dodge City on October 12, 2015.

Missouri

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Missouri received a MERS deployment for the VR15 exercise held May 3–7, 2016. MERS installed, operated, and maintained communications systems that adequately supported the interim field office, including conditions of storms in the Region as well as severe weather impacts at Mount Weather. The event included 372 personnel from 34 agencies, including 147 Federal participants representing 13 agencies, 46 Defense Coordinating Officers, and 179 persons representing 21 State emergency management agencies.
- Missouri hosted a Communications Drill and Deployable Assets Exhibit on September 8–10, 2015.
- A 2-day Audio Gateway Training course was held in September 2015.
- An SIEC Meeting was held December 22, 2015.
- Kansas City will host a COML Course in February 2016.

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-Line Winds, and Flooding (DR-4238), 8/7/2015

Other

- An SIEC Meeting was held on June 11, 2015, to introduce the recently updated Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan.
- An SIEC Meeting was held on October 28, 2015, at 10 a.m. at the Cole County Fire Department.

Nebraska

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Nebraska hosted an interoperable communications and Communication Assets Survey and Mapping update conference with Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command in March 2015.
- The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and Nebraska State Police exercised the Nebraska Statewide Radio System on October 21, 2015.
- A COML course was scheduled for November 17, 2015; however, it was delayed to allow prospective students to obtain the prerequisites.
- A SIEC Meeting was held December 3, 2015.

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-Line Winds, and Flooding (DR-4225), 6/25/2015.

Other

- Nebraska held its FirstNet initial consultation on March 18–19, 2015.
- A TICP Revision Workshop with OEC was held on May 5, 2015.

[This page intentionally left blank.]

REGION VIII

[This page intentionally left blank.]



FEMA

R8-RS

June 10, 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn
Assistant Administrator
Response Directorate

FROM: Nancy J. Dragani 
Acting Regional Administrator

SUBJECT: FEMA Region VIII Regional Emergency Communications
Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

As required by Title XVIII, Section 1805 of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2007, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in Title XVIII.

The attached Annual Report, developed by the FEMA Region VIII RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined calendar year (CY) 2015 RECCWG Annual Report that will be distributed to the Director for the Office of Emergency Communications, the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce. The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan.
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.
- Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region VIII RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report

represents the RECCWG membership’s input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region. The accompanying Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward as part of the “Whole Community” approach as embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Attachment: Region VIII summary for the CY 2015 RECCWG Annual Report

**REGION VIII
REGIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP
(RECCWG)**

CY 2015 SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

The Region VIII RECCWG addressed some significant communications issues during calendar year 2015. Interstate and cross-regional communications mutual aid agreements, which became effective in 2014, continued to move forward in CY 2015. Many of the Region’s States began the transition to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) at their communications centers, and the transition will continue into the foreseeable future. Each of the States shared case studies in areas such as amateur radio in emergency management, cybersecurity for land mobile radio (LMR) and data networks, NG9-1-1 options and best practices, and communications-related after action reports (AARs) from both exercises and real-world events. The RECCWG addressed the position of the communications unit in the Incident Command System (ICS) by voting to recommend elevating it to either the Section level or into the Command Staff. The RECCWG will continue to shape the emergency management and response communications landscape with the decisions it will make in 2016.

Moving into CY 2016, the RECCWG will continue to expand on its efforts to further interoperable communications, ensure the ability to maintain essential communications during disaster operations, and plan for the future of public safety communications. One of the top priorities for the group is to identify sustainable funding streams for LMR updates and expansion in the face of lagging Federal grant funding for emergency communications. It will also work with the First Responder Network (FirstNet) to better understand the capabilities and timeline for the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) deployment and increase involvement in the RECCWG of Tribal, private sector, and other whole-community stakeholders to more strategically and comprehensively plan for public safety communications.

For additional information regarding the Region VIII RECCWG, please contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region VIII Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), Patricia Sarin at Patricia.Sarin@fema.dhs.gov or (303) 235-4649.

Table 1. RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2015

Name	Role or Agency
RECCWG Leadership	
Cory Lyman	Region VIII RECCWG Co-Chair, Salt Lake City Corporation, Director of Emergency Management
Sharon Loper	Region VIII RECCWG Chair Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Acting Regional Administrator
Pat Sarin	FEMA Region VIII, Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC)

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
Colorado (CO) Representatives	
Jack Cobb Rolled off RECCWG mid-year	Colorado Division of Emergency Management, Communications Infrastructure Manager and Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)
Russell Gibson	Public Safety Communications Analyst, Colorado Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management
Mark Hall	Fairmount Fire Protection District
Kimberleigh Coleman Madsen	Public Safety Broadband, Program Manager
Pam Monsees	Public Safety Communications Network, Program Manager
Jay Wilson	Colorado Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES), Liaison Officer to FEMA
Montana (MT) Representatives	
Quinn Ness	SWIC
Mike Stapp	Montana Disaster & Emergency Services—Response Coordinator
Dan Sullivan	Montana Deputy SWIC
North Dakota (ND) Representatives	
Jim Crow	North Dakota State Radio, State Radio Operations Chief
Travis Durick Rolled off RECCWG mid-year	North Dakota Information Technology Division, Broadband Technology Manager
Jason Horning	North Dakota Association of Counties (NDACo), Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG 9-1-1) Program Manager
Karen Kempert	Cavalier County, 9-1-1 Coordinator/Emergency Manager
Mike Lynk	SWIC North Dakota State Radio, State Radio Director
South Dakota (SD) Representatives	
Cari Leidholt	Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS), State of South Dakota
John McQuillen	Brown County Sheriff's Office, Director of Communications
Jeff Pierce	SWIC, Bureau of Information and Telecommunications, Engineering Administrator
Utah (UT) Representatives	
Robert Craven	Utah Department of Public Safety—Division of Emergency Management, Operations Officer
Doug Reneer	Latter Day Saints Welfare Services, Emergency Communications Services
Jake Hunt	Utah Communications Authority (UCA)
Gordon Coles	SWIC, UCA
Beth Todd	Utah Valley Emergency Communications Center (VECC) Fire Manager
Wyoming (WY) Representatives	
Kim Lee	Wyoming Office of Homeland Security (WOHS), Operations Unit Chief

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
Bob Symons	SWIC WOHS, Wyoming Public Safety Communications Commission Administrative Support
Federal Partners	
Jessie Freeman	Defense Coordinating Element (DCE) Region VIII Communication Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (Colorado), Sergeant First Class (SFC)
Dan Hawkins	Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) Regional Coordinator
Nikki Shears	Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
Steve Trujillo	United States Bureau of Reclamation, Telecommunications Manager
FEMA	
Dennis Huntley	FEMA Denver Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS), Telecommunications Manager
Bob Schroder	FEMA Region VIII, Disaster Emergency Communications (DEC) Specialist

REGION VIII RECCWG CY 2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

- **Accomplishment 1: Discussed and assessed the progress, benefits, and viability of implementing interoperable and sustainable communications technology at each of the RECCWG teleconferences and plenary meetings.**

The Region VIII RECCWG investigated existing and cutting-edge technologies to provide members with innovative and cost-saving procedures and technologies to ensure emergency communication continuity during disaster operations. Cross-State and cross-Region communications were discussed, and progress was made in providing interstate and inter-Region interoperability, as evidenced by the sharing of interoperability channels between Colorado and Nebraska, and Colorado and Utah. The State of Colorado shared best practices it has developed for amateur radio. These include establishing an Auxiliary Communications Unit (AUXCOMM) within emergency management, providing enhanced emergency management training to operators, and providing workers compensation coverage to those engaged in emergency operations.

Amateur radio mesh Wi-Fi operations were investigated and discussed at length, and a subcommittee was formed to determine best practices for the use of amateur radio in emergency management. The subcommittee held a two day workshop on amateur radio and shared the live and recorded meeting with other RECCWGs via YouTube. Innovations in satellite communications was also a topic of discussion for the RECCWG. New satellite voice and data sharing technology was demonstrated for members' education.

A primary concern among the RECCWG membership is cybersecurity. A major portion of one plenary meeting was devoted to the subject. Utah leadership shared the results of its recent cybersecurity assessment of Salt Lake City and the Utah Communications Authority (UCA) statewide 800 megahertz (MHz) networks and offered its experiences as best practices to other States. A nationally recognized industrial cybersecurity expert from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) discussed cybersecurity as it relates to the commercial critical infrastructure that public safety relies on for emergency communications and discussed best practices in securing LMR networks, as well as mobile and landline data networks. In addition, a briefing on the topic was also presented during the RECCWG Auxiliary Communications subcommittee meeting.

➤ **Accomplishment 2: Examined availability of grant and other sustainable funding paths needed to ensure survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of State, Tribal, and local communications systems.**

The RECCWG examined funding mechanisms to determine the best way to ensure the sustainable funding of LMR and data communications systems. Systems purchased immediately following Hurricane Katrina have reached end-of-lifecycle and require major refreshes to maintain operability and security. The RECCWG examined Federal grant programs to determine whether there will be an increase in grant funding for LMR or whether monies from other sources could be shifted to LMR.

Two States within the Region (Montana and North Dakota) do not have statewide LMR systems. Both are studying the feasibility of building and funding systems. Colorado has a statewide system and is evaluating its subscriber base in an effort to provide interoperability across all levels of government. South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming are expanding their radio networks to provide enhanced coverage and additional capacity as well as to ensure continuity of service during all-hazards incidents.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Held follow-up discussions to the CY 2014 Region VIII Tabletop (TTX) Exercise.**

The summary and action results from the 2014 Region VIII TTX were discussed by the RECCWG. The exercise, using a Utah seismic scenario, provided the RECCWG some detailed insight into the communications required to maintain lifesaving and life sustaining government functions, the critical roles of commercial communications providers, and the communications needs of Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOADs) following a major disaster with high loss of life and staggering injuries. The findings were discussed in detail, and actions were assigned to the appropriate subcommittees to develop recommended policy, further actions, and best practices during 2015.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

- **Accomplishment 4: Actively pursued creating diversity in the RECCWG by including groups such as hospital associations, public/private partnerships, mission-critical utilities, and representation from the Region's Tribal nations.**

The RECCWG membership was rejuvenated in 2015, in part through realignment of personnel within their State and local governments. This included reorganization of emergency communications in Utah and resulted in the inclusion of the UCA and a new SWIC in the RECCWG membership. Colorado also had a change in SWIC. The Montana Disaster and Emergency Services received new leadership and, upon being briefed of RECCWG activities, committed to support the RECCWG members.

Planning for the future of public safety and emergency management necessitates the involvement of State and local key decision makers. All of the FirstNet Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) or their designated staff have been invited to join the Region VIII RECCWG. Currently, one of the SPOCs is a RECCWG member.

Stafford Act legislative changes allow Tribal nations the opportunity to directly request disaster declarations from the President. This requires FEMA to have a good working knowledge of Tribal communications capabilities and immediate disaster needs to serve the Tribes, should a declaration occur. During 2015, the scheduled update to the Utah Emergency Communications Plan (ECP) Annex achieved significant Tribal participation. Utah is home to seven Tribal nations. Coordination with the FEMA Region VIII Tribal Liaison and the Utah Division of Emergency Management Tribal Liaison resulted in four of the Tribal nations participating in the Annex development. During the process, Tribal leadership and emergency managers were invited to attend the RECCWG teleconferences and plenaries.

The Region VIII RECCWG is involved with the National VOADs through the activities of one of the RECCWG members who is Co-Chair of the National VOAD Technology Committee. He participated in their effort to establish a subcommittee for backup communications and to set guidelines and procedures to be shared nationwide as best practices.

During 2015, the RECCWG revitalized its subcommittees, including the membership and charter subcommittee. The subcommittee received instruction from the RECCWG to review the membership list and determine whether the needs of each of the emergency response disciplines, VOADs, Tribal nations, and commercial critical infrastructure are being met. The charter subcommittee was instructed to return recommendations to the full membership.

The Region VIII RECCWG also engaged industry partners to better understand capabilities and limitations of various commercial systems that support emergency communications, the services they can provide to emergency management, and what assistance they will need from emergency managers to restore critical services.

➤ **Accomplishment 5: Discussed the benefits and pitfalls of technologies and systems used for public safety and emergency communications.**

Multiple communications platforms were investigated and discussed, and best practices were shared by RECCWG members in 2015. These included LMR (simplex, trunked, simulcast, and repeated), landline, and mobile data, as well as commercial technologies that can be leveraged. Funding shortfalls and the options to fund future development, upgrades, and enhancements were discussed, along with lessons learned.

Two factors came to the forefront of the RECCWG's attention: 1) cybersecurity for both data and LMR networks, including site hardening and security, and 2) planning for the implementation of the FirstNet broadband network and its effect on public safety communications planning. Additional work will be done in these areas in 2016.

The RECCWG studied the efforts Montana made to enhance backup communications. The Montana Disaster Emergency Services is now using voice and data resources through the SHARED RESources (SHARES) High-Frequency (HF) Radio Program.

