

**Texas**

**Regional Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

**Template**

# Regional Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

This document replaces the previous Standard Operating Procedures Section in Volume II of the Regional Interoperability Chanel Plan (RICP) and is available for use by all emergency responders (local, state, tribal, federal, non-governmental.)

The Regional Standard Operating Procedures (RSOPs) contain information and the steps to follow to ensure effective communications when responding to an emergency event. Documented regional SOPs alone will not enable interoperable communications among emergency responders. Good planning, training, and exercises are vital to transform policy from the SOPs into real world understanding of how to establish and maintain communications during an incident or disaster.

Compliance with The Texas Interoperability Channel Plan (TSICP) is also a key element of enabling interoperability in Texas as it describes the conditions and guidelines for use of state-licensed interoperability or mutual-aid radio channels.

#### Both the RSOP, TSICP, and Training and Exercise templates and guidelines are available on the Texas Statewide Interoperability Coordinator’s (SWIC) home page, or at the SWIC Document Library link found in the left column on the home page. <https://www.dps.texas.gov/LawEnforcementSupport/communications/interop/index.htm>

## Regional Integrated SOPs

The following SOPs are used for [**insert region name]** and should be integrated into training and exercises for the region and neighboring regions, where applicable.

### Introduction and Lead Agency

To remedy the inability to communicate among disciplines, [**insert region name**]public safety agencies have worked cooperatively to develop regional interoperability solutions. These solutions utilize Federal Communication Commission (FCC) designated and system-specific public safety interoperability radio channels (as well as communications vehicles and other mobile equipment) and establish procedures for their use. The interoperability radio channels (and communications vehicles) are available as needed throughout the region. They are intended to provide both communications operability and interoperability at any multi-agency incident anywhere in the region.

In accordance with the [Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP)](file:///E%3A%5CAll%5CSCIP%5CRSOP%5CStatewide%20Communications%20Interoperability%20Plan%20%28SCIP%29%3A%20%20http%3A%5Cwww.txdps.state.tx.us%5CLawEnforcementSupport%5Ccommunications%5Cinterop%5Cdocuments%5CtexasSCIP.pdf), "Each Regional SOP will name a lead agency that will be responsible for the management, maintenance, and upgrade of the SOP. The SOP’s will be revised when major changes are needed due to enhancements or other changes in the communications environment."

*The lead agency for [****insert region(s)****] SOP is [****lead agency name****].*

### Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this RSOP is to define the authority, roles, and procedures for first responders to use when operating on the [**insert** **region name**] interoperability channels and/or activating and using mobile assets. This RSOP also recognizes a number of interoperable communications alternatives to the [**insert region name**] interoperability channels, which can provide back-up and redundant communication capabilities during critical incidents. This RSOP provides general operational guidelines for using calling and tactical interoperability channels; it is up to individual agencies to develop specific operational and technical SOP's for their internal purposes.

The scope of this RSOP includes all public safety agencies -- police, fire, and EMS -- and public service agencies in [**insert** **region name**]. These agencies will work cooperatively to follow this RSOP during any multi-agency response. Agencies outside this region wishing to participate may enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with [**insert** **region name**] for use of the channels and mobile assets, thereby agreeing to operate according to the procedures outlined in this document.

### Definitions, Channel Naming, and Radio Programming Requirements

**Definitions**

**7CALL50 –** AnFCC-designated public safety700 MHz frequency used for “calling” or hailing.

**Intended use:** This channel is used for in-bound first responders from outside the region to call Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP's) in the event they need resources or are responding in a mutual aid situation. A call is made to dispatch to determine which tactical frequency the incident is utilizing. The PSAP may use this frequency to direct responding units to an incident location or to advise which tactical channel to use.

**7TAC# –** An FCC-designated public safety700 MHz frequency used for tactical purposes.

**Intended use:** Example: The law enforcement agency operating at a hostage situation involving more than one agency can utilize any one of the many 7TAC frequencies for communication. The Incident Commander may choose to move Hostage Negotiations to 7TAC51 to lessen radio traffic on a main sector channel. (There are also discipline-specific tactical channels in the 700 MHz band, e.g. 7LAW, 7FIRE, 7MED. See the Texas Statewide Interoperability Channel Plan (TSICP) for the complete list.)

**8CALL90 –** AnFCC-designated public safety800 MHz frequency used for “calling” or hailing. (See intended use under "7CALL50.")

**8TAC# –** AnFCC-designated public safety800 MHz frequency used for tactical purposes. (See intended use under "7TAC#." See the TSICP for the complete list of 8TAC channels.)

