



# MPSCS NEWSLETTER

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Training

Contact: Gloria Cline  
(517) 336-6126

- July 20-23 (Ionia)
- August 17-20 (Lansing)
- September 14-17 (Saginaw)

## QUICK STATS

- TOTAL RADIOS: **48,937**
- AMOUNT ADDED IN PAST TWO MONTHS: **496**

## FUN FACT

- In 1968, the three-digit 911 telephone code was chosen as an efficient way of summoning police aid.

## Consolidated Dispatch Centers: *The Public Safety Trend Around the Nation*

Discussions are being held across the country on the advantages and disadvantages of consolidated dispatch centers. Today's tough economic times, and the need for streamlined communication processes, are encouraging centers to make the move whenever possible.

Many of the benefits to dispatch consolidation are obvious: immense cost-savings increased opportunities for equipment maintenance and upgrades due to resource pooling, improved information sharing and direct communication between geographic areas, and the elimination of replica services.

The drawbacks are just as plentiful. Some of which include a lack of trust by many public safety personnel, the loss of important geographical knowledge, less accountability to agencies, and a potential lack of control by politicians.

In May 2008, the city of Port Huron liquidated its dispatching center and consolidated with the St. Clair County Central Dispatch.

The Central Dispatch was understaffed, handling over 239,000 calls a year with a staff of only 14 people. During the consolidation, county officials decided to merge the dispatchers from Port Huron's dispatch center

with those at Central Dispatch. The personnel count nearly doubled... yet so did the call-volume.

Due to the increase in size and resource needs, the Central Dispatch expanded its budget. It does receive payment from the city of Port Huron to help accommodate the changes, yet it spends much more than it brings in.



*In May 2008, the city of Port Huron consolidated with St. Clair County Central Dispatch.*

Cherie Bartram, Director of the St. Clair County Central Dispatch, admits that consolidation "was difficult... for the dispatchers and the first-responders."

The city's dispatchers were not familiar with the Central Dispatch's Computer-Aided-Dispatch (CAD) system, or with certain geographic areas within the county. To lessen the effects initially, the transferred employees handled calls for the same part of the county as before, and always had assistance from original Central dispatchers.

Relations between the Central Dispatch employees and first-responders also became strained. Having experienced issues two years

earlier when the dispatch center broke away from the St. Clair County Sheriff's Department, Bartram understood there would be trials this time, as well.

"Officers think its going to be a lot different," she said. "After consolidation, dispatchers can't do things for the officers like they could before...run LEIN entries for example. The tasks are put back on the agencies...the way it should be."

One of the most important things consolidating centers should do before making the change is to "do the groundwork," Bartram realized. "Construct policies and procedures that everyone understands and can live with. That way, there is less confusion for everyone. There cannot be different rules for different agencies. Some [agencies] will have to give up the perks they once enjoyed."

Overall, St. Clair County Central Dispatch is adjusting to the changes. "It may be busy," Bartram said, "but everyone knows what they're doing and what to expect."

If dispatch centers are looking to consolidate, they should follow some simple advice put forth from others who have made the move before them. Prepare as much as possible, and make sure everyone understands the potential benefits and drawbacks beforehand.

## Plainwell Tower Site Showcases Well-Spent Homeland Security Funds

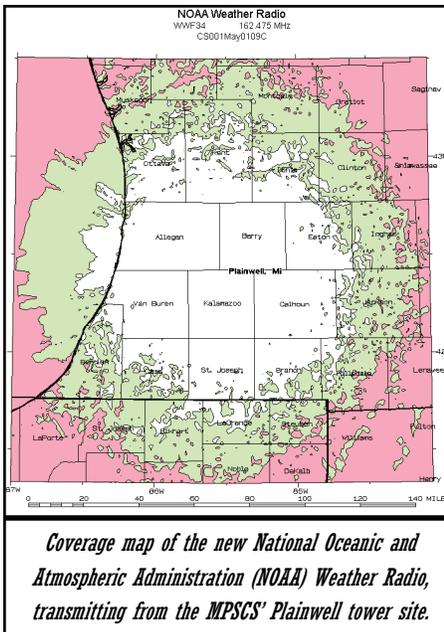
On May 19, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio transmitter went live at the MPSCS' Plainwell tower site. Transmitting emergency weather information within a 40-mile radius from the National Weather Service Forecast Office (NWSFO) in Grand Rapids, NOAA Weather Radio coverage in South and Southwest Lower Michigan has increased dramatically.

With funding provided through a grant from the 5<sup>th</sup> District Homeland Security Board, this \$49,000 project began one and one-half years ago. Jim Zoss, Director of the Battle Creek Office of Emergency Services and Homeland Security, coordinated the project and is very pleased with the outcome.

"This is a great service to the citizens of Southwestern Michigan. Everyone worked so hard on this project to make it a success," Zoss said at the project's completion event.

