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A Note from OEC Leadership
By: OEC Director Ron Hewitt and Deputy Director Chris Essid

The last few months have been busy for all of us. As many of you know, DHS expanded OEC's mission to include the former National Communications System's (NCS) technical capabilities for national security and emergency preparedness (NS/EP) communications programs. Under this new structure, OEC will continue to meet its mission and fully support critical communications programs and objectives as directed by Title 18 of the Homeland Security Act, which directs us "to partner with emergency communications personnel and officials at all levels of government to improve emergency communications capabilities nationwide." The combination of OEC's strong multi-jurisdictional partnerships with NCS's technical capabilities enhances OEC's ability to address interoperable and operable communications.

With the merger complete, OEC has been working around the clock to provide the public safety community with the resources and support it needs to ensure reliable and effective emergency communications are in place to respond to natural and man-made disasters, as well as planning for new technologies. In recent months, we have seen firsthand that the support that OEC programs provide makes a difference.

In April, the bombing at the Boston Marathon took America by surprise and we watched in horror as the day's events unfolded. Despite our shock, Boston's emergency responders were prepared, and the comprehensive communications plan developed for the marathon was used in the coordinated response to the bombings. In 2010, OEC observed communications during the marathon as part of assessing National Emergency Communications Plan Goal 1 and offered recommendations on further integrating communications into the event's command and control functions. Boston responded by requesting OEC technical assistance (TA) to train Communications Unit Leaders (COMLs), used funding available through the Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program to train more Communications Unit Technicians (COMTs), and participated in Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP) Workshops to enhance strategic planning and incorporate advancements in technology into the plan. OEC also provided field support through the Region 1 Coordinator Rick Andreano. Rick supported the use of interoperability

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frequencies through Massachusetts' communications plans with Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Federal agencies to ensure coordinated interoperability amongst the responders coming into Boston, as well as maintain other interoperable means for responders not involved with the Marathon incident. OEC's Priority Services – Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) and Wireless Priority Service (WPS) – also supported emergency responders and government officials during the attacks by enhancing call completion and emergency communications continuity. Due in part to the planning support and targeted training that OEC provided, Boston was able to achieve interoperability among State and local responders, and integrate Federal law enforcement into the system as the response and investigation amplified.

Several weeks later, on May 20, 2013, emergency communications in Oklahoma were put to the test when an EF5 tornado touched down near Oklahoma City and caused catastrophic damage to the adjacent areas, specifically the City of Moore, OK. Again, planning support through a SCIP Workshop and targeted TA training supported our partners in Oklahoma in their response. This included various COMT and COML trainings to support technicians in operating the 700/800 MHz Oklahoma Wireless Information Network (OKWIN).

In addition to responding to the Nation's current emergency communications needs, OEC continues to dedicate efforts to support our partners in public safety as the development of the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) continues. In a separate article in this edition, you can read more about the broad support OEC is providing to our stakeholders and FirstNet in the build out of the network, as well as our accomplishments during the 2013 Public Safety Broadband Stakeholder Conference held in June.

Also in this edition, we introduce Hank Koebler, a veteran of the military and public safety, who is now supporting OEC's Technical Assistance program in training others to plan for and lead effective communications during all-hazards events. In another feature, we highlight one of OEC's new TA offerings to support dispatchers known as the Public Safety Communications Center Operations Workshop.

Finally, OEC's dedication to the public safety community was recently recognized by our partners at the National Public Safety Telecommunication's Council (NPSTC) and the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO). In May, the hard work of the

OEC team was recognized when NPSTC presented its *Chairman's Award* to Chris to acknowledge OEC's leadership in meeting the needs of public safety. In addition, OEC's Region 2 Coordinator Chris Tuttle, was nominated as the APCO Radio Frequency Technologist of the Year. Across the office, OEC is working to ensure that the needs of our partners in the public safety community are addressed and met. Thank you for all that you do, and please let us know if there is anything you need.

Respectfully,
Ron Hewitt and Chris Essid

OEC Support for the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network

OEC continues to play a critical role in the development of the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN), as well as providing support to the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) Board of Directors. This past June, OEC participated in the 2013 Public Safety Broadband Stakeholder Conference in Boulder, Colorado, hosted by the Public Safety Communications Research (PSCR) Program. With more than 450 participants in attendance, including key OEC stakeholders from industry and State and local governments, the conference focused on the FirstNet and the implementation of the NPSBN.