**Incident Communications Center (ICC)** – May be a mobile unit or fixed facility.

**Incident Command System (ICS)** – The combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating, within a common organizational structure, with the responsibility for the management of assigned resources to effectively accomplish stated objectives pertaining to an incident.

**MHz (Megahertz) –** Radio frequency designator: One million cycles per second.

**National Incident Management System (NIMS) –** NIMS provides a consistent nationwide template to enable all government, private-sector, and non-governmental organizations to work together during domestic incidents. ICS is the national incident management model.

**Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP)** – A regional center where 9-1-1 calls are answered. PSAPS often include public safety radio dispatch centers capable of communications on all FCC-designated public safety calling channels (VCALL10, UCALL40, 7CALL50, and 8CALL90. There is no FCC-designated interoperability calling channel for 900 MHz) to provide a lifeline capability throughout the state.

**UHF (Ultra High Frequency) –** 450 MHz to 512 MHz for public safety, no longer widely used in the State of Texas.

**UCALL40 –** An FCC-designated public safetyUHF frequency for “calling” or hailing.

**UTAC# –** An FCC-designated public safetyUHF frequency used for tactical purposes.

**VHF (Very High Frequency)** – 150 MHz to 174 MHz for public safety; used by many public safety agencies throughout Texas, including the Texas Department of Public Safety.

**VCALL10 –** An FCC-designated narrowbandVHF frequency used for “calling” or hailing.

**VTAC# –** An FCC-designated narrowbandVHF frequency used for tactical purposes.

See the TSICP for complete listing and intended uses.

**Channel Naming**

The Texas nomenclature for FCC-designated calling and tactical channels, as detailed in the TSICP, follows channel-naming guidelines from the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council. However, because these names have changed over time, some agencies' radios may display different names for the same channels, as follows:

* **8CALL90/D** (851.0125 MHz)may show in some radios as "8CAL90/D," "8CALL/D," "I--CALL/D," or "USA-1/D."
* **8TAC91/D** (851.5125 MHz) may show in some radios as "8TAC-1/D," "ITAC-1/D," or "USA-2/D."
* **8TAC92/D** (852.0125 MHz) may show in some radios as "8TAC-2/D," "ITAC-2/D," or "USA-3/D."
* **8TAC93/D** (852.5125 MHz) may show in some radios as "8TAC-3/D," "ITAC-3/D," or "USA-4/D."
* **8TAC94/D** (853.0125 MHz) may show in some radios as "8TAC-4/D," "ITAC-4/D," or "USA-5/D."

(The letter “D” is used to signify "DIRECT," also known as talk-around or car-to-car, channels. These interoperable channels are available in all radios in both repeated and direct modes. **In DIRECT or "D" mode, the channels operate radio-to-radio only and do not go through system repeaters or dispatch consoles.**)

In [**insert region name**], system-specific interoperability channels/talkgroups are detailed in the [**insert region**]RICP. Compliance with these naming conventions is required for all radios that access the regional system.

**Radio Programming Requirements**

Per the TSICP, all public safety agencies in the State of Texas will program their first responder radios with the appropriate in-band interoperability calling and tactical channels.

Refer to the most current version of the TSICP (located on the DPS website) for programming. For VHF and 700MHz bands, note that there are recommended minimal 16-channel groups that can be found in the TSICP and the Texas Communications Field Operations Guide (TXCFOG.)

There are no FCC-designated interoperability channels in the 900 MHz frequency band. However, in [**insert region**], certain 900 MHz channels are designated by Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) for interoperability. These channels are available in 900 MHz public safety radios and to other public safety agencies via console patching. See the [**insert region RICP**] for details.

### Communications Structure

**State/ Regional/Local Specific Information**

#### Incident Types

Incidents may be typed in order to make decisions about resource requirements. Incident types are based on the following five levels of complexity. (Source: U.S. Fire Administration)

**Type 5**

* The incident can be handled with one or two single resources with up to six personnel.
* Command and General Staff positions (other than the Incident Commander) are not activated.
* No written Incident Action Plan (IAP) is required.
* The incident is contained within the first operational period and often within an hour to a few hours after resources arrive on scene.
* Examples include a vehicle fire, an injured person, or a police traffic stop.

**Type 4**

* Command staff and general staff functions are activated only if needed.
* Several resources are required to mitigate the incident.
* The incident is usually limited to one operational period in the control phase.
* The agency administrator may have briefings, and ensure the complexity analysis and delegation of authority are updated.
* No written Incident Action Plan (IAP) is required but a documented operational briefing will be completed for all incoming resources.
* The role of the agency administrator includes operational plans including objectives and priorities.
* Examples include a major commitment of local resources and day-to-day mutual aid.

