



MPSCS NEWSLETTER

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Training

Contact: Chris Moore
(517) 336-6126

- May 17-20
Train the Trainer
(Saginaw)
(Gaylord)
(Marshall)
- June 8,9
Operator Training
(Livonia)

QUICK STATS

- TOTAL RADIOS:
51,947
- AMOUNT OF CHANGE IN PAST THREE MONTHS:
+ 1,339

FUN FACT

- In 1960, AT&T created the first commercial modem, the Dataphone.

Emergency Alerts: History and usage of this life-saving feature

The morning of December 18, 2009, a female deputy in Monroe County was responding to a call when her patrol car began to swerve on slick, icy roads in the southernmost part of the county. The car crashed into a ditch, trapping the injured deputy in her vehicle.

She pressed the emergency button on her radio, which alerted the Monroe County Central Dispatch of a problem. Dispatchers called the deputy's radio, but all calls went unanswered.

Using the automatic vehicle locator, or AVL, dispatchers were able to identify her location and send help. An off-duty trooper also arrived on the scene and used the deputy's radio to provide updates on the deputy's condition until help arrived.

Had the emergency alert not been activated, dispatchers would not have known that the deputy had been in a serious accident and needed immediate help.

Emergency alerts are a very important function of the MPSCS' system. Many Michigan law enforcement agencies currently take advantage of this feature, which has been part of the MPSCS since the system was built.

How does it work?

The dispatch center that monitors each subscriber agency's calls must have the necessary equipment and license to monitor emergency alerts.

The dispatching center

needs a Radio Control Manager (RCM). The RCM enables constant monitoring of every radio's emergency alerts. Motorola provides RCM licenses for dispatch centers with this equipment.

Dispatch centers must also have connectivity from the RCM into the MPSCS. The connectivity can be costly to lease, or purchase and install, which is gener-

monitors alerts for three counties -Chippewa, Mackinac, and Luce.

The NCC, located in Lansing at the MPSCS' headquarters, does monitor emergency alerts, but function solely as a back-up to the primary monitoring agency.

When to use emergency alerts

Michigan State Police Sgt. Andy Stoner is an MPSCS training sergeant for the Southwest area of the State. Teaching MPSCS users how and when to use emergency alerts is an important part of his training routine.

"Use it (the emergency alert) in any officer safety situation," Stoner said. For specific instructions on how and when to use the emergency alert feature, contact your dispatch center or commanding officers.

If signaling an emergency alert on accident, or in a non-emergency situation, users should clear it by pressing and holding down the emergency button until a steady tone is heard. Then, users should notify the monitoring dispatch center of the accidental activation, who will then notify the NCC.

Emergency alerts are not monitored as effectively on secondary talkgroups, such as in car-to-car, admin, or transport talkgroups. When possible, users should signal the alert on a primary dispatch talkgroup.

Many Michigan law enforcement agencies currently take advantage of this feature that has been part of the MPSCS since the system was built.

ally why roughly 50% of all MPSCS users do not have the capability to utilize the emergency alert function.

Some counties across the state have developed work-arounds for this situation. The Mason-Oceana County Central Dispatch monitor's Newaygo County's emergency alerts in addition to their own, making the function possible for users in all three counties combined. The Chippewa County Central Dispatch, located in the eastern portion of Michigan's Upper peninsula, also



For additional training and Information, see the 2010 Training Information document on the MPSCS' website at www.michigan.gov/mpscs.

Upgrade Information

In March, the MPSCS received approval to upgrade the system from its current operating platform, Motorola's Astro 6.9, to the 7.11 release.

The current platform's user ID capacity is 64,000, which the MPSCS reached last summer. The new platform will allow for 128,000 unique user IDs, hence doubling the MPSCS' current capacity.

Current plans estimate that the new IDs will be available the first quarter of 2011. In the meantime, the MPSCS will keep users updated via newsletters and

New Department

MPSCS have moved from the Department of Information Technology to a new department, the Department of Technology, Management, and Budget.

This is due to Governor Granholm's effort to consolidate state government.

NCC Utilizes New User Notification System: Codespear

This is an incoming smart message. This codespear message is from the Network Communications Center (NCC) of the M.P.S.C.S.

Codespear will be used by the NCC to notify radio users of system outages, system problems or other necessary communications. Please remain on the line to acknowledge this message after the end of message statement. Thank you.