Placed at 420 feet, the 300-watt antenna has the same or better coverage than a 1000-watt antenna placed at a lower altitude. Carl Pigors, NWR RMS NOAA Weather Radio Regional Maintenance Specialist, said, "Antenna coverage is all about altitude. At about 30-40 miles from the site, the curve of the

earth starts to have an effect, regardless of the watts, so the higher we can place the antenna, the better the coverage."



Most MPSCS towers are between 400 and 500 feet tall. "We chose to place this antenna upon a State tower for two reasons. One, they do have the height that we'd like. And two, the shelters are very safe and secure.

They're well-maintained and monitored by the MPSCS," Pigors declared.

The NWS has three NOAA antennas co-located on MPSCS towers to date, and five more are in progress. Those eight, conjoined with an additional transmitter at a non-state tower, completes the NWS' enhancement of Michigan's NOAA Weather Radio coverage.

Buzz Leach, Co-Location Manager for the MPSCS and primary lead of the project on the State level, said, "This is a great example of a public safety service making use of a State-owned tower. The NWS will issue forecasts and warnings to Southwestern Michigan faster, and more accurately, because of this transmitter."

NOAA Weather Radios can transmit a variety of watches, warnings, and advisories from each site straight into the homes of area residents. Michigan's weather radios are equipped to transmit information about natural disasters and weather occurrences, technological incidents (e.g. chemical releases, train derailments, etc.), and terrorist attacks.

On the local, State, and Federal levels, hard work and swift thinking made this project a timely success. Michigan residents are now safer and more secure as the transmitter goes to work.

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## Having Problems with your Radio?

### When to Call the NCC and When to Call Your Local Service Provider or PSAP

Everyone with a radio attached to their hip, or mounted in their patrol car or fire truck, will inevitably have radio problems at some point. There are multiple reasons for these problems, and isolating certain factors can make pinpointing and resolving the issues smoother for all parties involved.

The Network Communications Center (NCC) receives an abundance of service calls daily; many of which should be directed to a user's local service provider. Understanding the size of the problem will establish whom to call.

If only one or two radios are experiencing a problem, the user should contact his or her local service provider. This may be a defect in the radio itself, or something that could be resolved by simple troubleshooting in relation to the make and model of the radio.

If experiencing major coverage problems, the user should contact their local Dispatch Center (PSAP). Those Centers should then contact the MSP Dispatch Centers, as the NCC will always alert the MSP Dispatch Centers should any large outages occur.

If many radios in a particular area are experiencing the same problem, the NCC is the point of contact. There are many tests the NCC can conduct, along with multiple reports to help isolate, troubleshoot, and fix the problem. If a tower issue is affecting radios, the NCC can typically remove the broken piece of equipment remotely, and open a service ticket to have the device repaired.

The NCC can help resolve any issue, 24x7. However, if everyone follows the proper procedures for contacting the NCC, the issues will be resolved more efficiently.

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#### Users should provide the following information when reporting a radio problem to the NCC:

- The geographic location of the problem.
- How often the problem is occurring. (i.e. constantly vs. intermittently)
- The duration of the problem.
- If the geographic area had good coverage previously.
- If recent maintenance had been done on the radio or radios.
- Whether the problem occurs during peak hours, or increases during peak hours.
- If the problem includes the dispatch consoles, or just the individual mobiles and portables.
- Any other relevant information the user feels may assist in targeting the problem.

## Michigan's Strategic Technology Reserve PSIC Funding Prepares the State for Emergencies

The Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) Grant Program issued over \$25 million to Michigan on September 30, 2007, with hopes of improving public safety communications and coordination during natural and man-made disasters.

The grant money was divided into eight distinct sectors, as recommended by the State Administrative Agency (SAA). Three of these projects were state-wide, three were regional, and two were planning and management oriented.

One program requirement for each recipient of the PSIC award was that it must establish a Strategic Technology Reserve (STR), equipped with advanced communications technology and capable of immediate deployment in the event of a major emergency or disaster.

Michigan had a total of \$2,459,034 to establish its STR; \$1,939,294 provided from the PSIC program, while the State supplied \$519,740 of its own as a Non-Federal match amount. In a summary issued by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Commerce on September 30, 2008, an overview of Michigan's STR is as follows:

*The Michigan Public Safety Communications System (MPSCS) is largely dependent on fixed infrastructure which may not always provide optimal coverage and capacity. Therefore, the State will purchase a Site-on-Wheels (SOW), three networked portable dispatch Internet Protocol (IP) consoles, and a Rapid Response Communications Vehicle (RRCV). Designed to address capacity issues and service interruptions, the RRCV will consist of satellite phones, data messaging devices, and wireless Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services. This investment satisfies the program requirement to develop and implement an STR that is pre-positioned, deployable, and able to reestablish communications when critical communications equipment is damaged or destroyed. MPSCS staff*

*Michigan's ability to react properly to acts of terrorism or natural disasters has significantly improved due to this equipment.*

*will receive training from the vendor on operating and maintenance of the SOW and IP consoles.*

The MPSCS was issued \$1.5 million to purchase the SOW, an additional tower trailer (without site equipment) and three IP Consoles. The SOW is composed of an extendable tower with communication antennas, both mounted on a trailer. Inside the trailer is a self-contained power source, along with all necessary equipment for a six-channel P25 trunking site.