**Type 3**

* When capabilities exceed initial attack, the appropriate ICS positions should be added to match the complexity of the incident.
* Some or all of the Command and General Staff positions may be activated, as well as Division/Group Supervisor and/or Unit Leader level positions.
* A Type 3 Incident Management Team (IMT) or incident command organization manages initial action incidents with a significant number of resources, an extended attack incident until containment/control is achieved, or an expanding incident until transition to a Type 1 or 2 team.
* The incident may extend into multiple operational periods.
* A written IAP may be required for each operational period.

**Type 2**

* This type of incident extends beyond the capabilities for local control and is expected to go into multiple operational periods. A Type 2 incident may require the response of resources out of area, including regional, state, and/or national resources, to effectively manage the operations, command, and general staffing.
* All of the Command and General Staff positions are filled.
* A written IAP is required for each operational period.
* Many of the functional units are needed and staffed.
* Operations personnel normally do not exceed 200 per operational period and total incident personnel do not exceed 500 (guidelines only).
* The agency administrator is responsible for the incident complexity analysis, agency administrator briefings, and the written delegation of authority.

**Type 1**

* This type of incident is the most complex, requiring national resources to safely and effectively manage and operate.
* All of the Command and General Staff positions are activated.
* Operations personnel often exceed 500 per operational period and total personnel will usually exceed 1,000.
* Branches may need to be established.
* The agency administrator will have briefings, and ensure that the complexity analysis and delegation of authority are updated.
* Use of resource advisors at the incident base is recommended.
* There is a high impact on the local jurisdiction, requiring additional staff for office administrative and support functions.

A depiction of command levels and roles within agencies clarifies the relationship among users. It is imperative that all agencies use the Incident Command System (ICS) as well as the NIMS to manage all incidents. As recommended in ICS and NIMS, *PLAIN LANGUAGE* shall be used when communicating on the calling and tactical channels***. It is the responsibility of the Incident Commander to determine when to use the national calling and tactical channels, however, the following criteria must be met as a minimum:***

* Multi-agency/multi-jurisdictional disasters or emergencies involving danger to life and property.
* Special event control activities, generally of a pre-planned nature and generally involving joint participation of two or more public safety agencies
* Drills, exercises and training sessions.

### Regional Policies and Procedures

General interoperable communications rules of use, policies, and procedures that apply across all participating systems, mutual aid channels and gateways are detailed below.

#### Regional - Shared System Rules of Use

* **National Incident Management System** – Use an Incident Command System (ICS) compliant with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) when using any regional interoperability resource.
* **Plain Language** – All interoperable communications during multi-agency, multi-discipline incidents will be in plain language. Avoid using radio codes, acronyms, and abbreviations as they may cause confusion between agencies. Ensure that all verbal requests for assistance or backup specify the reason for the request.
* **Unit Identification** – Announce your home agency prior to announcing your unit identifier during interoperable communication situations. (i.e., [Examples: ***"Bryan EMS 1605, this is Tyler Fire 2102"* or *"Incident Command, this is DPS 505”***])
* **Encryption** – All encrypted radios users must operate in a “clear” mode when a gateway is used, unless otherwise arranged in advance. **Never assume encryption carries across the gateway.**
* **Monitoring** – The Incident Commander, or their designee, will ensure that each activated interoperability channel is monitored consistently while in use.

#### Regional Shared System Policies and Procedures

Use the following procedures when requesting, using, or discontinuing the use of shared communication systems:

* When an individual responder needs to interoperate with other agencies on their same shared system, the responder will notify their dispatch center. The dispatcher can then identify and designate an appropriate channel. Note that in cases where no dispatcher intervention is required, responders still notify dispatch that they are switching to a shared channel to maintain responder safety.
* Notify dispatch when the interoperability channels/talkgroups are no longer required and announce the return to normal operations channels.
* For extended incidents:
* The lead agency dispatcher notifies the COML/designee that interoperability channels/talkgroups are in use.
* Each agency’s dispatch center tells additional en route responders what interoperability channels are in use for the incident.
* The Incident Commander determines when the interoperability channels are no longer required and notifies the appropriate dispatch center.

#### Regional Shared System Problem ID and Resolution

During an incident, Agencies using a shared system will report any problems with that system directly to the [**insert** **region name**] COML/designee. The [**insert** **region name**] COML/designee ensures effective resolution to reported shared system problems.

### NIMS and Multi-Agency Coordination

Multi-Agency Coordination System (MACS) have been implemented in some COG regions, which are compliant with NIMS, and the National Response Plan.