The RECCWG reviewed the work of Colorado's Adams County 911 (ADCOM 911) in creating its ADCOM 911 Public Safety Broadband Network, in conjunction with FirstNet and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program grant. The presentation brought forward lessons learned that were of value to the States in the Region. These include—

- The 700 MHz broadband frequency has fewer problems than 900 MHz band.
- Long Term Evolution (LTE) is an evolving standard, and the architecture selected needs to allow for the evolution.
- Highly populated events (concerts, sporting events, etc.) have much higher throughput on the NPSBN bandwidth than with commercial services—in one test, the NPSBN provided responders with 14–16 megabits per second (Mbps) while commercial wireless service provided 0–1 Mbps.
- Mobile broadband technology can be deployed with minimal end user training.
- Stakeholder education is key to managing expectations, setting up governance, and obtaining sustainment funding. Stakeholders include politicians, local officials, and end users.
- Devices and mobile modems need to support both commercial cellular and FirstNet 700 MHz bands.

All of Region VIII's States have begun the move to NG9-1-1. The RECCWG shared experiences and explored options to make the transition as cost effective and smooth as possible. It explored standalone solutions (in which the agency buys, operates, and maintains all equipment and data) and hosted solutions (in which local equipment is purchased or leased, and the data and operating system is offsite at a vendor's location). Most of the States in the Region have determined that a hosted solution is more appealing. As NG9-1-1 moves to more rural locations and FirstNet begins to integrate into dispatch and data systems, finding sustainable funding streams will be necessary. NG9-1-1, FirstNet, and updated LMR systems

will need to be funded as a single unit to ensure adequate funding and maintain the technological compatibility of all three systems.

- **Accomplishment 6: Continued to develop and enhance State Annexes (specifically Utah, as a result of recent changes in its communications organization and advancements in infrastructure) and Regional Emergency Communications Plans (RECPs), procedures, and support mechanisms based on anticipated impacts and operational capabilities.**

State annexes form the basis for the RVIII RECP. The RECCWG members understand the importance of keeping the annexes current to allow FEMA, Federal partners, and the other States, both within and outside of Region VIII, to be prepared to respond to any disaster within the Region. The RECCWG worked with FEMA DEC Division to schedule Annex and RECP updates. The Annex update process is currently underway in Utah, and the remainder of the State annex updates in the Region are scheduled.

The RECCWG is reaching out to the Tribal nations to include their communications information in the State Annex in cases where the Tribe has land and a population base. About half of the Tribes participated in the Utah Annex. Tribal participation has been enhanced through the activities of the Region VIII Tribal Liaison and the efforts of the Utah Division of Emergency Management's Tribal Liaison.

REGION VIII RECCWG CY 2016 CHALLENGES

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

- **Challenge 1: Lack of Federal grant monies and state and local revenue hinder agencies' abilities to assess, plan, maintain, expand, and integrate LMR, NPSBN and NG9-1-1 systems.**

Each of the States in the Region understands and accepts the SAFECOM recommendation that a shared communications system represents the highest form of interoperability. While some of the member States have established statewide shared systems to achieve that goal, the systems are aging and nearing end-of-life. Rejuvenating the systems and adding capacity and coverage will be an expensive process that many States cannot afford to fund. Many of the systems were built using the grant process. Grant funding for LMR activities has steadily declined over the last decade, and very little funding is currently available for LMR. Unfortunately, the future looks fiscally bleak for LMR. The RECCWG studied the UCA example. The UCA network is reaching end-of-life, and components are no longer supported by the manufacturer, requiring repairs to be made with secondhand parts. Research on updating the network has brought to light several challenges. Rural users are concerned with the cost of end user equipment, and they often purchase subscriber units that may not be compatible with the updated network. The potential increase in monthly subscriber fees to fund the updates also is of concern. Associated with this latter concern is an effort by rural ("mom-and-pop") telecommunications carriers to oppose updating and expanding the State microwave system. They view backhaul as a potential source of income.

- **Challenge 2: Evolving emergency management and public safety communications needs and technological advances create an ever-changing environment that hampers planning updates and expansion at the State and local levels.**

The scope of emergency management communications has grown as additional groups are added to the emergency management landscape. Increased use of Internet Protocol (IP) in disaster communications brings new technology forward at a rapid pace. These two factors make it challenging to effectively plan communications and make difficult decisions regarding which technological solutions to use. Sharing research on new technologies and use of current technology in different applications has been a strength of the RECCWG. Lessons learned from events, exercises, and studies of States, local entities, and Tribal nations has provided best practices that can be applied in other areas.

- **Challenge 3: Emerging technologies such as the NPSBN has created uncertainty in the ranks of State decision makers on how to prioritize funding and within the ranks of State technologists on how to plan for and prioritize upcoming communications requests.**

The inclusion at some point of FirstNet has clouded the decision making process on future public safety communications planning and investment within the ranks of State and local governments. Public safety voice applications within FirstNet are under development, but still are an indeterminate time from being offered to first responders. For systems whose support services will end in the next decade, FirstNet indecision could potentially create delays that could affect communications in the future.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

- **Challenge 4: Nonstandard channel naming conventions create confusion for end users across various levels of government as they attempt to use interoperability channels.**

The National Public Safety Telecommunications Council recommended a standardized channel naming convention in 2006. It became an American National Standards Institute standard in 2010 and is currently in the review and update process. Despite national standards, exercises in the Region demonstrated that naming conventions for common and mutual aid channels are still an issue, particularly at the Federal responder level. This issue affects the ability of responders to access the proper interoperability channels during an event.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

- **Challenge 5: Lack of information on FirstNet and the NPSBN strategic plans make it difficult to plan for public safety data and LMR updates and expansion.**

Significant progress has been made in the clarification of how FirstNet plans to operate the NPSBN; however, many issues related to operation in Region VIII's rural environment remain

unclear. One of the first public safety LTE mobile broadband networks in the Nation is within Region VIII, in Adams County, CO. The RECCWG has studied the Adams County network and obtained the county's best practices, but many RECCWG members feel they lack sufficient information on FirstNet's strategy to effectively plan for a comprehensive communications environment that includes mobile broadband, data, and LMR. Additional information would allow planners to make informed choices in balancing the budget for their communications suites.

➤ **Challenge 6: Additional efforts are needed to include underrepresented disciplines, VOAD groups, private sector partners, and the Tribal nations within the RECCWG membership.**

The RECCWG made good progress in reviewing the membership and adding new members from various disciplines and VOAD groups, and industry remains engaged in RECCWG activities. Despite the RECCWG's best efforts, the Tribal nations are underrepresented. Additional outreach is needed to ensure all emergency management and response groups have a voice in the RECCWG.

REGION VIII RECCWG CY 2016 GOALS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

- Goal 1. Continue to research the availability of sustainable funding sources needed to ensure the survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of LMR, NG9-1-1, and NPSBN systems.
- Goal 2. Research and study cost-effective and cutting-edge communications technology and best practices in an effort to share information not only within the Region but with other Regions.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

- Goal 3. Establish and exercise standard channel naming conventions, particularly with Federal partners, to enhance interoperability.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

- Goal 4. Obtain insight into the NPSBN and FirstNet's vision for mobile broadband to enable effective communications planning and sustainable funding.
- Goal 5. Continue to increase participation/involvement of Tribal entities, private sector partners, and whole of community, ensuring that all disciplines have a RECCWG voice.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

REGION VIII RECCWG CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The table below lists trainings, exercises, briefings, subcommittee activities, and other events hosted or promoted by the Region VIII RECCWG.

Table 2. RECCWG Events

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VIII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
1/21/2015	RECCWG Quarterly Teleconference	Region VIII RECCWG Membership, i.e., State, local, Tribal, Federal communications entities, and the private/nonprofit sector, etc.	Black Hills, South Dakota 75th Anniversary Sturgis Motorcycle Rally and exercise meeting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share State, local, Tribal and regional successes as well as FirstNet status. 2. Share information on the 2015 Sturgis Rally Planning, which is expected to bring 750,000 to 1,000,000 people to South Dakota and the upcoming exercise in February. 	Goal 1	Statutory Duty 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared best practices for interoperable communications for large planned events. • Provided insight into the establishment of continuity of operations (COOP) sites for State emergency operations centers (EOC).
2/10/2015 – 2/12/2015	Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) LTE technical assistance network assessment in	State and local emergency communications entities	Usage of LTE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a sound understanding of LTE. 	Goals 1 and 5	Statutory Duty 1 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided best practice information to allow membership to begin to integrate mobile broadband data into daily operations, emergency management communications, and public safety answering

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/ nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VIII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
	Vail and Beaver Creek, CO						points (PSAP) NG9-1-1 plans.
2/25/2015	Wyoming FirstNet Consultation	Federal, State, and local agencies	FirstNet and the deployment of the NPSBN	1. Develop FirstNet governance objectives.	Goals 1 and 5	Statutory Duties 1 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided information to allow membership to begin to integrate mobile broadband data into daily operations, emergency management communications, and PSAP NG9-1-1 plans.
3/11/2015	OEC LTE technical assistance workshop in Denver, CO	State and local emergency communications entities	Public safety use of mobile LTE broadband services	1. Develop a sound understanding of LTE.	Goal 1 understanding and Goal 5	Statutory Duties 1 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided information to allow membership to begin to integrate mobile broadband data into daily operations, emergency management communications, and PSAP NG9-1-1 plans.
3/12/2015	Statewide Public Safety Radio Summit in Colorado	Federal, State, Tribal, and local government agencies	Role of amateur radio in emergency communications, review status and State-provided protection for amateur operators, update and expand emergency management and ICS training	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Solidify the role of amateur operators in auxiliary communications. 2. Enhance understanding of ICS among amateur operators. 	Goal 4	Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtained an understanding of how to use amateur radio groups in emergency management. Shared expectations with amateur radio groups to ensure they understand the role they play in emergency communications.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/ nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VIII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
3/25/2015	RECCWG Quarterly Teleconference	Region VIII RECCWG Membership, i.e., State, local, Tribal, Federal communications entities, and the private/nonprofit sector, etc.	NPSBN and FirstNet activities, case study review of the ADCOM 911, CO LTE broadband network, discussion on North Dakota establishing a statewide LMR network, progress and best practices on moving to NG9-1-1, and report on National VOAD's efforts to establish a backup communications subcommittee, and introduction of new RECCWG member from Utah	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Members share State, local, Tribal and regional successes as well as FirstNet status. 2. Share information on Adams County Communications Center (ADCOM911) LTE network. This is the Nation's first deployment under FirstNet authorization. 	Goals 1, 2, and 5	Statutory Duties 1 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared real-life experiences, and best practices and lessons learned in building, maintaining, and operating a public safety mobile broadband network. • Shared NG9-1-1 options and alternative solutions. • Gained insight into the communications issues and objectives of VOAD groups.
5/15/2015	OEC Communications Unit Leader (COML) Exercise in Great Falls, MT	Federal, State, and local agencies in the Region	All-Hazards COML Exercise	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assist COML trainees in demonstrating skills and completing requirements in the Position Task Book. 	Goal 3	Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six COML trainees participate. • Had two persons successfully complete their entire Position Task Books.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/ nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VIII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
5/27/2015	Region VIII RECCWG Quarterly Teleconference	Region VIII RECCWG Membership, i.e., State, local, Tribal, Federal communications entities, and the private/nonprofit sector, etc.	RECCWG Plenary Meeting June 10–11, 2015	1. Review final details and arrangements.	Goal 4	Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned the direction of the RECCWG for the next CY quarter.
6/10/2015 – 6/11/2015	Region VIII RECCWG Plenary—Salt Lake City, UT	Region VIII RECCWG Membership, i.e., State, local, Tribal, Federal communications entities, and the private/nonprofit sector, etc.	<p>Review changes in the NECP, discuss the current state of cybersecurity and best practices, receive a report on the UCA LMR network cybersecurity audit, receive recommendations on alert and warning practices for the deaf and hard of hearing, review new offerings for a satellite hotspot, and discuss the role of amateur radio in emergency management.</p> <p>Discuss reduction of communications funding by the Montana legislature,</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Update membership on new NECP guidelines Share best practices in cyber security Review and discuss new communications technology Discuss communications funding shortfall alternatives Ensure representative membership. 	Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5	Statutory Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtained insight into the changes in the NECP and why they occurred, and reviewed updated NECP goals to enable strategic planning to meet them. Enlightened the membership on cybersecurity issues for industrial control systems, LMR, and public safety data networks; shared possible solutions, best practices, and foreseeable security issues. Shared the UCA 800 MHz network cybersecurity case study and assessment to provide insight into

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/ nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VIII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
			<p>receive a report on the Hill Air Force Base 800 MHz buildout and the sharing of tower space with UCA, review membership and recommendations assigned to the membership subcommittee.</p> <p>Assign action items from 2014 TTX to subcommittees.</p>				<p>possible cybersecurity best practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revitalized the RECCWG subcommittees to address local, Regional, and national communications issues including membership rejuvenation and representation, funding for NG9-1-1 and LMR, and integration of auxiliary communications operators and groups into emergency management.
6/16//2015	OEC Incident Dispatch Training Course in Pierre, SD	State and local agencies in the preparation for the 75th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally	All-Hazard Incident Dispatcher Training.	1. Train experienced dispatchers for operations in an incident command post or incident communications center.	Goal 3	Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully trained five individuals through the 4-day class.
6/23/2015	OEC LTE technical assistance workshop in Sandy, UT	State and local emergency communications entities	Public safety use of mobile LTE broadband services.	1. Develop a sound understanding of LTE.	Goal 1 understanding and Goal 5	Statutory Duties 1 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided information to allow membership to begin to integrate mobile broadband data into daily operations, emergency management