During the conference, Chief Jeff Johnson, who is overseeing FirstNet's outreach efforts, announced that the Emergency Communications Preparedness Center (ECPC) supported by OEC will coordinate the Federal user requirements for the network. In addition, representatives from OEC's TA Branch gave a presentation to the full conference on the various tools and workshops that are being used to provide NPSBN support to more than 40 States and territories. The FirstNet Board of Directors also recognized OEC TA Branch Chief Rich Reed for the ongoing broadband planning support being provided to FirstNet and State and local stakeholders. In addition, OEC's Policy Branch, led by Ryan Oremland, continues to provide ongoing support to acting Under Secretary Suzanne Spaulding, the Department's representative on the FirstNet Board of Directors.

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The conference also marked the first full in-person meeting of the FirstNet's Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC), which is supported by OEC's Partnerships Branch at the request of FirstNet. Chaired by Harlin McEwen, the PSAC is responsible for ensuring that the unique needs of public safety, as well as State and local views, are represented to FirstNet during the development and implementation of the NPSBN. In addition to the PSAC meeting, OEC Director Ron Hewitt and Deputy Director Chris Essid participated in meetings held by attending members of both SAFECOM and the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC).

As FirstNet and the PSAC continue to work to make the NPSBN a reality, OEC will continue to provide support, guidance and feedback through its programs and partnerships with key Federal, State, local and tribal stakeholders. As part of our technical assistance offerings, OEC is assisting states in broadband planning through workshops such as our Coverage Objectives Workshop and Site Survey Tool. Through these workshops, OEC is providing the expertise and resources States need to identify and address any gaps in broadband coverage and prepare for the deployment of the NPSBN. OEC has also been working to update its curriculum for the COMT and COML training courses to include broadband services and other emerging technologies.

Using a Career's Worth of Experience to Strengthen Emergency Communications

In a career that has spanned nearly five decades, Hank Koebler has served in the military and public safety through wars and peace time, disasters and calm. He knows communications from every angle and has brought his considerable experience and skill to the OEC Technical Assistance program, where he is training others to plan for and lead effective communications during all-hazard events.

Mr. Koebler began his career in the U.S. Navy and served for 30 years as a crypto-linguist for the Navy Security Group and head of the counter-narcotics intelligence group for the National Security Agency. After the Navy, Mr. Koebler joined the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) where he designed and documented the processes and procedures for the entire operation of the State

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Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). Using that experience, he drafted a comprehensive Emergency Communications Notifications and Warnings Plan that was selected as a first ever communications plan "best practice" by the Emergency Management Accreditation Program.

Over the years, Mr. Koebler worked in every one of the section chief jobs and many of the branch manager roles at the SEOC. In these roles, Mr. Koebler managed the State response during many disasters, including the devastating floods that hit Tennessee in 2010, and the floods and tornadoes that affected the State in 2011. He also served as the State Emergency Management Assistance Compact coordinator, and deployed to Mississippi for three weeks following Hurricane Katrina.

At his retirement from Tennessee Emergency Management Association (TEMA) on January 23, 2013, TEMA Director, Major General James Bassham (USAF Ret.) presented Mr. Koebler with a TEMA Shadowbox in recognition of his 18 years of outstanding service (see photo). Of Koebler, Tennessee's Statewide Interoperability Coordinator Louis Friedmann says: "If you want things done, you give it to Hank."

For the last several years, Mr. Koebler's invaluable experience and thorough understanding of communications and emergency response have served OEC's TA Program. As a subject matter expert, Mr. Koebler has taught COML, COMT, and Auxiliary Emergency Communicator (AUXCOMM) courses. His experience as both an active amateur radio operator and a state emergency communications professional has given him the perfect skill set to offer ham operators guidance on operating successfully within Emergency Operations Centers during storms and other events when their skills are so valuable. Practitioners like Mr. Koebler make TA a permanent part of OEC's mission to strengthen emergency communications. For more information on OEC's TA Program, visit: www.dhs.gov/office-emergency-communications-technical-assistance-program.

Focusing on the Dispatcher's Role in Successful Emergency Communications

Minutes after the first bomb detonated at the finish line of the Boston Marathon on April 15, recordings show a police dispatcher stepping in to command a chaotic situation: "Units stay off the air! Units stay off the air!" The dispatcher's order was crucial to ensuring radio transmissions were limited so supervisors could pass along essential information.