Per the [Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP)](#_Statewide_Communications_Interopera), [**insert** **region name**] has adopted and implemented NIMS procedures for emergency response. Use of an ICS, compliant with the National Incident Management System, is required for use of any regional interoperability resource. (Also see SCIP Section 5.5 NIMS Compliance.)

* The first responder on scene becomes the local Incident Commander (IC) and remains IC until he/she is replaced by an IC with more experience and expertise or the incident operational period exceeds 12 hours.
* If needed, the IC may call for additional resources from other disciplines within the jurisdiction and/or other jurisdictions including adjacent cities or county.
* If needed, the IC may contact the city and/or county Emergency Manager to open the Emergency Operations Center; at this point the Emergency Manager will notify the Chief Elected Official and the DPS District Coordinator (DC). The DC is the emergency management link between the state government and city and county governments and non-governmental organizations.
* If additional and/or special resources are still needed the Emergency Manager makes a formal request to the Disaster District Chair (DDC) for state resources.
* The DDC may contact the State Operations Center (SOC) for additional state-level action if necessary.

The figure below shows a graphic assessment of how MACS is implemented in Texas. More details on MACS and Incident Command implementation is provided in Section 2 of the TSICP.

****

Figure 1. Channels for Requesting Operational Assistance

### Use of Interoperability Channels

**Incident Command System (ICS)**

Each agency will use ICS as an operational guide at large-scale incidents. Radio communications procedures on the interoperability channels must be consistent with NIMS.

**Appropriate Use of Interoperability Channels**

Use of interoperability channels shall be limited to their designated purpose of coordination between emergency response agencies, dispatchers, and resources in the field. Such coordination may occur during en route travel, events or incidents.

The interoperability channels are not to be used for routine dispatch operations but may be used by dispatchers for communications with personnel in the field, in accordance with local and regional policies and procedures. Tactical interoperability channels may be used for day-to-day emergency operations in the absence of higher priority events.

Use of interoperability channels shall be prioritized as follows:

* Emergency or urgent operation involving imminent danger to life or property.
* Disaster or extreme emergency operations requiring extensive interoperability and inter-agency communications.
* Special event, generally of a pre-planned nature.
* Joint training exercises.
* Inter-agency and en route communications in accordance with local and regional policies and procedures.
* Day-to-day tactical communications on scene.

**Radio Channel Activation Authority**

Use of interoperability channels may be requested whenever an agency determines the need to communicate directly with other agency representatives who have access to the channel. Each agency has the right to use the channels as necessary for public safety and availability of necessary resources. It is important to note that use of the channels is not intended to replace the establishment of an on-scene unified command post among responding agencies. Interoperability channels are intended to assist communications until a command post can be established or to speak with an agency representative not yet on the scene.

**Establishing and Transferring Lead Dispatch Radio Command Control**

The IC, identifying the need for interoperable communications, will contact his/her respective dispatch/radio communications center (i.e., mayor’s office, police/fire/EMS dispatch center). The IC will request that specific agencies switch their radios to the designated interoperability channel(s). The dispatch/radio communications center of the agency that initiates use of the interoperability channel(s) has the responsibility to notify all other required agencies by radio or telephone in accordance with the procedures outlined in this SOP. The dispatch/radio communications center will become the lead dispatch/radio communications center.

The designation of the lead dispatch/radio communications center may be changed as the lead agency requires or requests. If the IC is transferred, the new IC will notify his/her respective dispatch/radio communications center by radio or telephone that he or she is the new IC for the agency. That dispatch/radio communications center will then become the lead dispatch/radio communications center of the designated interoperability channel(s).

**Notification Process for Establishing Command Control**

Each agency participating in incident will follow its own internal notification procedures for establishing command and control. The mayor, county judge, police chief, fire chief, EMS chief, and emergency management agency director or their designees are authorized to activate the interoperability channel(s).

**Discontinuation of Interoperability Channel Use**

At such a time that communication on the interoperability channel(s) is no longer required, the IC of the lead agency will notify his/her respective dispatch/radio communications center to discontinue active use of the channel(s), and normal monitoring will resume. The lead dispatch/radio communication center will notify all participating dispatch/radio communications centers that the interoperability channel(s) is no longer in use.

### Interoperability Channel Monitoring and Operation

**Interoperability Calling Channel Monitoring**

Each Public Safety Dispatch/Communications Center will monitor Interoperability Channels as defined in the TSICP on a daily basis.

**Interoperability Channel Operation**

Per the [TSICP](#_Texas_Statewide_Interoperability), all FCC-designated interoperability repeaters are maintained in "receive mode" for monitoring purposes. Repeaters are disabled for transmit operation until needed for two-way communication. This prevents interference with repeaters in adjacent jurisdictions that operate on the same interoperability frequencies.