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/ nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VIII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
							communications, and PSAP NG9-1-1 plans.
6/24/2015	OEC LTE technical assistance workshop in Richfield, Utah	State and local emergency communications entities	Public safety use of mobile LTE broadband services.	1. Develop a sound understanding of LTE.	Goal 1 understanding and Goal 5	Statutory Duties 1 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided information to allow membership to begin to integrate mobile broadband data into daily operations, emergency management communications, and PSAP NG9-1-1 plans.
8/18/2015 – 8/19/2016	Region VIII RECCWG Plenary— Denver	Region VIII RECCWG Membership, i.e., State, local, Tribal, Federal communications entities, and the private/nonprofit sector, etc.	<p>Briefing on the Colorado State AUXCOMM program, best practices for training amateur operators, discussion on digital communications for amateur and the amateur use of mesh networks.</p> <p>Ramifications of space weather on communications systems, best practices from a vendor perspective on NG9-1-1, the role of FEMA National Radio System (FNARS) in emergency</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share best practices on amateur radio. 2. Gain perspective on NG9-1-1. 3. Explain the purpose and role of FNARS. 	Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5	Statutory Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Furthered discussion on amateur radio integration and best practices in emergency management. • Updated membership on the use of the FNARS system as backup communications.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/ nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VIII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
			communications, National Coordinating Center for Communications (NCC) products available to emergency managers.				
9/15/2015	OEC LTE technical assistance workshop in Delta, CO	State and local emergency communications entities	Public safety use of mobile LTE broadband services.	1. Develop a sound understanding of LTE.	Goal 1 and Goal 5	Statutory Duties 1 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided information to allow membership to begin to integrate mobile broadband data into daily operations, emergency management communications, and PSAP NG9-1-1 plans.
10/20/2015	RECCWG Quarterly Teleconference	Region VIII RECCWG Membership, i.e., State, local, Tribal, Federal communications entities, and the private/nonprofit sector, etc.	Restructuring of the Communications Unit (COMU) in ICS. Interference on very high frequency (VHF) channel 155.370. NTIA's new Emergency Support Function (ESF)-2 responders.	1. Members share State, local, Tribal and Regional successes as well as FirstNet status.	Goals 4 and 5	Statutory Duty 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Furthered discussion on a national initiative to move Communications within ICS to ensure communications operational requirements can be and are met. • Furthered discussion on VHF interference between voice and trunked system control frequencies to determine scope of issue.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/ nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VIII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
10/29/2015 – 10/30/2015	AUXCOMM (amateur radio) sub-committee in Salt Lake City	RECCWG subcommittee members, Utah Emergency Management, Utah and Colorado amateur radio leadership	Amateur radio's role in emergency management, operator requirements, and update on current technology.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify requirements for amateur radio operators. 2. Establish regional best practices for use of operators. 3. Keep amateur radio leadership aware of cutting-edge technology. 	Goals 1, 3, 4, and 5	Statutory Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Furthered discussion on amateur radio integration and best practices in emergency management. • Obtained an understanding of cutting-edge amateur technology being used to provide continuity communications.
11/15/2015	OEC backup communications workshop in Durango, CO	Local agencies of Colorado's Southwest Region	Planning for backup communications options.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examine the challenges to communications centers telephony/ data and LMR connectivity. 2. Explore and discuss backup connectivity options. 3. Discuss COOP issues for communications centers. 	Goal 1 and Goal 5	Statutory Duties 1, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtained capabilities assessment templates. • Obtained Incident Action Planning sample documents. • Obtained examples of backup options and documentation from other public safety agencies. • Obtained draft standard operating procedures.
11/30/2015	OEC Communications Technician Course in Bozeman, MT	Federal, State, and local agencies in the Region	All-Hazards Communications Unit Technician (COMT) Course	1. Provide introductory and refresher training for the National Incident Management	Goal 3	Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully trained 14 individuals through the 5-day class.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/ nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/ Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region VIII CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
				System ICS COMT position. 2. Introduce public safety professionals and support staff to various communications concepts and technologies. 3. Develop the essential core competencies required for performing the duties of the COMT in an all-hazards incident.			
12/20/2015	Utah Emergency Communications Annex Update Kickoff Meeting	FEMA Region VIII, Utah emergency management from all levels of government and Tribal nations	Begin the Region VIII Annex update process.	1. Update the Utah Annex. 2. Involve Tribal leadership in RECCWG.	Goals 1, 4, 5, and 6	Statutory Duties 1, 2, and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began the evaluation of communications systems technology to ensure survivability and continuity by starting the Utah Disaster Emergency Communications Annex. • Enhanced the influence of the Utah Tribal nations by holding communications with over half the tribes.

CROSS-STATE AND CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The following list includes events in which multiple States or Regions worked together to coordinate strategies, collaborate on ideas, conduct training, or responded to real-world events together.

- South Dakota and Wyoming partnered on the regional interoperable communications planning in preparation for the 75th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally by coordinating at the State, county, and local level to ensure coordination across State borders.
- The State of Colorado is working with Kansas and Nebraska to share interoperability channels among agencies along their shared borders.
- The State of Idaho now has voice LMR communications with Montana via Idaho's licensed HF radio system SecureNet.
- Montana participated in the Canada–U.S. Enhanced Resiliency Experiment (CAUSE) III, Phase 2 in 2015. This is an information-sharing experiment with partners in the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan and the State of Montana. Outcomes of the CAUSE experiment included enhanced resilience, integration of non-traditional resources, and the ability to send and receive cross border alerts. (See the Montana State Activities for more details.)
- Montana, North Dakota, Alberta, Saskatchewan, local responders, and Federal agencies participated in a meeting of the Western Border Interoperability Working Group meeting, October 22–23, 2015, in Havre, MT. Participants shared information on current projects, discussed challenges, and made plans to develop communications interoperability capabilities between radio systems and console subsystems.

STATE CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The following list includes trainings, exercises, briefings, real-life response incidents, and other events sponsored or hosted by a particular State.

Colorado

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Colorado held its FirstNet consultation meeting on January 14, 2015.
- Colorado hosted an OEC LTE technical assistance network assessment for State and local agencies in Vail and Beaver Creek, CO, on February 10–12, 2015; a Basics of LTE Design and Coverage workshop was held in Denver on March 11, 2015.
- OEC held a Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan technical assistance workshop in conjunction with State and local agencies in Denver, CO, on April 2, 2015.

Other

- Colorado successfully established multijurisdictional Inter RF Subsystem Interfaces between the statewide Digital Trunked Radio (DTR) and regional systems in the Denver metropolitan area. Combined efforts of the Public Safety Communications Subcommittee

of the State's Homeland Security and All-Hazards Senior Advisory Committee and the North Central Region Denver Urban Area Security Initiative Communications Committee over the past couple of years came to fruition in 2015, providing the means for dispatch centers across the Region and beyond to patch together users of these independent systems.

- Colorado held a Statewide Public Safety Radio Summit on March 12, 2015.
- New sites were added in 2015 to address some identified DTR system coverage gaps. More sites are planned in 2016.
- The Colorado General Assembly passed HB14-1203 providing multiple years of funding to support the statewide public safety DTR system. These funds are restricted to the replacement of legacy state-owned transmitters and for purposes of scheduled system wide software upgrades. Through CY2015, the State Public Safety Communications Network team has successfully completed transmitter replacements at 76 State sites containing more than 400 legacy repeaters.
- In December 2015, Colorado successfully negotiated a long-term contract with Motorola to include a Migration Assurance Plan and Software Upgrade Assurance plan. This contract provides for a series of five system wide software platform refreshes for the statewide DTR system. The contract term is through the State's FY2025 and will leave the DTR system operating on SR 7.25.

Montana

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Montana participated in CAUSE III, Phase 2 in 2015. The DHS Science and Technology Directorate and the Defense Research and Development of Canada's Centre for Security Science completed the second phase of the third cross-border information-sharing experiment with partners in the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan and the State of Montana. Some of the outcomes of the CAUSE experiment included—
 - Enhanced resilience through cross-border partnerships with interoperable communications and shared situational awareness
 - Integration of non-traditional resources, including crowd-sourced information, open technologies, and digital volunteers to augment traditional emergency response
 - The ability to send and receive cross-border alerts via multiple channels and among multiple response partners.
- Montana Disaster and Emergency Services (DES) conducted a DHS OEC/ Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP) All-Hazards COML exercise for State, Federal, local and amateur radio in May; 13 individuals participated.
- Montana held a COML Exercise on May 15 to enable recently trained COML personnel to gain some of the experience needed to complete their certifications.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

- COML and COMT training and task books sessions were held in Montana on May 16 to increase the number of certified personnel within the State.
- Another DHS OEC/ICTAP All-Hazards COMT course was conducted in Bozeman during November with 14 students attending.
- Military Auxiliary Radio System (MARS), Secure Net, SHARES, and AUXCOMM are still active and currently being maintained within DES by Amateur Radio Volunteers.

Real-world events

- Montana DES coordinated the deployment of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services communications trailer to support a Type 2 Wildfire Incident Management Team during the 2015 wildfire season.
- DES deployed 21 handheld radios (walkie-talkies) to State firefighters after Regional and National Interagency Fire Center caches were exhausted at the height of fire activity during August and September 2015.

Other

- The State Radio User's Group is developing a plan for the use of two talk groups for the Capital area in Helena. (This includes policy, procedures and protocol for their use.)
 - The group will conduct a study to identify issues with emergency communications between State agencies.
 - The group consists of members from DES; the National Guard; Department of Administration (Public Safety Services Bureau and the Office of State Continuity and Emergency Management); Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; Department of Corrections; Montana Highway Patrol; Legislative Services; Montana Historical Society; Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Department of Health and Public Services; Montana Department of Transportation; Department of Livestock; and the Department of Justice. In 2015, The Montana Department of Administration assumed the role of the primary agency for State ESF-2.
- Amateur Radio
 - Volunteers continue to maintain the MARS, SHARES, SECURENET, and AUX COMM equipment.
 - They continue to participate in the above net check-ins and exercise.
 - Amateur radio operators have begun providing Montana Volunteer Fire Departments with narrowband, analog radios free of charge.
 - They have currently distributed more than 100 free radios and offer free programming to recipients of the radios. The radios were purchased and received through a surplus program and offer the department's additional VHF communications.
 - The State Amateur Radio Operators have also agreed to use version two of the Broadband-Hamnet firmware for the buildout of a Mesh network within Helena and the surrounding areas.

North Dakota

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- North Dakota held its FirstNet Consultation to set requirements for public safety mobile broadband on July 9, 2015.

Other

- North Dakota is presently involved in a study to evaluate radio systems and assess next steps in moving forward with the next generation of LMR. This study will help the State and local jurisdictions in preparation for legislation for the 2017/2018 legislative session.
- 2015 really began to see results from system implementation of NG9-1-1 for the PSAPs, which had begun the year before. Local jurisdictions began to see financial savings and improved network performance, decreasing the time it takes to connect a caller to a 9-1-1 call taker.

South Dakota

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- All-Hazard Incident Dispatcher Training was held in Pierre on June 16–19, 2015.
- A TTX leading up to the 2015 Sturgis Rally was also held.

Real-world events

- The State hosted the 75th Anniversary of the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally during the year, an event that drew nearly one million people to a town with a population of less than 7,000. Preparations took two years to complete. South Dakota successfully put together and implemented a regional communications plan for the Rally, improving both operability and interoperability in the area and across State lines with Wyoming. The results were an EOC located in Camp Rapid that will be maintained and serve as the COOP site for the State EOC. Preparation also included several State-sponsored TTXs. One of the communications lessons learned was that the same channels had different names assigned to them by different responders, which led to some confusion and interoperability problems. These problems were addressed prior to the event.

Other

- South Dakota signed a contract with Motorola to implement the WAVE system in conjunction with the statewide trunked radio system. The WAVE system extends the radio system out to an app that can be on any mobile device with a wireless connection to the Internet. South Dakota expects this to be very useful for command and control staff, assisting with in-building coverage and actually helping in areas with strong cellular coverage.

Utah

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Utah held an OEC LTE technical assistance Workshop for State and local agencies on June 23–24, 2015.
- Amateur radio operators attended an OEC AUXCOMM technical assistance workshop to gain an understanding of their role in ICS on October 29–30, 2015.
- The Region VIII RECCWG AUXCOMM subcommittee held a Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service meeting on October 31, 2015, to discuss roles and expectations of amateur radio groups and emergency management officials.