Jurisdictions nationwide have made strides in emergency communications planning, training, preparedness, and response. COMLs and COMTs have been trained in every State and are being used to manage communications in the field through disasters, storms, and large planned events. However, the staff at Public Safety Communications Centers (PSCC) or Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) must also manage incidents and implement interoperability solutions. The dispatcher who receives that first call is often the first communications leader—calling out resources, keeping communications running among disparate agencies, and assigning radio channels or talk groups.

The Public Safety Communications Center Operations Workshop (OP-PSCC) is a new offering by OEC's TA Program and seeks to deepen dispatchers' knowledge of the equipment, policies, planning, and procedures involved in effective incident response. The two-day workshop covers the National Incident Management System and Incident Command System (ICS), integrating PSCC operations into various types of incidents or events, coordination among PSCCs during multi-agency incidents, incident-based dispatch operations, and jurisdiction-specific information on resources and policies.

Another element of the training, and part of a larger national effort, is the need to plan ahead for emergency staffing in PSCCs. When a disaster strikes, jurisdictions immediately recognize the need to call in additional law enforcement, fire, and public safety officers. Field personnel often forget that employees within the communications center are also dealing with a flood of demands. Storms and major events inevitably bring a sustained spike in call volume. When the impact of the event lasts several days, telecommunicators will need support and relief.

The need for a system to provide operational support to communications centers and their personnel became especially clear during hurricanes Katrina and Rita, when operators were not only working multiple shifts without rest, but were also dealing with the storms' effects on their own homes, families, and communities.

In the aftermath of those devastating storms, the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) and the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) worked to create a formal system for States to provide mutual aid during disasters or for large planned events. The National Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce (TERT) is a comprehensive program that supports States as they train, select, and prepare teams of telecommunicators to deploy within a State or to other States. Currently, 15 States have TERT teams, and some of them have been deployed to support call centers during Hurricanes Ike, Isaac, and Sandy, among other events.

"It goes back to the adage of who gets called when 9-1-1 needs help?" says Sherry Decker, National Joint TERT Initiative co-chair for NENA.

The technical assistance course and the TERT initiative are two ways of ensuring communications center operators are given vital training, tools, and support.

For more information on the PSCC course, visit www.publicsafetytools.info.

For more information on the TERT initiative, visit the National Joint TERT Initiative at www.njti-tert.org.

FY2013 SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants Available

To support stakeholders, OEC has posted the *Fiscal Year 2013 SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants* to the SAFECOM website. The document can be found at: www.safecomprogram.gov/grant/Default.aspx.

The SAFECOM Guidance is developed in coordination with stakeholders and Federal agency partners, and provides grantees with

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the most up-to-date information on Federal policies and initiatives affecting emergency communications, and technical standards for improving interoperability. Many agencies strongly encourage grantees to consult and comply with the FY 2013 SAFECOM Guidance as a condition of grant funding.

Grantees and sub-grantees are strongly encouraged to read the FY 2013 SAFECOM Guidance before developing and submitting projects for funding under FY 2013 grants. Compliance with the FY 2013 SAFECOM Guidance will not only strengthen project proposals, but will also help to ensure that emergency communications projects are coordinated, compatible, and interoperable.

The *Emergency Communications Forum* (ECF), published by OEC is intended to engage and inform the emergency response community, policy makers, and Federal, State, local, and tribal officials about issues and events that directly impact everyday nationwide emergency communications.

Interested in contributing articles for future editions of the ECF? Please send any articles or content ideas to: OECExternalAffairs@hq.dhs.gov.

OEC Team on the Road
As part of our stakeholder engagement activities, OEC will be participating in the following events:

National Association of Counties (NACo) Annual Conference & Expo
2013 County Solutions and Marketplace
July 19-22, 2013
Fort Worth, TX

Northwest Tribal Emergency Management Council (NWTEMC) Tribal Emergency Preparedness Conference
NWTEMC Tribal Emergency Conference
August 13-15, 2013
Spokane, WA

Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) Annual Conference & Expo
APCO 2013 Annual Conference & Expo
August 18-21, 2013
Anaheim, CA

International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Conference & Expo
IACP Conference Site
October 19-23, 2013
Philadelphia, PA