### Regional Shared Channel(s)

Note: In addition to the requirements of the TSICP, each region will monitor interoperability channels listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Region-wide Shared Channel(s)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Channel Name** | **Primary Use** | **Agencies Supported** | **Frequency/Band** |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

### Communications Alternatives

Several alternatives may have been identified to ensure interoperable communications remain available among all agencies if the interoperability channel is not available. A sample list of alternatives is provided below. It may be helpful to describe capabilities and guide readers to appendices if instruction is required.

* + **Telephone Conference Bridges** - Telephone conference bridges permit direct communication among a number of users, assuming they have access to telephone services.
	+ **Cellular/Push-to-Talk Commercial Wireless Technology -** Currently, most agencies use cellular/push-to-talk commercial wireless communications technology. In the event that the intra-jurisdictional interoperability channel is malfunctioning, this technology may be used to disseminate critical information to department heads and/or designees.
	+ **Computerized Emergency Notification System -** The computerized emergency notification system will be programmed to contact specific individuals and agencies, depending on the nature of the incident. This includes appropriate media outlets, which could be used to inform the general public of situation updates, specific instructions, and/or emergency locations, if warranted.
	+ **Internet/E-mail -** A lesson learned from September 11, 2001 was the power of the Internet and e-mail. While conventional communications outlets (i.e., wireless phones and land lines) were either damaged or overwhelmed, the Internet was up and provided an invaluable service to the general public. In the same way, the city’s online EOC can be used as a means to pass information to various agencies that are involved in the event.
	+ **Satellite Phones -** Satellite phones are assigned to the agency heads for intercommunications if conventional phone lines become impaired. A cache of satellite phones will be stored at [ ]; and assigned for use by the EMA director and/or operations officer. The satellite phone numbers are listed in **Appendix C**.
	+ **Dispatch/Radio Communications Center to Dispatch/Radio Communications Center Messaging**

Table 2. Customized *section for agency/region/entity*.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

*Example: Police, fire, and EMS share a common computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system capable of providing text messaging between users.*

* + **Amateur Radio Resources -** Amateur Radio Operators (also known as ‘ham radio operators’) provide a valuable service in time of need. They are licensed by the Federal Communications Commission and are permitted to operate on a broad range of frequencies dedicated for their use. The ‘ham radio’ operators typically provide their communications equipment (fixed and portable) to serve EOC, shelters, etc. when requested. Frequently the licensed amateurs voluntarily associate with groups or teams such as: Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES), Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES), Military Auxiliary Radio System (MARS).
1. Table 3. Amateur Radio Teams POC

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name/Location** | **Email** | **Phone** | **Organization** | **Call-sign** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

* + **Runner System -** In the unlikely event that the intra-jurisdictional interoperability channel and redundant back-up systems are all unavailable, the police department will arrange for a “runner system” in which designated personnel respond to the residence of department heads and other key agency representatives to make notifications and provide transportation as necessary.

### Regional Gateways

“Gateway” systems interconnect channels of disparate systems (whether on different frequency bands or radio operating modes), allowing first responders using their existing radios and channels to be interconnected with the channels of other users outside of their agency. Dispatch consoles that are able to create patches will also be captured as gateways. Gateways for regional use or listed on the following table along with POC information.

Table 4. Region-wide Gateway Systems

| **Gateway Name** | **Owning Agency** | **Agency 7 x 24 Phone Number** |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

#### Regional Gateway Communications Request

The COML and/or Incident Commander must be aware that activating multiple gateways to support an incident can result in mutual interference. Interference issues are best resolved by the technical support team assigned to the gateways.

The agency requesting the use of a fixed or mobile gateway device for incident/event communications support should document and provide the following information to the owning gateway agency POC, on request:

* Requesting agency
* On-scene agencies requiring interoperability
* Incident/event type (e.g., wild land fire, etc.)
* Equipment required
* Expected duration of event
* Location required/access information
* Incident POC
* User/requestor and/or servicing dispatch contact phone number
* Additional support services requested (e.g., gateway operator, generator, etc.)

#### Regional Fixed Gateway Activation

Once the owning agency grants authorization to use their fixed gateway, the region-wide procedures for establishing communications connectivity are:

* Select a channel or talkgroup on the home system for use in the gateway patch.
* Verify the system-wide availability of required resources (coordinate among control point dispatchers).
* Provide radio call sign/designator information to connected agencies as needed.
* Assign the requested unit/agency to that channel or talkgroup.
* Connect the agency to the appropriate talkgroup.
* Announce to users that interoperability is activated.
* Identify users on the interoperability channel using their agency name and unit identifier through *a* *roll call*.
* Monitor the interoperability channel to address requests.