Other

- UCA has successfully expanded coverage by the addition of six or more sites on its 800 MHz trunked network in south central Utah. This has also improved interoperability.
- Funding for operation, expansion, and lifecycle management of the UCA network has been a challenge. Users of the network and funding bodies have both been resistant to providing the additional needed funding.
- Utah completed and submitted to FirstNet the requested data collection elements for the NPSBN. Fourteen percent of Utah public safety entities completed the data collection survey. UCA contracted with the Utah Automated Geographic Resource Center to put together the five-phase coverage objectives for the State of Utah.

Wyoming

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Wyoming held its FirstNet Consultation on February 25, 2015.

Real-world events

- Two major blizzards in April 2015 provided a test for the Wyoming Statewide Radio System known as WyoLink. One of the storms resulted in a 70-car pileup on Interstate 80, which closed almost 150 miles of the interstate. A few days later, there was another large accident on Interstate 80 in Albany County that closed the interstate again. These accidents required response personnel from several areas and service sectors. Interoperability at both accident scenes worked well, and responders at the second accident used the same command structure as was used for the first incident, enabling a more rapid and orderly response.

- During the Memorial Day weekend on May 23, 2015, several communities were affected by severe spring thunderstorms. Heavy rain in some areas produced flood waters causing washed out gravel roads and culverts. Then, on June 5, cloud bursts in both Johnson and Niobrara counties resulted in flash flooding in the communities and surrounding areas of Lusk, Manville, and Buffalo. Millions of dollars in damage resulted. The State of Wyoming requested Federal assistance. FEMA responded, and the President granted Federal aid for both Public and Individual Assistance.

Other

- Funding for WyoLink, both for operational and capital expenses, is an ongoing challenge and looks to be more so in the coming legislative session.

REGION IX

[This page intentionally left blank.]



FEMA

August 31, 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn
Assistant Administrator
Response Directorate

FROM: Robert J. Fenton 
Regional Administrator

SUBJECT: FEMA Region IX Regional Emergency Communications
Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

As required by Title XVIII, Section 1805 of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2007, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in Title XVIII.

The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region IX RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined calendar year (CY). It is understood that the report distribution will include the Director for the Office of Emergency Communications, the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce. The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP)
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements
- Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, tribal and territorial support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region IX RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report

as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

Additionally, the FEMA RIX Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC) continues to work with our headquarters elements as well as other agencies in working towards solutions for recurring emergency communications challenges identified by our RECCWG membership which includes ensuring support for:

- Dedicated, backup communications capabilities to include High Frequency/FEMA National Radio System (HF/FNARS), National Alert and Warning System (NAWAS) and Integrated Public Alert and Warning Systems (IPAWS) access at all state and territorial Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs).
- Full time, technically trained/qualified, experienced communications personnel and interoperability coordinators to support continuity of emergency communications operations especially during emergency response operations.
- Full time internet bandwidth access (FEMA "blue line", OneNet, etc.) at all RIX EOCs to facilitate connectivity to both state and federal emergency management email and shared emergency response management software programs (WebEOC, etc).

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for Federal, State, local, tribal and territorial agencies to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region. The accompanying Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole of Community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Attachment: Region IX summary for the CY 2015 RECCWG Annual Report

**REGION IX
REGIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP
(RECCWG)**

CY 2015 SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

The Region IX RECCWG had a very productive CY 2015. Key accomplishments include an increased level of information sharing, coordination, and collaboration among RECCWG member States, territories, and Tribal Nations as well as expanded engagement with nontechnical stakeholders; development of innovative ideas to more efficiently share resources within and across Regions, implementation of regionally focused “hot washes” after real-world incidents to discuss and determine Regional-level successes and areas for improvement, and identification of anticipated emergency communications support requirements that may require Federal support following a disaster event.

Through the efforts of RECCWG members and their participation in the monthly teleconferences, attendance at semi-annual face-to-face meetings, and involvement in real-life incidents, the Region IX RECCWG was also able to identify several key findings that will shape its direction for CY 2016 and beyond. Following Typhoon Soudelor, RECCWG members discussed the need to resolve any remaining technical issues with high-frequency (HF) radio communications in the Pacific Islands. Also of importance, RECCWG members want to establish and implement the use of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) National Radio System (FNARS) and the National Warning System (NAWAS) in all Pacific Island Emergency Operations Centers (EOC). To ensure all RECCWG member States are capable of communicating during major disaster responses, RECCWG members will also focus on increasing the involvement of amateur radio operators as well as encourage further participation from the Region’s Tribal Nations. Lastly, RECCWG members will focus on researching and acquiring grant funding for CY 2016 and beyond to enhance the Region’s communications infrastructure, equipment, and personnel.

For additional information regarding the Region IX RECCWG, please contact FEMA Region IX Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), Mr. David Benoit at David.Benoit@fema.dhs.gov or (510) 627-7268.

Table 1. RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2015

Name	Role or Agency
RECCWG Leadership	
Robert Fenton	Regional Administrator, FEMA Region IX
Dr. Ahsha Tribble	Deputy Regional Administrator, FEMA Region IX
David Benoit	Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region IX

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
VACANT (Filled in 2016 by Victoria Garcia)	State Co-chair
American Samoa Representatives	
Vinnie Atofau, Jr.	Territorial Emergency Management Coordinating Office (TEMCo) Manager, Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
Jacinta Brown	Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)/Deputy Director of Homeland Security, DHS
Smith Lutu	Chairman, Territorial Emergency Communications Committee (TECC)
Carl Prendergast	Information Technology Manager, DHS
Tina Tapuai	Communications Coordinator, Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
Ray Tulafono, Jr.	Chief Information Officer (CIO), American Samoa Medical Center Information Systems Department
Arizona (AZ) Representatives	
Jeremy Knoll	SWIC/Wireless Systems Maintenance Supervisor, Arizona Department of Public Safety
Robert Church	Communications Manager, Arizona DOC
Rich Kochanski	Chair, Maricopa County Local Emergency Planning Committee
Al West	Arizona Transportation Security Administration (TSA)
California (CA) Representatives	
William Anderson	Interim Deputy Director, California Public Safety Communications Office—California 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Division
Mike Beckstrand	Mutual Aid Region III Telecommunications Coordinator, California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES)
Budge Currier	SWIC, Public Safety Communications (PSC)
Jim Falls	Certified Engineering Geologist, Department of Conservation—California Geological Survey
Ben Green	Mutual Aid Region V Telecommunications Coordinator, Auxiliary Communications Service—CalOES
Leo Liberio	California Director, Air Force (AF) Military Auxiliary Radio System (MARS)
Dennis McCord	National Operations Officer, Air Force MARS (AFMARS)
Don Nelson	Digital Communications Coordinator, Humboldt State University
Sue Plantz	Deputy Director, Telecommunications Governance and Service Division—California PSC
Anthony Ravago	Chief, Pala Fire Department
Scott Tillman	Region IX Emergency Coordinator, AFMARS
Steve Weston	Firefighter/Paramedic, Los Angeles Fire Department—Tactical Communications Unit
Ralph Williams	Pasadena Fire Department
Wendy Schleppe	California Department of Water Resources
Kody Kerwin	Telecom Specialist, Contra Costa Fire Department
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Representatives	
Gerald Guerrero	Deputy Special Assistant for HS & Emergency Management (HSEM)

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
Joaquin “Kilroy” Guerrero	Communication & Technology Manager/SWIC)
Joey Delacruz	Director, Breuer Information & Technology Applications
Eric David	Communications Specialist, Information & Technology Section
Guam Representatives	
John Bamba	DHS Office of Civil Defense
Brad Hokanson	Guam SWIC, Office of Civil Defense
Lucia Perez	Emergency Support Function (ESF)-2 Coordinator, Guam Telephone Authority Managing Director
Hawaii (HI) Representatives	
George Burnett	Telecommunications Chief, Hawaii Emergency Management Agency
Teresa Debebar	Land Mobile Radio (LMR) Program Assistant, United States Army Pacific
Will Espero	Hawaii Senator
Victoria Garcia	SWIC, Hawaii Emergency Management Agency
David Hafner	Telecommunications Planner, Hawaii Emergency Management Agency
Ryan Hirae	Assistant Telecommunications Officer, Hawaii Emergency Management Agency
Torrey Ho	Telecommunications Technician, Hawaii Emergency Management Agency
Walter Pacheco	Communications Coordinator, Maui Police Department
Nevada (NV) Representatives	
George Molnar	SWIC
Lonnie Richardson	Las Vegas Information Technology Manager
Jeff Yeagley	Former SWIC
Shawn Taylor	Regional Communications Coordinator, Washoe County
Vinnie Pulido	Las Vegas Metro Police Department
Paul Pocheco	Nevada State Representative
Tribal Representatives	
Terry Bohl	Nevada Tribal Representative
Jena Morado	Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada
Sky Road Webb	Program Manager, Inter-Tribal Council of California (ITCC)
Jim Stillwell	Arizona Tribal Representative
Perry TwoFeathers Tripp	ITCC
Mike Russ	Disaster Services Manager, San Manuel Band of Mission Indians—Highland, CA
Federal/Private Partners	
Dennis McCord	National Operations Officer, AFMARS
Art Botterell	AFMARS
Steve Simmons	AFMARS
Steve Sylas	AFMARS—Travis Air Force Base

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
John Rosica	Army MARS
William Heckler	District 14 Spectrum Manager, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)
Eric Simmons	USCG—Oakland, CA
David Hartshorn	Federal Communications Commission (FCC)—San Francisco Office
Robert Mussenden	FCC, Attorney-Advisor, Policy and Licensing Division, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau
Scott Jackson	National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA)
Lance Johnson	NTIA
Steve Veader	NTIA
Thomas Lawless	DHS Office of Emergency Communications (OEC)
Ross Merlin	Wireless Services Program Manager, DHS OEC
Suzanne Moss	ESF-2 Coordinator, General Services Administration (GSA)
FEMA	
Brian Carney	FEMA National RECCWG Coordinator
Justin Dombrowski	Response Division Director, FEMA Region IX
Mark Ackerman	Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT), FEMA Region IX
Wendy Bailey	National IMAT, FEMA Region IX
Mark Craig	Recovery Division, FEMA Region IX
Michael Cummings	Private Sector Liaison, FEMA Region IX
Farley Howell	Federal Preparedness Coordinator, FEMA Region IX
Jeff Lusk	Deputy Federal Preparedness Coordinator, FEMA Region IX
Shawn Matz	Logistics Branch Chief, FEMA Region IX
Dennis McKeown	Planning Branch Chief, FEMA Region IX
Jeff Meyer	Communications Unit Leader (COML), FEMA Region IX
Tom Reinecke	COML, FEMA Region IX
Colby Stanton	Director, FEMA Region IX - Pacific Area Office
Lee Champagne	Chief, FEMA Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) Bothell
Glen Gorud	Communications Manager, FEMA MERS Bothell
Jeff Lucas	Communications Specialist, FEMA MERS Bothell
Jay Marts	Senior Advisor, FEMA National Continuity Program Readiness Division
Kevin Youngberg	FEMA Contract Support, Subject Matter Expert (SME)
Courtney Cunningham	FEMA Contract Support

REGION IX RECCWG CY 2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

➤ **Accomplishment 1: Shared lessons learned and best practices from Typhoon Soudelor and California wildland fires with RECCWG members.**

Several discussions were held that focused on best practices and lessons learned from the response and recovery operations for Typhoon Soudelor in the Pacific and the wildland fires in California. Both events emphasized that success stems from having established strong partnerships with multijurisdictional and multidisciplinary response agencies prior to major emergency events. In addition, these events underlined the importance of responders maintaining a variety of skill sets to successfully assist in all aspects of the response, including interoperable emergency communications. Through the Region IX RECCWG collaboration, on-scene responders at both incidents had a better understanding of the emergency communications infrastructure available, resources needed, and who to contact for additional information and equipment.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Accomplishment 2: Strengthened the RECCWG as the Regional coordinating body by addressing geographical challenges to bringing members together.**

To overcome geographic constraints, the Region IX RECCWG hosted two in-person plenaries—one in the Pacific Islands and another in the continental United States (CONUS), both of which were open to all RECCWG members interested in participating. Attendance at both plenaries was significantly larger than in previous years and demonstrated the benefit of hosting in-person meetings in two locations. Cross-cutting issues such as land mobile radio (LMR) coverage challenges, HF management, and FirstNet coordination were discussed at both plenaries, and members shared best practices and lessons learned from exercises and response events. In addition to the two in-person plenaries, the Region IX RECCWG hosted monthly teleconferences in which RECCWG members provided updates on the status of each State's and Territory's interoperable emergency communications environment. These monthly teleconferences provided members with a direct forum to discuss successes and challenges in interoperability, future training dates and registration, upcoming exercises, States' and territories' communication needs, and potential solutions to interoperability issues. This consistent exchange of ideas has resulted in the creation of strong partnerships among members, which in turn has strengthened the Region IX RECCWG and reinforced it as a leading regional coordinating body.

