

**Stanislaus County Fire Authority  
Communications Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

**March 11, 2008**

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Members in attendance:

- Alan McFadon – SR911
  - Dale Skiles – Salida Fire
  - Lisa Byrne – SR911
  - Mike Botto – Oakdale City Fire
  - Kevin Wise – Oakdale City Fire
  - Chad Homme – Salida Fire
  - Mike Kraus – Modesto City Fire
  - Steve Hall – West Stanislaus Fire
  - Mark Lockwood – SR911
  - Lucian Thomas – SR911
  - Mike Parker – SR911
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I. Identify and Discuss Countywide Radio Problems and Solutions

- a. It was reported that background noise (i.e. pulsing) is being experienced in Patterson, Newman, and the Diablo Grande areas (Chief Hall).
  - i. Possibility was discussed of PL protection on pagers. Pagers hear all the traffic on a channel, not just specific traffic to Stanislaus County's PL frequency.
  - ii. It was identified that this problem is primarily on Command 2.
- b. It was reported that Oakdale City is not receiving all of the pages on their Minitor pagers.
  - i. Discussion took place on the possibility of Minitor pagers being out of tune could potentially cause issue.

- ii. It was discussed that the problems appear to have worsened at the time that the radio infrastructure equipment on Mt. Oso was replaced/updated.
  - c. Several agencies also reported that receive communications on Dispatch and Command channel can be scratchy at times.
  - d. It was noted that agencies are indicating that this is affecting the service that agencies are providing. In building penetration is scratchy in outlying areas of the county.
  - e. It was noted that radio volume seems low in various parts of the county.
  - f. Mark Lockwood discussed the fact that radios can “drift off” frequency and need to be retuned at that time.
  - g. Chief Kraus spoke about the fact that Modesto’s equipment was all recently tuned, and the performance improvements that MFD has experienced since making these changes.
- II. Discuss the Process for Submitting Trouble Tickets to SR-911 for Radio Problems
  - a. The existing “Communications Inquiry” form from SR-911 was distributed to the agencies.
  - b. It was suggested that the form be completed at the time of the incident, and that be submitted directly to SR-911 either via email to Mark Lockwood, Kurt Kline, or Chad Homme. Or these forms can be faxed to 209-552-3950.
  - c. It was identified that the form could be revised to be more specific to communications problems/difficulties.
  - d. Chad Homme is going to work with Mark Lockwood to come up with a new form to report communications-specific issue and email out as well as post on the web site.
- III. Update on the Interference Problems with Command 2 and Cal Fire, Amador-EI Dorado Unit
  - a. Mark Lockwood reported on the latest findings and updates.

- b. A follow up meeting to discuss the issues and discuss resolutions has been scheduled for Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>.

IV. Discuss the Various Paging Solutions that were presented at the International Wireless Communications Exposition

- a. Fliers were handout out on the Tribute 911 pager as well as the Swissphone 629, and the newly introduced Swissphone 729 model.
- b. Spoke about the Tribute pager being available now, and that it will scan eight channels. Operational bandwidth has been increased from 4.5 to 10 MHZ. This allows this pager to function with Stanislaus Counties existing infrastructure.
- c. Spoke about the Swissphone 629. This pager has no scanning capability, however, is a very well built unit and seems to be a great alternative for fire agencies.
- d. Spoke about the latest model, the Swissphone 729. This pager will be released in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2008. It allows 50 channels and full scanning capability. It has an 8.5MHZ operational bandwidth, that would work very well for Stanislaus County. It comes pre-programmed with the 5 national interop VHP channels.

V. Discuss the Fire Paging Tone Scheme and Future Pager Programming

- a. It was discussed that in the near future, all agencies should have paging tones reprogrammed that are below 500. Some are in the 340-380 range, and this can be a source of missing tones.
- b. Some equipment in the county is still Plectron, and will require replacement before these changes can take place.
- c. This would also be a good time to re-evaluate agencies tones and look at consolidating tones, as well as eliminating tones that are no longer used.
- d. It was noted that this will need to be a phased approach. Not all agencies will be able to be programmed at once.

VI. Fire Frequency Sharing Policies and Procedures Manual Update

- a. It was noted that a section will be added for the radio problem notification/reporting form.
- b. There will be one more meeting with all fire agencies to agree (by consensus) to approve the Fire Frequency Sharing Policies and Procedures Manual.
- c. The first new change has been an addition to the wording of dispatches. This informs personnel to eliminate unnecessary verbage in radio communication.
- d. Another section was added that for important information, either page it out, or repeat audible.
- e. Another section has been added that suggests that the dispatcher working the command channel also be the person that dispatches the calls that will be on his/her command channel (for example, Command 2 dispatcher dispatches Oakdale City call, Command 5 dispatcher dispatches Modesto City call).
- f. Dispatch has been having to solicit units on occasion to not transmit on the dispatch channel. Please be sure to review this with your personnel.

VII. Update on the Countywide Radio Study

- a. The report is on schedule to be completed by the vendor on March 15<sup>th</sup>.
- b. Preliminary thoughts are that the report will suggest a long term system that is 700-800mhz.
- c. Report will have to provide suggestions for a "phased installation."

VIII. Discussion on USA Mobility and Current Pager Coverage Issues

- a. Agencies were updated that most of the issues in Stanislaus County have been resolved.
- b. Oakdale Rural is still using 929.6125 pagers and needs to be switched to 931.6125.
- c. Oakdale Rural is scheduled to be replaced/reprogrammed on Friday, March 14<sup>th</sup>.

- d. Diablo Grande is experiencing trouble receiving pages. Doug and Mike Murphy have been notified.

IX. Announcements: Assistance to Firefighters Grant 2008 Open

- a. Remember, the closing date for 2008 AFG Grants is April 4<sup>th</sup>.
- b. Be sure your agency allows adequate time to prepare and submit!

X. Announcements: Next Meeting

- a. The next Communications Advisory Committee meeting will take place at the RFTC in the Library on April 8 at 1:00PM.