#### Regional Mobile Gateway Deployment Procedure

Upon receiving a request for the deployment of a mobile gateway, the owning agency dispatcher should follow these deployment procedures:

* Contact the on-call mobile gateway operator/technician responsible for mobile gateway deployment.
* Dispatch the mobile gateway operator to the incident scene.
* Inform the requesting agency that the mobile gateway is en route and provide an estimated time of arrival (ETA), if available.

The mobile gateway operator should follow these deployment procedures:

* Provide dispatch with an ETA at the incident and method of communications while en route (e.g., designated radio channel, cell number).
* Retrieve the dedicated unit and mobile gateway from its storage location and deliver it to the incident scene
* Report to the Incident Commander or Check-in on arrival.
* Once on-scene, establish patches via the mobile gateway in accordance with the Gateway Activation Procedures listed above.

#### Regional Gateway Deactivation

When the gateway connection(s) is (are) no longer required, agencies should follow these deactivation procedures:

* Contact the monitoring dispatcher (for fixed gateways) or the mobile gateway operator (for mobile gateways) to request patch/gateway deactivation.
* Announce over all patched channels/talkgroups that connections will be deactivated prior to the connection being disabled.
* Return all personnel to their appropriate home system channel assignments.

#### Regional Gateway Problem ID and Resolution

During an incident:

* Report gateway problems to the owning agency dispatcher (for fixed gateways) or mobile gateway operator (for mobile gateways), who will follow established agency procedures to resolve the problem.

Following an incident, the following general problem ID and resolution processes apply to all regional gateways:

* Report any problems with the gateway to the appropriate POC for that agency. The POC will be responsible for ensuring effective resolution to problems that exist with the gateway.
* Report unresolved gateway problems directly to the [**Region COML/designee**]. The [**Region COML/designee**] ensures effective resolution to reported gateway problems.

#### Regional Gateway Limitations

Interoperability provided through a gateway can connect participating agency responders but has the following limitations:

* The number of simultaneous patches that can be supported by the gateway will be limited by switch capacity and the number of lines connecting control centers and consoles. As a result, a limited number of patches involving resources at different control points can be supported simultaneously. Likewise, a limited number of patches involving resources that are accessed through a communications center console may be supported simultaneously.
* Home system coverage may limit communications. Gateway users must be within the footprint of their coverage area.
* Agencies not permanently configured on a given gateway will require additional planning to establish interoperable communications through that gateway.

#### Regional Gateway Test Procedures

To ensure that equipment components of the gateway operate properly, each agency will participate in the following testing procedure:

* Representatives from multiple agencies should meet on a regular basis to test each gateway.
* Testing should include deployment (mobile only), setup, operation, and deactivation of each gateway.
* If an issue or problem is identified during the testing procedure, determine who will take corrective action. If the issue or problem cannot be resolved, contact the appropriate technical personnel to address the issue or problem.

### Regional Cache Radios

Cache radios, also known as “swapped radios,” refer to maintaining a cache of standby radios that can be deployed to support regional incidents. These radios may be from a regional cache or from a participating agency. These radios allow all responders to use common, compatible equipment during an incident. Specific caches within the [Insert **Region name**] are listed in the following table.

Table 5. [Insert Region name] Radio Cache(s)

| **POC** | **Make / Model** | **Owning / Managing Agency** | **Frequency Band** | **Quantity** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

#### Regional Cache Radio Policies and Procedures

[**Insert region name**] radio caches have the following characteristics:

* Portable radios are fully charged and maintained, ready for immediate deployment.
* Deployed equipment includes battery chargers to support extended deployments.
* Personnel are available to transport equipment to the incident scene.
* Technicians are available for on-scene support during the deployment.

Reference additional cache radios in an annex.

All [**Insert region** name radio caches are required to have the following channels/talkgroups programmed:

Table 6. [Insert Region] Cache Radio(s)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TSICP Channel Name** | **Agency Name** |
|  |  |
|  |  |

#### Regional Radio Cache Request

The Incident Commander, or the designee, determines when a situation exists that requires the use of a regional radio cache and notifies the appropriate dispatch center. The dispatch center will follow internal agency procedures to contact the COML or Radio Cache Agency POC and relay pertinent information regarding the event. The requesting agency documents and provides the following information to the Radio Cache Agency POC, on request:

* Requesting agency
* On-scene agencies requiring interoperability
* Incident/event type of event (e.g., wild land fire, etc.)
* Equipment requirements
* Expected duration of event
* Location required/access information
* Incident POC
* User/requestor and/or servicing dispatch contact phone number
* Additional support services requested (e.g., technician, chargers, etc.)