➤ **Accomplishment 3: Achieved cost efficiencies and increased participation in training events through sharing of training resources.**

The Region IX RECCWG has enabled its members to share information regarding multiple training opportunities, as well as exchange certified instructors to teach courses throughout the Region. Multiple exercises have taken place in CY 2015 and the Region IX RECCWG has been instrumental in promoting these exercises and encouraging its members to participate. Each exercise included an emergency communications component and mobilized local, State, Tribal, territorial, and Federal public safety agencies to collaborate with nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and private sector industry. Examples of exercises that Region IX RECCWG members participated in during CY 2015 include the Multi-Agency Regional Radio Interoperability Training Exercise (MARRITE), Cascadia Rising, Kontra I Piligru Full Scale Exercise (FSE), SoCal 2015 FSE, and the Makani Pahili FSE. These exercises allowed Region IX RECCWG members an opportunity to test their knowledge and skills while building resilient relationships with cross-State/Territory and cross-regional partners.

➤ **Accomplishment 4: Began drafting the Region IX Regional Emergency Communications Plan and completed the California State Disaster Emergency Communications (DEC) Annex**

Region IX RECCWG members were integral in assisting FEMA representatives with the information gathering and data analysis required to develop and complete the California DEC Annex. In addition, RECCWG members are currently supporting FEMA representatives with the development of DEC Annexes for Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and Guam. Each Annex provides government leadership with a better understanding of the communications needs of each locale while also enhancing Federal, State, Tribal, territorial, and local communications planning efforts.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

➤ **Accomplishment 5: Enhanced stakeholder understanding of Federal and private communications programs and capabilities that could affect emergency communications efforts in the Region.**

The RECCWG provided a venue to discuss both operable and interoperable communications issues throughout the Region. Plenary meetings and teleconferences created a forum for partner organizations to share information regarding multiple training opportunities, including Communications Unit Leader (COML) and Communications Unit Technician (COMT) training as well as Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP) and broadband workshops. This outreach and engagement allowed the Region to leverage existing resources and access training opportunities to meet its training goals in a restricted fiscal climate.

REGION IX RECCWG CY 2016 CHALLENGES

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

➤ **Challenge 1: Address technical issues with establishing and maintaining HF communications in the Pacific Islands.**

The remoteness of the State of Hawaii and the territories located in the Pacific requires them to be self-sufficient; a breakdown in equipment typically takes months to resolve, because replacement parts are not readily accessible. HF radio provides the best backup communication system for most areas in the Pacific; however, numerous challenges impede the functioning of these systems. HF communication with the mainland is not always accessible owing to the distance between the mainland and Hawaii and the Pacific territories. In addition, the steep, mountainous island terrain often impairs coverage spread of HF radio systems. FNARS is insufficient in meeting the range requirements for the territories, and most FNARS are underpowered or have maintenance issues that need to be resolved. NAWAS is limited or nonexistent because it requires numerous dedicated circuits for operation, and its recurring costs are exorbitant. Because NAWAS traffic must be transmitted from the Hawaii EOC to each of the Pacific Islands, the recurring monthly costs to operate NAWAS in Guam, for instance, are estimated at \$15,000, and in CNMI, the cost more than doubles to \$40,000. In addition, the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) cannot use HF communications to speak with counterparts in the Pacific Islands because the CalOES Log Periodic antenna is not functioning properly. Even amateur radio is hindered in the Pacific because many of the certified operators are nearing retirement, and younger generations are showing less interest in amateur radio because they do not readily have access to the training and certification coursework required. To ensure territories have the basic means to communicate following a disaster, it is critical that the HF radio issues, such as the lack of dependable FNARS capabilities in American Samoa, Guam, CNMI, be resolved quickly and efficiently in the coming year.

➤ **Challenge 2: Address geographical and cost impediments to achieving secure telecommunications with and among the Pacific territories.**

The issue of secure telecommunications in the Pacific territories remains a challenge because available bandwidth often cannot support the virtual private network (VPN) or encryption needed to provide a secure pathway. The Pacific Island territories rely on expensive cable or satellite communications for data, and no matter which service provider is used, will be competing for a finite amount of bandwidth. This makes secure communications difficult because VPN and secure data communications require a specific amount of dedicated bandwidth to maintain the connection.

In addition, during the response operations for Typhoon Soudelor, there were security concerns about subcontractors from foreign countries regarding their participation and access to investments in United States owned telecommunications infrastructure, (particularly those that provide Government Emergency Telecommunications Service [GETS]).

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Challenge 3: Coordinate Tribal involvement with the RECCWG.**

The Region IX RECCWG continues to invite and encourage the Tribal Nations within the Region to actively participate in the RECCWG. With more than 150 Tribal Nations in the Region, it is critical they participate in the RECCWG to have a better understanding of what emergency communications resources are available in the Region, where and how to acquire them, as well as any existing communications needs or requirements they might be able to fill. Obtaining representation from Tribal Nations would benefit the RECCWG's ability to meet communications needs during times of disaster; however, securing and maintaining consistent Tribal participation in the Region IX RECCWG remains a challenge. Many Tribal Nations have small populations or land areas and do not have full-time emergency managers or dedicated first response personnel. Many rely on local jurisdictions to provide emergency services and therefore, are not actively involved in the planning for disaster response. Participation of Tribal Nations in the Region IX RECCWG would ensure that all entities in the Region understand what communications resources are available to them and what resources will likely be needed during emergency responses.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

- **Challenge 4: Address the lack of training on Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) implementation, which is causing confusion and thus leading to inactive use of IPAWS in Region IX RECCWG member States and Territories.**

Emergency Alert System (EAS) and IPAWS provide emergency response organizations a new way to connect with communities and individuals; however, several territories within Region IX have expressed frustration with using IPAWS. Currently, not enough staff are trained to effectively use IPAWS to distribute emergency alerts in the Pacific Islands, and many do not understand its benefits. The Region IX RECCWG membership is exploring ways to organize and expand the use of these tools while also securing additional training for RECCWG members.

- **Challenge 5: Address the limited State, territorial, local, and Tribal understanding of various Federal, NGO, and private partners' communications capabilities and limits.**

Various organizations have communications capabilities and assets (e.g., the DHS/TSA HF radio network) that can assist during disasters but they are not thoroughly understood by local response organizations. Opportunities for these organizations to educate each other and interact with RECCWG members will be provided during teleconferences and face-to-face meetings during CY 2016. Furthermore, the RECCWG will continue efforts to ensure each State and Territory is represented and that Federal, Tribal, local, NGO, volunteer organizations active in disaster, and private sector emergency communications groups are invited to join the Region IX RECCWG. The diversity of membership will enhance the group's ability to evaluate communications structures and ensure all groups will be able to communicate at the appropriate levels.

REGION IX RECCWG CY 2016 GOALS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

- Goal 1. Design, implement, and maintain an emergency communications resource, personnel, and asset dashboard accessible to and maintained by all emergency communicators, and continually updated to ensure an accurate assessment of emergency communications resources available within the Region. The dashboard will be organized by Region, but national in scale, so that an accurate assessment is reflected for all participating Regions.
- Goal 2. Establish Interstate memoranda of understanding/memoranda of agreement to formalize the sharing of assets across State and Territorial lines during a disaster event.
- Goal 3. Increase congressional support and visibility of communications efforts in the region.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

- Goal 4. Conduct exercises and hold teleconferences and plenary meetings to enhance the collaborative relationships among emergency communicators likely to interoperate during a disaster.
- Goal 5. Hold regular trainings on various interoperability topics for emergency response personnel to ensure a consistent knowledge among response personnel during standard disaster operations.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

- Goal 6. Perform annual exercises to test deployable equipment to ensure regional communications units can be quickly and efficiently deployed to support an incident anywhere in FEMA Region IX, as well as the Nation.
- Goal 7. Develop regional emergency communications plans, procedures, and support mechanisms that are based on anticipated impacts and operational capabilities.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

REGION IX RECCWG CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The table below lists trainings, exercises, briefings, subcommittee activities, and other events hosted or promoted by the Region IX RECCWG.

Table 2. RECCWG Events

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/ nonprofit sector, etc.)	Description/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region IX CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
1/27/2015– 1/28/2015	Kontra I Pilgru FSE	Guam Homeland Security, the Guam National Guard’s 94th Civil Support Team along with local and Federal first responders	Scenarios included mock helicopter crash, active shooter incidents, suspicious vessel at Port Authority, and an explosion at District Court.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Test and evaluate the operational capability of the emergency management system 2. Test communications assets 3. Determine where additional training is needed 4. Ensure Navy and local hospitals communicate via amateur radio; was first use of amateur radio communications during annual FSEs. 	Goal 1	Statutory Duty 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual 2-day FSE between Guam and CNMI.
1/29/2015	Region IX RECCWG Monthly	Region IX Federal, State, Territorial, Tribal, and local	Tribal DEC Annex, Super Bowl communications response, Region IX	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Announce upcoming trainings/events. 	Goals 1 and 6	Statutory Duty 1 and Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed updates and challenges that are ongoing in the Region

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Description/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region IX CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
	Tele-conference	public safety agencies	Pacific and CONUS Plenaries, State updates, ongoing State exercises	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Update status of communications technology updates in the States and Territories. 3. Discuss any relevant communications issues. 			IX RECCWG member States and Territories.
2/1/2015	Arizona Super Bowl	Federal, State, Tribal, Territorial, and local public safety agencies; private companies	Maintain interoperable emergency communications during the Super Bowl XLIX	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Test communications assets to ensure all agencies are interoperable and communications functions as required. 	Goal 6	Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved successful communications operations during the Super Bowl. • Used best practices from previous Arizona Super Bowl, which ensured success. • Incurred no major hurdles. • Need to be aware of encryption and resolve it early in the planning process.
2/26/2015	Region IX RECCWG Monthly Tele-conference	Region IX Federal, State, Territorial, Tribal, and local public safety agencies	Gathering of Region IX RECCWG members to share information and resolve communications issues affecting Region IX.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Announce upcoming trainings/events. 2. Update status of communications technology updates in the 	Goals 1 and 6	Statutory Duty 1 and Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed Region IX DEC Annexes, Super Bowl communications response, Region IX Pacific and CONUS Plenaries, State and Territorial updates, and ongoing State and

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Description/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region IX CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
				States and Territories. 3. Discuss any relevant communications issues			Territorial exercises to ensure RECCWG members are aware of events and can participate if they desire.
3/20/2015	Bay Area Planning Brief	Federal, State, Tribal, and local public safety agencies	Briefing of exercises participants to prepare for San Francisco earthquake response	1. Prepare for an earthquake event in the San Francisco Bay area	Goal 7	Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed interoperability among public safety agencies and commercial network restoration.
4/2/2015–4/3/2015	Region IX Pacific RECCWG Plenary	Region IX Pacific RECCWG Membership	In-person meeting for RECCWG members to have a face-to-face discussion on various Region IX topics	1. Allow RECCWG members in the Pacific Islands to meet one another and exchange best practices, solutions, challenges, etc. of emergency communications.	Goal 1	Statutory Duty 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed the state of the RECCWG, specifically Pacific-focused challenges, such as commercial network restoration following a disaster.
4/11/2015–4/12/2015	Auxiliary Communications (AUXCOMM) Course, California	State and local public safety agencies in Region IX	Certify AUXCOMM personnel	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Practice establishing communications links with amateur radio capabilities. Certify participants as AUXCOMMs. 	Goals 1 and 4	Statutory Duty 1 and Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted course focused on radio communications and provided a broad knowledge of the fundamental principles of communication systems used by emergency management agencies.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Description/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region IX CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
5/2/2015–5/3/2015	AUXCOMM Course, California	State and local public safety agencies in Region IX	Certify AUXCOMM personnel	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Practice establishing communications links with amateur radio capabilities. To certify participants as AUXCOMMs. 	Goals 1 and 4	Statutory Duty 1 and Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted course focused on radio communications and provided a broad knowledge of the fundamental principles of communication systems used by emergency management agencies.
5/11/2015–5/14/2015	SOCAL 15 Exercise	Federal, State, Tribal, and local public safety agencies; private companies	2015 National Level Exercise that used the ShakeOut Scenario of a M7.8 earthquake on the Southern San Andreas Fault	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Foster interagency data collection and collaboration. Develop an information collection plan for earthquakes. 	Goals 1, 6, and 7	Statutory Duty 1 and Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Held a successful annual exercise focused on the response operations to a major earthquake in the Cascadia region of California.
5/30/2015	Makani Pahili Annual Exercise in Hawaii	Federal, State, Territorial, Tribal, and local public safety agencies; private companies	Annual Regional Hurricane Exercise with communications component	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Test regional interoperability. Test communications assets. Determine where additional training is needed. Discuss amateur radio operators' use of WebEOC. 	Goals 1, 4, and 6	Statutory Duty 1, Statutory Duty 2, and Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pacific region tested responders' skills in emergency communications and demonstrated where improvements need to occur.
6/16/2015–6/18/2015	Region IX CONUS RECCWG Plenary	Region IX Continental United States	In-person meeting to discuss the state of affairs of the RECCWG	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Receive State DEC Annexes Update. 	Goals 1, 4, and 6	Statutory Duty 1, Statutory Duty 2, and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed CONUS-focused challenges and how to improve