Motorola's MOTOBRIDGE and MOTOMESH will also be incorporated into the SOW, allowing for superior interoperability. The MOTOBRIDGE permits gateway connectivity to radio systems that are not P25 compliant, and to systems operating on different frequency bands that utilize UTAC and VTAC channels.

The three IP consoles are Motorola's MCC7500 version. These consoles will be integrated into the MPSCS' Zone 1 infrastructure via new microwave paths at the installation point. Two of these consoles will remain in hot standby mode: one at the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), and the other at the MPSCS' Network Communications Center (NCC). The third will be connected to the SOW.

The STR will serve as a temporary fix to damaged infrastructure and provide enhanced coverage and/or additional capacity when necessary. Michigan's ability to react properly to acts of terrorism or natural disasters has significantly improved due to this equipment.

The RRCV was purchased by the Michigan's Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

All of the STR's infrastructure, purchased by the MPSCS, has been received and is undergoing installation and testing. The project group from Motorola and the MPSCS anticipate completion of the project in early August.

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## REBANDING UPDATE: Plan and Budget Proposal Nearing Completion

The 800 MHz Rebanding process has moved into high gear. The following activities and reports have been developed during the past two months as part of comprehensive Rebanding strategy and implementation plan:

- The process for how antenna sites will be reconfigured was agreed upon and incorporated into the Preliminary Site Reconfiguration Report.
- The Testing and Comparability Report for base lining the Fixed Network Equipment (Antennas and Network Equipment at the sites) before and after Rebanding was developed.
- A possible solution was identified to ensure that Mutual Aid (MA) channels are continuously available throughout the Rebanding process, including the actual migration to the new frequencies. MPSCS has proposed installing Back-to-Back Repeater Antennas that will enable both the old and new MA frequencies to be utilized throughout the Rebanding effort by all public safety radios (both MPSCS and non-MPSCS licensees).
- MPSCS is working with non-MPSCS licensees that are part of the Interoperable Network (Grosse Pointe Farms, Downriver Mutual Aid, Westland, Lapeer County, Ann Arbor, Warren and the Toledo/Lucas County area of Ohio) to ensure that both theirs as well as the MPSCS' new frequencies are installed in a coordinated fashion. The objective is to ensure that no loss of connectivity or interoperability occurs during Rebanding.
- Motorola developed an automated procedure to reband the roughly 48,000 Motorola radios on the MPSCS; the procedure has been approved.
- Initial Rebanding discussions with EF Johnson and Kenwood representatives were held.

The planning process is scheduled for completion by the end of October. The Frequency Rebanding Plan Proposal and Budget will be submitted to Sprint/Nextel and the FCC's Transition Authority (TA) in November 2009.

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*Updates will appear in each future issue of this Newsletter. However, detailed project information, upcoming events, and up-to-date progress reports can be found at the Rebanding Project's website:  
<http://www.rccpm.com/MI800MHz/default.aspx>*



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Comments or suggestions are appreciated!

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### Usage Statistics

2009	Total Calls	PTTs	PTT Change From 2008
MAY	4,633,296	8,436,036	+436,036
JUNE	4,665,213	8,448,596	+98,107

## System/User ID Capacity Notification

The MPSCS has reached the certified number of allowable System/User IDs on its current operating platform, Motorola's Astro 6.9. The MPSCS' Director, Brad Stoddard, issued an official letter on June 2, 2009 to all users of the state system that further explains this topic.

The letter is available on the MPSCS' website:

<http://www.michigan.gov/mpscs> .

As of now, the MPSCS requests that before an agency purchases new radios for use on the system, all options are discussed with MPSCS officials.

After MPSCS officials receive word from Motorola on the platform's actual capacity, further information will be available, either on the MPSCS' website or in a formal letter to all current users.

Updates will also appear in upcoming issues of this Newsletter.

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### Want additional information?

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## Keep Your Eyes Open for UPCOMING ISSUES of the MPSCS Newsletter:

- Point-To-Point Technology
- New Data Security Technology
- Grade-Of-Service
- MPSCS Performance Standards
- Improving Coverage with IGN's
- Project 25 Phase 2 Standards
- MPSCS Engineering Overview
- MPSCS Staff Bio
- System/User ID Updates
- Rebanding Updates
- ...and more!