The Radio Cache Agency determines what radio caches are available for use, identifies a specific cache, activates that cache, and coordinates the cache deployment with the requesting agency Incident Commander or their designee.

#### Regional Radio Cache Equipment Activation

Upon receiving a request for the deployment of a radio cache, the owning agency **dispatcher** should follow these deployment procedures:

* Contact the on-call technician responsible for radio cache deployment.
* Dispatch the radio cache technician (or an approved designee) to the incident scene.
* Inform the requesting agency that the radio cache is en route and provide an estimated time of arrival (ETA), if available.

The **radio cache technician (or designee)** should follow these deployment procedures:

* Provide dispatch with an ETA at the incident.
* Retrieve the radio cache from its storage location and deliver it to the incident scene.
* Report to the Incident Commander or Check-in on arrival.
* Once on-scene, sign the cache over to the requesting agency for incident use or, if assigned to remain on scene, coordinate radio cache deployment procedures with the Communications Unit.
	+ Each radio in the radio cache will have a unique identification number for inventory tracking. Ask the receiving agency to sign a property transfer form if they take responsibility for managing the radio cache on scene.
	+ The requesting Incident Commander, or their designee, will be responsible for:
		- Supporting radio deployments on-scene
		- Maintaining a record of each user and agency to whom a radio and associated accessories have been distributed
		- Documenting the identification number of each radio deployed
		- Documenting the channel(s) in use
* Each user and/or agency that receives a radio from the radio cache will be responsible for returning that radio and all associated accessories to the cache at the end of the incident.

#### Regional Radio Cache Equipment Deactivation

When the radio cache is no longer required, agencies should follow these deactivation procedures:

* Coordinate the return of all cache radios to the Communications Unit through the Incident Commander or their designee.
* The Communications Unit will be responsible for inventorying all radios and accessories returned to the cache. Before leaving the incident scene, the Communications Unit will determine if any radios have not been returned to the radio cache and note the user and agency to which the radio was distributed. Provide this information to the Incident Commander or their designee.
* If the missing radios cannot be recovered at the incident scene, the Communications Unit will provide this information to the Radio Cache Agency POC for resolution.

#### Regional Radio Cache Problem ID and Resolution

During an incident, report radio cache problems to the radio cache technician or their designee who will follow established agency procedures to resolve the problem.

Following an incident, the following general problem ID and resolution processes apply to all regional radio caches:

* Report any problems with the radio cache to the appropriate POC for the owning agency. The POC will be responsible for ensuring effective resolution to problems that exist with the radio cache.
* Report unresolved radio cache problems directly to the [**Region COML/designee**]. The [**Region COML/designee**] ensures effective resolution to reported radio cache problems.

### Mobile Communications Units (MCUs)

A mobile communications Unit (MCU) (also known as a Mobile Communications Center (MCC) or Mobile EOC) refers to any vehicular asset that can be deployed to provide or supplement communications capabilities in an incident area. Examples of the types of communications devices an MCU can house are: subscriber and base station radios of various frequency bands, gateway devices, satellite phones, wireless computer networks, video broadcasting/receiving equipment, etc. Typically these communications devices are permanently [located/stored] in the MCUs when not used. The MCU should also be able to temporarily provide the electrical power required to operate the communications devices.

Table 7. Regional Mobile Communications Unit(s)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Owning Agency** | **Deployment Area** | **POC & Contact Information** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Mobile Communications Unit Policies and Procedures

The Incident Commander, or the designee, determines when a situation exists that requires the use of an MCU and notifies the appropriate dispatch center. The dispatch center will follow internal agency procedures to contact the COML or MCU POC and relay pertinent information regarding the event. The requesting agency documents and provides the following information to the MCU POC, on request:

* Requesting agency
* Agencies requiring interoperability
* Incident/event type (e.g., wild land fire, etc.)
* Expected duration of event
* Location required/access information
* Incident POC
* User/requestor and/or servicing dispatch contact phone number
* Additional support services requested

The MCU Agency determines if the MCU is available for use and coordinates the deployment with the requesting agency Incident Commander or their designee.

### Regional Emergency Resource Staffing

***Emergency Resource Directory***

The Regional Emergency Resource Directory (Table 8) establishes a list of personnel who will respond to fill the Communication Unit positions. Identified personnel must train and exercise to a regional response level.

Job descriptions and qualified personnel for each Communications Unit position are detailed below.