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Description/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region IX CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
		RECCWG Membership		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Receive State updates. 3. Discuss upcoming trainings and exercises 4. Pursue collaboration efforts with private sector 		Statutory Duty 3	operations with the Pacific Islands.
7/21/2015	Southwest Border Communications Working Group (SWBCWG) meeting— San Diego	Federal, State, Tribal, and local public safety agencies from border regions	Discussion of interoperable communications issues between the United States and Mexico and Canada	To promote regional communications interoperability with bordering nations and test frequency usage.	Goals 1 and 7	Statutory Duty 1 and Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held in-person discussion to determine best practices, challenges, and solutions to border communications.
7/24/2015	Shared Resources (SHARES) working group Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) webinar	Federal, State, Tribal, and local public safety communications agencies	Presentation on SHARES	Promote regional communications interoperability using HF radio systems.	Goal 4	Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided updates regarding the SHARES program.
8/27/2015	Region IX RECCWG Monthly	Region IX Federal, State, Tribal, and local public safety	Gathering of Region IX RECCWG members to share information and	1. Announce upcoming trainings/events.	Goals 1 and 5	Statutory Duty 1 and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed response and recovery efforts to Typhoon Soudelor.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Description/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region IX CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
	Tele-conference	communications agencies	resolve communications issues affecting Region IX.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Update status of communications technology. 3. Receive updates in the State. 4. Discuss any relevant communications issues. 		Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided HF radio updates. • Reported on State updates.
9/30/2015	Region IX RECCWG Monthly Tele-conference	Region IX Federal, State, Tribal, and local public safety communications agencies	Gathering of Region IX RECCWG members to share information and resolve communications issues affecting Region IX.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Announce upcoming trainings/events. 2. Update status of communications technology. 3. Receive updates in the State. 4. Discuss any relevant communications issues. 	Goals 1 and 6	Statutory Duty 1 Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed response and recovery efforts to Typhoon Soudelor. • Received State updates.
10/22/2015	Guam/CNMI FirstNet Consultation	Public Safety Representatives from CNMI, Guam, and FirstNet	Discussion on the progress of the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide an update on FirstNet in the Pacific. 2. Discuss next steps for Guam and CNMI. 	Goal 8	Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determined next steps for Guam and CNMI.
10/29/2015	Region IX RECCWG Monthly Tele-conference	Region IX Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies	Gathering of Region IX RECCWG members to share information and resolve	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Announce upcoming trainings/events. 	Goals 1 and 6	Statutory Duty 1 and Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed upcoming exercises, challenges to interoperability, new equipment procured,

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Description/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region IX CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
			communications issues affecting Region IX.	2. Update status of communications technology. 3. Receive updates in the State. 4. Discuss any relevant communications issues.			and Super Bowl 50 preparations.
10/30/2015	SHARES Working Group Meeting	Region IX Federal, State, Tribal, and local public safety agencies	Monthly meeting to discuss SHARES operations	Promote regional communications interoperability using HF radio systems.	Goal 4	Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided updates regarding the SHARES program.
11/8/2015	Army MARS Communications Exercise (COMEX)	Region IX Federal, State, Tribal, and local public safety agencies	Amateur radio exercise to test resources and operations following a solar electrical event	Address communications issues following a solar coronal mass ejection flare.	Goals 1 and 4	Statutory Duty 1 Statutory Duty 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tested amateur radio operations in a solar flare event.
11/12/2015	COML Weekly Meeting	Region IX Federal, State, Tribal, and local public safety agencies participating in Super Bowl communications operations	Weekly meeting of all COMLs involved in preparation for Super Bowl 50	Discuss logistics of communications unit before, during, and after Super Bowl 50	Goals 1 and 6	Statutory Duty 1 and Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed any communications issues discovered recently. • Worked to resolve all issues pertaining to communications at the Super Bowl.
11/17/2015	MARRITE	Region IX Federal, State, Tribal, and local public safety agencies	MARS exercise to test amateur radio operators capability to send information down to the local level	Exercise amateur radio operators' skills in handling net traffic.	Goals 1, 4, and 6	Statutory Duty 1, Statutory Duty 2, and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tested the transfer of messages between field units and Unified Command.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/ nonprofit sector, etc.)	Description/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region IX CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
			and up to Unified Command			Statutory Duty 3	
12/10/2015	Region IX RECCWG Monthly Tele-conference	Region IX Federal, State, Tribal, and local public safety agencies	Gathering of Region IX RECCWG members to share information and resolve communications issues affecting Region IX.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Announce upcoming trainings/events. 2. Update status of communications technology updates in the Region IX States. 3. Discuss any relevant communications issues. 	Goals 1 and 6	Statutory Duty 1 Statutory Duty 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed upcoming exercises, challenges to interoperability, State updates, and amateur radio operations. • Discussed Super Bowl 50 preparation.

CROSS-STATE AND CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The following list includes events in which multiple States or Regions worked together to coordinate strategies, collaborate on ideas, conduct training, or responded to real-world events together.

- CalOES participated in a SHARES exercise on March 25, 2015, with the Washington, DC, SHARES network. Communications efforts were successful between California and the District of Columbia; however, CalOES continues to have challenges speaking with counterparts in the Pacific Islands because of the Log Periodic antenna malfunction.
- Department of Defense and Air Force MARS (AFMARS) participated in the MARRITE exercise in which Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Network (SATERN) and Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) groups also participated.
- The California DEC Annex was recently updated and approved by the State. The updated Annex contains predictive analytics that identify critical infrastructure in the State and demonstrates the probability of emergency communications infrastructure being affected by different types of hazards. The Annex is designed to assist States in determining their likely emergency communications needs from FEMA following a major incident.
- CNMI continues to have issues communicating with Guam via HF radio. CNMI can talk to Guam and be heard, but Guam cannot hear the CNMI transmissions. A MERS detachment was sent to attempt to resolve issues; however, if MERS cannot determine the issue, Mr. Benoit will return to CNMI and troubleshoot the system and install an antenna that is tuned to the emergency frequency used for interisland communications.
- Kontra I Piligru FSE was held between Guam and CNMI to test and evaluate the operational capability of the emergency management system.

STATE CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The following list includes trainings, exercises, briefings, real-life response incidents, and other events sponsored or hosted by a particular State.

American Samoa

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- The Territory participated in an FSE with FEMA on September 15–17, 2015.

Real-life events

Other

- The Territory hosted FirstNet Consultation on August 13–14, 2015.
- The Territory hosted the following OEC Technical Assistance Workshops in 2015:
 - ENG-SHARE Shared Resource Analysis and Coordination
 - ENG-SITEID Site Identification and Sharing Agreement
 - TIC-WKSP Tactical Interoperability Communications Plan workshop

- SCIP-WKSP Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan workshop.

Arizona

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Arizona hosted an AUXCOMM training for the cities in the Phoenix Area Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) and Maricopa County; it was held in summer 2015.

Real-life events

- The State hosted and managed communications efforts during Super Bowl XLIX.
- Fire Management Assistance Declaration—Arizona Kearney River Fire (FM-5086), 6/17/2015
- Fire Management Assistance Declaration - Arizona Willow Fire (FM-5095), 8/09/2015.

Other

California

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- A SHARES HF exercise was conducted in Washington, DC, on June 17, 2015.
- The MARRITE was conducted November 17, 2015.
- The Bishop Radio Rodeo was held on July 15, 2015.
- The Capstone 2015 FSE was conducted in May 2015 to test southern California's earthquake response.
- AUXCOMM courses were conducted on April 11–12, 2015 and on May 2–3, 2015.
- COML/AUXCOMM Train-the-Trainer course was completed by two California instructors in July 2015.

Real-life events

- Fire Management Assistance Declaration—California North Fire (FM-5089), 7/17/2015
- Fire Management Assistance Declaration—California Wragg Fire (FM-5091), 7/23/2015
- Fire Management Assistance Declaration—California Rocky Fire (FM-5093), 8/2/2015
- Fire Management Assistance Declaration—California Butte Fire (FM-5111), 9/10/2015
- Fire Management Assistance Declaration—California Valley Fire (FM-5112), 9/13/2015
- Major Disaster Declaration—California Valley Fire and Butte Fire (DR-4240), 9/22/2015

Other

- The State hosted the following OEC Technical Assistance Workshops in 2015:
 - An AUXCOMM course was held in Thousand Oaks on April 11–12, 2015,
 - An AUXCOMM course was held in San Marcos on May 2–3, 2015,
 - The CAPSTONE Bay Area Planning Brief was held on March 27, 2015.

- The California Public Safety Broadband workshop was held on July 23, 2015.
- The 7th Annual California Mobile Command Center (MCC) Rally was held at the Sacramento Convention Center on April 9, 2015.
- The State hosted a FirstNet Consultation on July 23–25, 2015.

CNMI

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- The CNMI Department of Public Health hosted PREPARAO on February 3, 2015, a 2-day FSE that focused on response operations for pandemic influenza and tested the Strategic National Stockpile.
- FEMA Region IX hosted a category 5 tropical typhoon workshop in February 2015.
- On February 13, 2015, the Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (HSEM) conducted a communications exercise to test OHSEM mobile response unit vehicles.
- On April 16, 2015, HSEM supports the Commonwealth Ports Authority Triannual FSE by providing three mobile support unit vehicles for command and logistical communications support.

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Typhoon Soudelor (DR-4235), 8/05/2015
- On January 2 and 3, 2015, HSEM provided interoperable communications and logistical support for search and rescue operations at Forbidden Island, deploying the CNMI transportable conventional repeater (DVR) and supplying tactical channels for interoperability among all response agencies.
- On January 12, HSEM supported the CNMI Governor’s Inauguration Ceremony and Executive Ball by providing radio caches, tactical channel support, and a mobile support unit vehicle for the incident command post.
- On May 9, 2015, HSEM provided radio caches, tactical channels, and command vehicles for the detonation of unexploded ordnance at the Best Sunshine project site near Hafa Adai Shopping Center in Garapan.
- OHSEM activated the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) on May 15, 2015, in response to Typhoon Dolphine. HSEM also deployed 14 radio caches with multi-chargers to Rota, 5 radios with 1 single charger to Tinian, 7 radios with single chargers to the public school system shelters, and 12 radios to the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation to power restoration operations.
- In June, HSEM provided communications support to Guam and CNMI’s Explosive Response Team in Marpi in June 2015.
- In July, HSEM provided the short-term shelter a radio cache with single and tactical channels programmed into each radio for Typhoon Chan Hon response.

- July 9, 2015, HSEM provided communications support to Telecommunications Company IT&E when a break in an undersea fiber optics cable disconnected CNMI telephone, Internet, banking, and other communications with Guam and the rest of the world.
- In July 2015, a partial activation of the CNMI SEOC occurred to monitor Typhoon Nangka; HSEM provided radio caches to short-term shelters.

Other

- OEC offered the TRG-AUXCOMM Auxiliary Communications course in early September 2015.
- In July, FEMA representatives assisted CNMI with updating its DEC Annex.

Guam

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Guam conducted the Kontra I Piligru FSE on January 26, 2015.
- A combined FirstNet Consultation with CNMI was held on October 22, 2015.

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Guam Typhoon Dolphin (DR-4224), 6/5/2015

Other

- The following OEC Technical Assistance Workshops were conducted in 2015:
 - GOV-DOC Development of Governance Documentation
 - ENG-SYS Systems engineering on the PACTOR III HF modem support
 - TRG-AUXCOMM Auxiliary Communications Workshop was held August 4, 2015.
- Guam held a National Preparedness Month community outreach event focused on amateur radio operations on September 21, 2015.

Hawaii

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Hawaii hosted the Makani Pahili Annual Exercise on May 30, 2015

Real-life events

Other

- Hawaii FirstNet State Consultation was held on August 11–12, 2015.
- The following OEC Technical Assistance Workshops were held in 2015:
 - TRG-COMT Communications Technician Training courses were held in January, 2015 and July, 2015.

- SCIP-WKSP Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan workshop was held on September 25–26, 2015.

Nevada

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Nevada conducted a Tribal Communications Functional Exercise on June 17, 2015.

Real-life events

Other

Tribal

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- The ITCC Meeting was held at the end of April 2015.
- A Tribal Communications Functional Exercise was held on June 17, 2015.

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians Severe Storms, Flooding, and Mudslides (DR-4206), 1/27/2015

Other

REGION X

[This page intentionally left blank.]



FEMA

JUL 1 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR: Damon Penn
Assistant Administrator
Response Directorate

FROM: Kenneth D. Murphy 
Regional Administrator

SUBJECT: Regional Emergency Communication Coordination Working Group
(RECCWG) Annual Report

As required by Title XVIII, Section 1805 of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2007, each Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) must report annually to the Regional Administrator on the Region's status in building robust and sustainable interoperable voice and data emergency communications networks. The Annual Report provides each RECCWG an opportunity to share its progress, activities, and accomplishments against each of the statutory duties identified in Title XVIII.