The above test message was sent out in February, 2010 to test the notification system by the NCC. The NCC will utilize Codespear to notify radio users on the MPSCS that there is or will be a system outage, service disruption or a major failure. It is programmed to call the 24 hour phone number at your PSAP or dispatch center.

This is the same notification system

used by the Emergency Management Division of MSP to notify users of emergency situations across the state. If you are an EMD person, then you are familiar with the codespear message.

It will be beneficial to the NCC in letting our users know of the status of the MPSCS. This automatic notification will let the NCC technicians focus on the system problem and not have to make a number of phone calls to the affected dispatch centers.

If you have any questions you can contact the NCC at 517-333-5050.

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You Asked, We Answered

Frequently Asked Radio Questions

1. How are user fees determined?

As discussed in the May 2009 newsletter, MPSCS user fees are determined currently based on the number of talkgroups programmed into each radio, *not* on the amount of PTT's. However, there is a restriction on the amount of private call time allowed per fee level.

For more information, see Policy 1.1.1 *MPSCS Fee Structure* on the MPSCS' website under the 'Polices' navigation.

2. Who do I need to talk to to get my radio template changed?

Dan Robinson is the contact person for template change requests and questions. He can be reached at 517-336-6621 or RobinsonD4 michigan.gov

3. How often can I change my radio template, and what fees are involved?

The MPSCS permits one free template re-write a year per agency, so there is no cost to change the master templates and create serial-specific files for each radio for the free re-write.

If an agency wants an additional re-write within the one-year period, the MPSCS charges \$200 per template. Agencies need to be aware that often times numerous versions of a template are needed (due to variations in radio models and types). There is no restric-

tion as to the frequency of template re-writes.

However, the MPSCS radio technicians will *not* physically install these templates into the radios. Each agency must contact their local radio vendors to physically handle and reprogram the individual radios. The local radio vendors may or may not charge a fee for this.

4. How does scanning work on my radio?

When a user's radio, Radio A, is affiliated to a tower, Tower A, is tuned to a talkgroup, TG1, and wants to listen in on three additional talkgroups, TG2, TG3, and TG4, he enables his radio's scan function to scan for talkgroups TG2, TG3, and TG4.

The *only* way that Radio A's scan function will pick up *any* of the additional talkgroups' transmissions is if another radio tuned to TG2, TG3, or TG4 is affiliated with Tower A. If the radio moves out of the area and affiliates with a different tower, the other radio will lose the ability to listen to the additional talkgroups.

This is why users should *not* rely on the scan function to always pick up transmissions from talkgroups other than the ones your radio is tuned to. All wide-area trunked systems with multiple talkgroups operate this way with re-

gards to the scan function.

Many users never experience problems with the scan function as they are located in large urban areas where there are many radios affiliated with many towers and many different talkgroups. Also, because simulcast subsystems treat all towers in the subsystem as one, a radio affiliated to *any* of the towers will be able to scan for talkgroups being utilized by other radios affiliated with any of the other towers in the sub-system.

There is one small work-around for the scan issue, but will only guarantee the ability to listen to two talkgroups at one time. While in a vehicle equipped with a mobile radio, users can tune the mobile radios to one talkgroup and their portable radios to another.

5. Is there a way to make a "contact list" for those I want to private call often?

The MPSCS does not maintain "contact lists" for user agencies; however, agencies can have such lists installed by their local vendors.

The MPSCS discourages private calls on a regular basis as they consume valuable system resources.

It is recommended that private calls be limited to supervisory radios to limit the amount of resources being used.

Rebanding Update: Negotiations underway with Sprint/Nextel

MPSCS has completed most of the planning for the Rebanding Project. Final proposals and budgets are finished for some of the project's activities, with the rest nearing completion.

The implementation of the Rebanding Project will take place sequentially in three phases:

1. Installation of a Back-to-Back (B2B) Mutual Aid TX/RX Antenna System
2. Rebanding Subscriber's mobile and portable radio, as well as such peripherals as Consoles, BDAs and VRS equipment with the new frequencies
3. Rebanding or reconfiguring the Fixed Network Equipment (FNE) on the antenna towers and in the shelter buildings at the base of the towers with the installation of the new frequencies.