The attached annual report, developed by the FEMA Region X RECCWG membership with FEMA support, is my Region's submission for the combined calendar year (CY) 2015 RECCWG Annual Report that will be distributed to the Director for the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce (DOC). The annual report describes the RECCWG's progress on each of the statutory duties as outlined below:

- Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP)
- Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements
- Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The Annual Report reflects the accomplishments that the Region X RECCWG membership achieved to meet the intent of the statute. As such, no modifications were made by the FEMA Regional Office without the expressed approval of the RECCWG membership. The final report as attached wholly represents the RECCWG membership's input and does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the Region.

Regional Emergency Communication Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) Annual Report

Page 2

I recognize the importance and value that the RECCWG has as a venue for Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies to improve emergency communications coordination and response capabilities within the Region. The accompanying Annual Report provides important insight on how emergency communications-related efforts are moving forward in this Whole of Community as it is embodied in the RECCWG membership.

Attachment: Region X summary for the CY 2015 RECCWG Annual Report

**REGION X
REGIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION WORKING GROUP
(RECCWG)**

CY 2015 SUMMARY AND LOOKING AHEAD

During CY 2015, Region X's RECCWG had a year that was rich in communications lessons learned and planning opportunities, having just completed one full-scale functional exercise and working on the planning phase for another. The RECCWG members worked on communications issues identified in the 2014 full-scale exercise "Alaska Shield" and the 2014 Oso (Washington) mudslide. The Region was subject to an inordinate number of wildfires, which provided valuable opportunities to exercise interoperable communications capabilities across a number of unique circumstances. Extensive preparation was done in 2015 for the upcoming Cascadia Rising exercise to be held in June 2016. Not only were planning meetings held to prepare the States for the cross-regional exercise, but the Region's States held communications drills and tabletop exercises (TTX) in preparation as well. Canadian agencies were working with the Region to participate; however, they had not committed by the end of CY 2015. The RECCWG achieved these successes despite CY 2015 being a year of significant changes for the group, including the retirement of the co-chair owing to a change in employment, retirement of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region X Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC), and several other retirements, position appointments, and overall changes in State positions that altered the RECCWG membership.

Heading into CY 2016, the Region X RECCWG has elected a new Co-Chair, and the membership is as strong and diverse as ever. The group seeks to share successes and best practices across the communications community, including all public safety disciplines and levels of government, among the Region's States, with other Regions, and also internationally with its Canadian partners. The RECCWG will research funding mechanisms to assist State and local governments in funding updates, maintenance, and expansion to land mobile radio (LMR) and data systems. The RECCWG will promote the funding of the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) positions at a full-time level and seek to enhance the group's knowledge base by expanding its membership to include all public safety disciplines and the members from Tribal Nations.

The upcoming Cascadia Rising functional exercise will identify communications shortfalls and provide lessons learned. The Region X RECCWG will work with industry, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), non-governmental organizations, and partner agencies to mitigate the identified shortfalls and develop and share best practices across the Region's communications landscape. The RECCWG will develop an executable regional emergency communications plan, procedures, and support mechanisms to meet the identified communications gaps. In addition, the diversification and enlargement of the membership will provide a platform to bring the Whole Community into disaster response.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

For additional information regarding these or other RECCWG activities, please contact FEMA Region X RECC, Laura Goudreau, Laura.Goudreau@fema.dhs.gov, or (425) 487-4706.

Table 1. RECCWG Membership Roster CY 2015

Name	Role or Agency
RECCWG Leadership	
Ken Murphy	RECCWG Chair, Region X Regional Administrator
Steve Noel* <small>*Mr. Noel has moved to another position. The RECCWG co-chair position is currently vacant.</small>	RECCWG Vice-Chair, Oregon Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)
Terry Knight	Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region X Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator (RECC)
Laura Goudreau	FEMA Region X RECC (present)
Alaska Representatives	
David Aragon	Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management
Bryan Fisher	Emergency Operations Center
Bill Galligan	Alaskan Command/Joint Task Force Alaska
Rich Leber	Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR)
Matt Leveque	Alaska State Troopers, SWIC
John Lynn	State of Alaska, Communications Engineer
Del Smith	ALMR
Idaho Representatives	
Robert Hugi	Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security (BHS)
Lorin Nielsen	Sheriff, Bannock County
Bill Shawver	BHS
Bob Wells	BHS (Acting SWIC)
Oregon Representatives	
Mark Bucholz	Salem Police Department
Kathy Condon	Portland Bureau of Emergency Communications
Karl Larson	City of Portland
Terry Pietras	Oregon Office of Emergency Management, Communications Manager
Davis Soloos	SWIC
Lisa Turley	Portland Bureau of Emergency Communications
Washington Representatives	
Roy Benavente	Washington Military Department—Emergency Management Department (EMD)
Bill King	Skagit County 911
Andy Leneweaver	Washington Military Department—EMD
Christopher Lombard	Seattle Fire
Kathy McCaughan	Port of Seattle

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Name	Role or Agency
Bill Peters	Washington Military Department—EMD
Bill Schrier	Washington State Office of the Chief Information Officer
Robert Schwent	Washington State Patrol
Monte Simpson	American Radio Relay League (ARRL)—Amateur Radio Emergency Services, Northwest Division Director
Philip South	IT Specialist Lead, Skagit 911
Mike Voss	Skagit 911, Telecommunications Manager
Tribal Representatives	
Randell Harris	Quinault Indian Nation, Information Technology Manager
Lynda Zambrano	National Tribal Emergency Management Council
Rick Zambrano	National Tribal Emergency Management Council
Federal Partners	
Lon Biasco	FEMA Region X Response Director
Tom Burgess *Retired September 2015	Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Protective Security Advisors (PSA) Alaska
Jonica Chalcraft	General Services Administration
Lee Champagne	Chief, FEMA Mobile Emergency Response Support Bothell
Vince Crawford	General Services Administration
Glenn Gorud	Telecommunications Manager, FEMA Mobile Emergency Response Support Bothell
Josh Keller	FEMA Region X GIS
Sharon Loper	Deputy RA, FEMA Region X
Jeff Lucas	RF Manager, FEMA MERS Bothell
Steve Noel	FirstNet (Previously SWIC for Oregon)
Eric Puype	DHS PSA Idaho
Charles Radbaugh	Federal Bureau of Investigation
Bruce Richter	DHS Office of Emergency Communications (OEC)
Brandon Smith	DHS OEC Technical Assistance Branch
Industry Partners	
Robert Pence	Alaska Communications Systems
Anthony Martwick	Verizon
Monte Simpson	ARRL

REGION X RECCWG CY 2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

- **Accomplishment 1: Tested survivability and sustainability of the Region and the Region's States' communications capabilities by exercising them during wildland fires.**

The Region X States supported communications for 25 wildland fires during CY 2015. Each of the Region's States had fires. The number of major fires by State is as follows:

- Alaska—2
- Idaho—4
- Oregon—6
- Washington—13.

Each of the wildland fires presented unique communications challenges that required the States, Tribal Nations, industry, and the Federal Government to work together on a multilevel response. Communications during wildfire operations bring unique problems associated with the remote locations, terrain, size of the incident, and the involvement of multiple jurisdictions. One fire extended into Canada and required close coordination with Canadian authorities to ensure interoperable communications, both with the American responders and command structure and with their Canadian counterparts.

- **Accomplishment 2: Actively pursued the involvement of the private sector and VOAD groups in the RECCWG's training, planning, and exercises.**

Planning and exercises being conducted as lead-ins to the 2016 Cascadia Rising full-scale exercise have brought private sector industry and VOAD groups together to prepare for the exercise. Regular meetings involving Federal, State, local, and Tribal public safety and emergency management have included industry providers of critical communications infrastructure that is depended on to support response communication and public warning and information. VOAD groups have also been included to ensure that the Whole Community approach is exercised specifically to support mass care, medical, and sheltering operations communications. Further work will be required in CY 2016 to enhance communications as identified in the upcoming Cascadia Rising after action report.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

- **Accomplishment 3: Collaborated with member States, Tribal Nations, and local governments to assess the availability and inform the members of common communications assets and capabilities that can be shared within the Region.**

The RECCWG held two collaborative meetings during CY 2015 to share communications successes, discuss issues, and coordinate communications planning efforts. The Region's

wildland fires also required multilevel cooperation, at times across State and international borders. Finally, the extensive preparations for Cascadia Rising 2016 offered an opportunity to bring the Region's emergency communicators together to coordinate a response to a widespread catastrophic event.

- **Accomplishment 4: Continued to actively participate in planning and preparation for the 2016 Cascadia Rising exercise to ensure primary, secondary, and tertiary communications capabilities from all levels of government, the Tribal Nations, and amateur radio are exercised. The RECCWG will review the after action report at a RECCWG plenary meeting and prepare an action plan to overcome shortfalls observed in communications.**

The Cascadia Rising exercise planning and (TTXs held in 2015 have included representatives from not only the States of Idaho, Washington, and Oregon, but industry partners as well. Although Alaska is not participating in Cascadia Rising, the RECCWG membership from the State has been helpful in preparing the remaining States by providing lessons learned and best practices developed from the 2014 Alaska Shield functional exercise. Sprint, Verizon, AT&T, and T-Mobile have participated and gained important insight into the role that wireless voice will play for public safety and the public. Critical infrastructure (electrical, data, and landline voice) providers that have significant roles in maintaining emergency management and public safety voice communications have participated in strategic talks and TTXs to prepare for the major exercise.

- **Accomplishment 5: Actively worked to complete a region-wide resource assessment and asset list for deployable communications.**

The RECCWG supports the classification of portable and deployable communications systems, technicians and caches. They have worked in partnership with the Office of Emergency Communications to catalog and type communications equipment for each State, with one State being completed each year. In 2015, deployable equipment in Oregon was catalogued, and in 2016, Washington will be coordinated. The RECCWG is the clearinghouse for sharing the inventories among the Region's States.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

- **Accomplishment 6: Evaluated the current membership to ensure representation was adequate to assess and maintain emergency communications survivability, sustainability, and interoperability within each State, across State and regional boundaries, and internationally.**

The retirement of the Co-Chair brings a change in leadership to the group as well as the changing positions within many of the States' communications leadership. Matthew Leveque (Alaska) has been elected as the Co-Chair. The previous Co-Chair, Steve Noel, has moved to FirstNet and represents it and the National Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) in the RECCWG.

During 2015, two Tribal members held membership in the RECCWG.

- **Accomplishment 7: Actively discussed and explored funding streams in an effort to provide funding for a full-time Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) position in each State.**

RECCWG members recognize the importance of a full-time SWIC position for each State. The SWIC coordinates interoperability efforts, works to ensure standards are met for LMR system to enable interoperability between systems and coordinates the licensing of the Federal Law Enforcement—Incident Response frequencies to State, local, and Tribal agencies. As grant funding for the SWIC position has decreased, States have either eliminated the SWIC as a full-time position or added additional duties that take the SWIC away from interoperability coordination. The Region X RECCWG has taken the position that SWIC duties should be full time for each of its States.

REGION X RECCWG CY 2016 CHALLENGES

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

- **Challenge 1: Develop and share white papers that highlight the growing need for grant funding to update emergency management and public safety communications systems. Information on potential, upcoming, and actual grant funding needs to be provided to members to allow them to explore funding options.**

Emergency management personnel and first responders have an increasing need to expand, maintain, and upgrade interoperable communications for disaster operations. Since 2003, Homeland Security Grants, which have been a major funding capability for maintaining and upgrading radio systems, have declined. This loss of funding is directly affecting the ability of local jurisdictions to acquire new radios and maintain existing systems. The RECCWG seeks to identify and share information on upcoming and available grant progress to assist agencies in obtaining sustainable funding streams for public safety interoperable communication.

- **Challenge 2: Obtain additional funding to support of full-time SWIC program in each State.**

In addition to using diminishing grant funds for maintaining radio systems, the 89-percent drop in grant funding has also affected the ability of the States to have a full-time SWIC. As the central coordination point for their State or territory, the SWICs play a critical role in each State's interoperability effort. The SWIC works with emergency response leaders across all levels of government to implement a statewide strategic vision for interoperability. The SWIC also oversees the daily operation of the State's interoperability efforts, coordinates interoperability and communication projects, maintains governance structures, and updates/maintains the Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP), which establishes a vision for interoperability in the State. As of the end of CY 2015, none of the Region X States has a full-time SWIC. All the SWICs have other positions within State government and only coordinate interoperability as a secondary function.

- **Challenge 3: Establish routine Regional communications exercises, drills, and tests to test interoperability, systems, and procedures.**

Regionally, there are no routinely scheduled communications exercises, drills, or tests for interoperability. Locally, jurisdictions work among themselves to coordinate such tests. However, the RECCWG identified the need for region-wide communication exercise opportunities to test between Federal, State, Tribal and local agencies in a variety of media. These exercises should take place quarterly if possible, but semi-annually at a minimum.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

➤ **Challenge 4: Increase RECCWG participation.**

As of the last RECCWG meeting in CY 2015, there were 67 members of the RECCWG with a breakdown of 26 Federal partners, 18 State partners, 4 Tribal partners, 14 local jurisdictional partners, and 5 industry partners. In addition to low number of members, most members did not actively participate in the RECCWG meetings. Identification of new potential members from multiple disciplines and levels of government, the private sector, VOAD groups, and Tribal nations is a Region X RECCWG priority for 2016.