While there will be some overlap as one phase nears completion and the next phase gears up for implementation, each of these phases must be completed before the next can begin. Other-

wise, gaps in coverage, increases in response times and related problems could develop. The project's number one goal is to maintain and continue existing levels of coverage and service. The plans that are being finalized are designed to ensure that the goal is achieved.

MPSCS submitted its B2B Installation Plan and Budget (Phase 1 above) to Sprint/Nextel on Jan 11. Negotiations are now under way with Sprint to arrive at a mutually agreeable plan and funding for it.

Michigan's Mutual Aid system utilizes 176 tower sites that will be modified (Rebanded) so that they transmit and receive the five existing, as well as the five new, Mutual Aid frequencies. Installing both sets of frequencies will ensure that all MPSCS subscriber's radios will be able to use the Mutual Aid channels throughout the period regardless if they have been Rebanded or not, since both MA frequencies will be accessible.

Upon completion of both Phases 2 and 3 above, the old MA frequencies will then be abandoned since all radios will have been Rebanded by that time with the new MA frequencies.

Utilizing this phased approach will enable Rebanding to take place in a transparent and seamless operation. The plan's objectives were developed to ensure, to the extent possible, that no loss of coverage, access, or timeliness of response would occur for the user of the system while this 3-stage process is taking place.

MPSCS will continue to keep you informed of the progress of this plan and looks forward to your participation as we move ahead.

MPSCS submitted its B2B Installation Plan and Budget to Sprint/Nextel on January 11 ... negotiations are now underway.

I-Tac Channels: Useful for interoperable, local communications

I-Tac channels are meant for emergency events where interoperability is needed among and between local, statewide, and national agencies.

These are analog channels that permit direct communication between radios instead of signal transmission from radios to towers and back to radios, the way that the 800 MHz trunked system functions.

Of the five tactical channels available to MPSCS users, there is one I-Call channel designated for calling the dispatch center, and an I-Call talk-around (TA) channel designated for local use.

There are four I-Tac channels, each with a talk-around channel. The talk around channels are designed for local on-scene communications. These channels are for short-term short-distance communications, as the analog signal can usually reach a maximum distance of one-quarter to one-half mile.

Fire agencies, like those in Livingston County, often use the talk around channels during fire fighting operations when experiencing poor in-

Fire agencies ... often use the talk around channels during fire fighting operations when experiencing poor in-building coverage.

building coverage. Because of the talk around channels, the firefighter inside a building can speak directly to the officer/firefighter outside the building despite poor system reception.

"We (Livingston county public safety officials) discovered the benefits of using the (talk-around) channels while doing coverage testing in 2002," Livingston County 911 Director Don Arbic said. "We did many default set-ups to test the system ... in schools for example. We would go as far into buildings as we could on the 800 MHz channels then switch to the direct channels. This was our solution to the (coverage) problem."

The talk-around channels also help alleviate voice clarity problems some firefighters have experienced in noisy environments, as the transmitted signal is the original sound from the radio.

In Memory

NCC Technician Glenn Schell passed away January 31st after nearly ten years of commitment to the MPSCS. He is deeply missed by his family, friends, and co-workers.



Welcome!

Tom Thompson is now the MPSCS' Client Service manager. After previously working for the MPSCS until 2006, Thompson worked for EFJohnson, and later as a Hosting Center Facilities Manager for the State of Michigan.

Stanley Wekwert is a new MPSCS steeplejack working out of the Gaylord shop. Before his January hiring, Wekwert worked for the Mackinaw Bridge Authority for five years.

Robert (Bob) Olson is a new MPSCS radio technician working out of the St. Ignace shop. Bob did communications service with Motorola for 20 years before joining the MPSCS.

Welcome to the MPSCS!



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Comments or suggestions are appreciated!

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Usage Statistics

2010	Total Calls	PTTs	PTT Change From 2009
Jan	4,423,330	7,914,070	+ 335,716
Feb	4,116,900	7,379,464	+ 448,429

Want additional information?

Email: mpscs@michigan.gov

For topics of interest related to articles in this volume contact:

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Rebanding
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I-Tac Channels
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Keep Your Eyes Open for UPCOMING ISSUES of the *MPSCS Newsletter*.

- Fire Paging Workarounds
- System Issues
- VHF/800 MHz Cross-Patch
- MIOC Relocation
- Frequency Naming Changes
- Event Talkgroups
- Staff Bios
- System/User ID Updates
- Rebanding Updates
- ...and more!