➤ **Challenge 5: Increase operational detail into potential communications system failure during a catastrophic event.**

In June 2016, FEMA Region X will host the Cascadia Rising functional exercise with the focus on a full rupture of the Cascadia Subduction Zone (CSZ) fault line. The planning for the exercise has brought State, local, Tribal, Federal, nonprofit, and industry partners together to prepare for a CSZ event. Cascadia Rising will not fully exercise the communications systems and will have minimal actual communications play. Because the Region's States have not fully exercised their communications system in a catastrophic event, there is no clear understanding of how secondary and tertiary systems will meet the mission requirements for interoperable, tactical, and command communications. The Region's primary and backup communications all depend heavily on the commercial infrastructure. The lack of exercises simulating commercial outage creates an unclear vision of the outage's effects on communication capabilities.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

➤ **Challenge 6: Address insufficient development of communication plans for a CSZ event.**

As identified by the RECCWG members in preparation for the Cascadia Rising 2016 exercise, the existing CSZ plans do not fully cover the necessary communications planning. Sufficient frequency planning and management, incorporation of the National Interoperability Field Operation Guide law enforcement/incident response radio channels, knowledge of anticipated communication needs, analytics to predict damaged infrastructure, and communication pathways to share information between responders, emergency operations

centers (EOC), industry partners, and Federal agencies are all lacking. The Region also lacks a comprehensive plan and concept of operations to provide orderly restoration of these services.

➤ **Challenge 7: Develop a coordination and sharing mechanism for post-incident damage and operability assessments.**

Following a CSZ, or other major incident within the Region, one major concern is the ability of the government and industry to identify damage and restore services. Capabilities do exist for conducting flyovers, as well as tools to help determine what damage exists for communications infrastructure. However, there also needs to be a capability for sharing this information to facilitate restoration work and supplant downed communications systems.

➤ **Challenge 8: Increase insufficient Whole Community communications planning.**

In many of the Federal response plans, communications is focused on an agency or local tactical communication capabilities and does not fully encompass the whole community, including volunteer organizations, industry partners, and other Emergency Support Functions that either have communications capabilities or specified needs. Outreach and information sharing with Whole Community groups will enhance the community's preparedness level and provide the RECCWG with an understanding of the roles and capabilities of the Whole Community groups. Such awareness will allow emergency managers to use these resources to their potential.

REGION X RECCWG CY 2016 GOALS

Statutory Duty 1: Assess survivability, sustainability, and interoperability of local emergency communications systems to meet the goals of the NECP.

- Goal 1. Provide an outlet to research and share information with partners, including grant funding opportunities and other sustainable funding streams that could assist with the maintenance, upgrade, and/or expansion of communications systems within the Region.
- Goal 2. Support increased grant opportunities to assist the States' ability to fund a full-time SWIC. The activities of a full-time SWIC help ensure interoperable communications are coordinated and promoted across each State.

Statutory Duty 2: Ensure a process for the coordination of effective multijurisdictional, multi-agency emergency communications networks for use during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters through the expanded use of emergency management and public safety communications mutual aid agreements.

- Goal 3. Expand RECCWG membership by 25 percent overall and by 10 percent with Tribal representation and 10 percent with industry partners at a minimum.
- Goal 4. Gather, analyze, and share interoperable communication data from the Cascadia Rising 2016 exercise, including communications related gaps and failures. Develop and share best practices, policies and procedures, and mitigation strategies for overcoming the shortfalls. Encourage conducting a communications-centric

Region-wide exercise to provide data for the development of a comprehensive communications plan for the Region's States.

Statutory Duty 3: Coordinate the establishment of Federal, State, local, and Tribal support services and networks designed to address the immediate and critical human needs in responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters.

- Goal 5. Develop mechanisms to gather and share post-incident damage assessments among government and industry partners.
- Goal 6. Encourage Whole Community input during the development of regional communications plans to further identify capabilities and potential needs post incident.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

REGION X RECCWG CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The table below lists trainings, exercises, briefings, subcommittee activities, and other events hosted or promoted by the Region X RECCWG.

Table 2. RECCWG Events

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region X CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
1/13/2015	Region X RECCWG Meeting Oregon	State, Tribal, Federal, nonprofit, and private sector	Amateur radio, Training and Exercises, International Interoperability, State Reporting Federal Updates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State and Regional interoperable voice and data communications 2. Next Generation (NG) 9-1-1 progress and best practices 3. Commercial data switching— CenturyLink 4. Preparation for Cascadia Rising 2016 	Goals 3 and 4	Statutory Duty 2	<p>Shared of best practices and preparation for development of NG 9-1-1 centers.</p> <p>Discussed lessons learned from preparation for Cascadia Rising 2016.</p> <p>Held commercial voice and data carrier switching capability review and tour.</p>
6/23/2015	Region X Plenary Meeting Idaho	State, Tribal, Federal, nonprofit, and private sector	Amateur radio, Training and Exercises, International Interoperability, State Reporting, Federal Updates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State and Regional interoperable voice and data communications 2. FirstNet coordination and 	Goals 3 and 4	Statutory Duty 2	<p>Shared national communications best practices</p> <p>Developed coordination processes for fire channels</p>

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Date	Event Name	Participants (Federal agencies, States, private/nonprofit sector, etc.)	Descriptions/Topics	Event Objectives	Related Region X CY 2015 Goals	RECCWG Statutory Fulfillment	Outcomes
				mobile data capabilities			Discussed State preparations and the role of commercial communications providers in the Cascadia Rising 2016 exercise.

CROSS-STATE AND CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The following list includes events in which multiple States or Regions worked together to coordinate strategies, collaborate on ideas, conduct training, or responded to real-world events together.

- The Region X RECCWG is actively engaged with the Canada–US Communications Interoperability Working Group to ensure wireless interoperability across international borders.
- Idaho amateur radio operators have tied their repeater systems into those of Utah and Wyoming to provide interstate and cross-border communications.
- FEMA Region X sponsored the development of a cross-State working group for radio communications between state EOCs, including amateur radio capabilities.
- Whitcom, a dispatch center for most agencies in and near Whitman County, Washington, is now dispatching for the Nez Perce Tribe, covering parts of five Idaho counties.
- FEMA Region X conducted two communications outage drills to test the extended capability to communicate and coordinate Federal resources during periods of communications infrastructure outages in support of the member States, including a TTX in April and an actual outage drill in November.
- In June, FEMA Region X conducted a full continuity of operations drill, including the relocation of the Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) to Moses Lake, Washington. During the drill, radio communications with the Region and amateurs simulated contact with State partners.
- In May, FEMA Region X conducted the Cascadia Ready RRCC Exercise to practice coordination of resources supporting State and local jurisdictions for a Cascadia Subduction Zone event as a ramp-up drill for Cascadia Rising 2016.

STATE CY 2015 ACTIVITIES

The following list includes trainings, exercises, briefings, real-life response incidents, and other events sponsored or hosted by a particular State.

Alaska

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe Storm (DR-4244) Incident period 8/27/2015 to 8/27/2015.
- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe Storm (DR-4257) Incident period 12/12/2015 to 12/15/2015.
- Card Street Fire (FM-5085) Incident period 6/15/2015.
- Sockeye Fire (FM-5084) Incident period 6/15/20145.

Idaho

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe Winter Storms (DR-4252) Incident period 12/16/2015–12/27/2015.
- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe Storm and Straight-line Winds (DR-4246) Incident period 11/17/2015.
- Tepee Springs Fire (FM-5110) Incident period 8/29/2015.
- Municipal Fire (FM-5105) 8/14/2015.
- Clearwater Lawyer Branch Fire Complex (FM-5099) Incident period 8/10/2015.
- Cape Horn Fire (FM-5088) Incident period 7/5/2015.

Other

- Held 2015 Idaho Emergency Management Association (IEMA) Conference WebEOC Exercise. IEMA held its annual conference in Boise. One of the activities at the conference was an exercise designed to provide an opportunity for the emergency management community to practice using WebEOC. WebEOC, a web-based tool used by emergency managers in Idaho, is designed to facilitate event reporting, situational awareness, resource management, and essential documentation during emergency events. The scenario for the exercise started as the emergence of a novel strain of influenza, followed by a widespread severe winter storm causing heavy snow and blizzards, ice storms, and flooding throughout the State. The objectives of the exercise for local emergency managers included posting information on WebEOC, submitting requests for assistance to the Idaho Emergency Operations Center, and becoming familiar with the shelter boards used by the American Red Cross (ARC) during an emergency or disaster. Seventy-six people took part in the exercise, including representation from 33 counties and 2 tribes, 7 public health districts, 3 State agencies, the National Weather Service, and ARC. This was by far the largest WebEOC exercise in Idaho to date, and the first time that ARC and all public health districts participated with local jurisdictions in a WebEOC exercise. Many of the county and tribal emergency managers participated on portable computers while present at the conference, demonstrating the ability of WebEOC to be used anywhere Internet connectivity is available. This exercise demonstrated the ability to use WebEOC to provide immediate situational awareness across Idaho from multiple locations. Strengths and areas for improvement were identified during and after the exercise. One of the most significant outcomes was the identification of potential gaps in providing situational awareness among the emergency management community as a whole, thus providing an opportunity to address those areas for improvement before a real-world incident.
- Updated the Idaho governance structure to create a Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) having authority over 9-1-1, public safety answering points, NPSBN (FirstNet) and LMR.
- Appointed Todd Herrera as SWIC.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

Oregon

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- The Oregon Statewide Communications Committee held a meeting to discuss progress, and near-term and strategic goals in August 2015.
- SIEC held meetings on 2/18/2015, 5/12/2015, 8/11/2015, and 11/10/2015.
- Statewide Radio Conference was held 9/15/2015 featuring more than 80 participants from agencies and jurisdictions around the State.

Other

- Continued discussion of interoperability issues with a November 10, 2015, SIEC Meeting and joint Oregon SCIP Workshop.
- The Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) State Radio Project is replacing aging public safety communications systems statewide. Focused on repairs and modernization, the project is upgrading the existing radio systems for ODOT and the Oregon State Police to create an integrated statewide network and to allow for shared efficiencies with other users of the radio system.
- SEAPAC Amateur Radio Conference, June 5–7, 2015
- Appointed Dave Soolos as SWIC.

Washington

Trainings, exercises, etc.

- Developed the Communications Academy, a non-profit coalition of volunteer communications teams to provide a high-quality, professional-grade training opportunity for the various emergency communications teams around the Pacific Northwest.
- Held Evergreen Tremor National Guard Exercise.
- Washington National Guard Communications Exercise.
- Cascadia Rising 2016 Communications Workgroup Meetings (monthly).

Real-life events

- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe Windstorm (DR-4242) Incident period 8/29/2015 to 8/29/2015.
- Major Disaster Declaration—Wildfires and Mudslides (DR-4243) Incident period 8/9/2015 to 9/10/2015.
- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe Winter Storm, Straight-line Winds, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (DR-4249) Incident period 11/12/2015 to 11/21/2015.
- Major Disaster Declaration—Severe Winter Storm, Straight-line Winds, Flooding, Landslides, Mudslides, and a Tornado (DR-4253) Incident period 12/1/2015 to 12/14/2015.
- Emergency Declaration—Wildfires (EM-3372) Incident period 8/13/2015 to 9/10/2015.
- Horsethief Butte Fire (FM-5113) Incident period 9/13/2015.

2015 RECCWG Annual Report

- Goodell Fire (FM-5109) Incident period 8/19/2015.
- Renner Fire (FM-5108) Incident period 8/21/2015.
- Twisp River Fire (FM-5106) Incident period 8/19/2015.
- Okanogan County Fire Complex (FM-5104) Incident period 8/15/2015.
- Stevens County Fire Complex (FM-5103) Incident period 8/15/2015.
- Stickpin Fire (FM-5101) Incident period 8/14/2015.
- Chelan Fire Complex (FM-5100) Incident period 8/14/2015.
- Nine Mile Fire (FM-5098) Incident period 8/13/2015.
- Highway 8 Fire (FM-5094) Incident period 8/4/2015.
- Blue Creek Fire (FM-5090) Incident period 7/20/2015.
- Sleepy Hollow Fire (FM-5087) Incident period 6/28/2015.
- U.S. Open, June. Two hundred thirty Washington State Patrol (WSP) troopers helped with security using their new radios, which provided interoperability with the Pierce County Combined Communications Network, the Federal (Federal Bureau of Investigation) Integrated Wireless Network (IWN) and the Tacoma 800 megahertz network.
- Chinese President Xi's visit. For the first time, the multi-agency motorcade protection detail that managed the shutdown of Interstate 5 through three counties for the president's visit had full, uninterrupted communications owing to the WSP-Pierce County-Tacoma-King County-Snohomish County IWN interoperability.

Other

- Tactical Interoperable Communications Field Operations Guide kickoff meeting.