**Auxiliary Emergency Communications Personnel (AUXCOM)** – Volunteers who are typically licensed Amateur Radio Operators with a public safety background and are trained in NIMS/ICS. They can be used as Subject Matter Experts regarding: antennas, repeaters, propagation, radio systems set-up, High Frequency (HF), Very High Frequency (VHF), Ultra-High Frequency radio, networks, and computer networks.

**Communications Coordinator (COMC)** – Works with the COML to coordinate communications with other dispatch centers and the incident communication plan. Locally, the jurisdictional dispatch center supervisor or dispatcher will act as the Communications Coordinator. Coordinators may also be located at the region/county, State, and Federal level.

**Communications Unit Leader (COML)** – Responsible for developing plans for the effective use of incident communications equipment and facilities; installing and testing communications equipment, distribution of communications equipment to incident personnel; maintenance and repair of communications equipment; supervision of the COMT, THSP, INCM, RADO COMC, and AUXCOMM.

**Communications Technician (COMT)** – Responsible for supporting the technical activities of the Communications Unit and assisting COML in designing system needs and developing ICS 205 Incident Radio Communications Plan.

**Incident Commander (IC)** – the individual responsible for the management of all incident operations.

**Incident Communications Center Manager (INCM)** – Responsible for establishing, supervising and managing the Incident Command Center; supervising Radio Operators (RADO,) and assisting COML with Maintaining equipment accountability and inventories, Implementing a document filing system, ensuring information regarding communications restrictions or coverage limitations is disseminated to operations and ICC personnel, and reporting network malfunctions to the COML or COMT.

**Radio Operator (RADO)** – Responsible for passing accurate and timely information from the sender to the receiver and follow through with an accurate and timely response to the sender if needed.

**Technical Specialist (THSP)** – catch-all a position in the Incident Command System for any specialized skill such as the installation, operation and maintenance of specific communications equipment and modes of operations that are unique to the incident response efforts’ communications requirements. THSPs may include Local Agency Radio Technicians (as opposed to the COMT), Telephone Specialists, Gateway Specialists, Data/IT Specialists, and or Cache Radio Specialists.

The following table identifies staff in the Regional Emergency Resource Directory. The form should be used at the incident site to list specific contact information of the Incident Emergency Resource Personnel.

Additional information about COML and other components of incident communications management can be found at the Department of Homeland Security’s web site at http://www.dhs.gov/video/communications-unit-leader-training.

Table 8. Regional Emergency Resource Directory

|  | **Name** | **Agency** | **Address** | **Phone** | **Email** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **COMC** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **COML** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **INCM** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **RADO** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Cache THSP** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Gateway THSP** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Other THSP** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

### Commercial Service Dependencies

Commercial Cellular data services are prevalent in our region. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** *(appropriate provider*) is our largest provider of this service. Commercial data circuits are widely used for back haul for most of the radio systems in use in the region. Plans are underway to replace these data circuits with more reliable microwave connectivity. Commercial cellular voice provided by a variety of vendors is also heavily used in our region for non-tactical communications. (Possibly add the customer representatives, then add what kind of connections and circuit numbers you have. Describe how your connections work. Identify the contact and the circuit number. Develop some sort of architecture.)

Table 9. Commercial Services Information

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Commercial Provider** | **Customer Representative** | **Connections and Circuit Numbers** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

### Disaster Communications Capabilities

The Mobile Communications Command Program (MCCP)) has been established by the DPS and Texas Military Forces (TMF) which will be used to provide and/or restore emergency communications due to natural hazards (such as hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, etc.) and hazards caused by terrorist or criminal activities. DPS is the designated first responder state agency and will continue to implement and manage the Strategic Technology Reserve equipment. The STR may include:

* Command/Communications Trailers
* Primary Towing Vehicles
* P25 Compliant Portable Radios with Trunking
* Cellular on Wheels may be requested
* Trunking Site on Wheels
* Suitcase Digital Repeaters
* IP Gateway Devices
* Portable Generators
* Cargo Trailers
* Portable Gateway Devices
* Video Downlink for Helicopters
* Satellite Telephones and Radios
* HF Radio Equipment
* Portable Satellite Packages

When called upon to support planned events, respond to hostile events or natural disasters, the STR assets can provide augmentation to expand the area of coverage of existing systems, assist with wireless communications during planned events if necessary, or provide critical communications capabilities to local systems damaged during a hostile event or natural disaster.

After local assets have been extended, escalation through the Multi-Agency Coordination system through each level of Incident Command management may be made.

### Fuel Re-Supply Plan

Each jurisdiction will be responsible for producing their own fuel re-supply plan for communications sites and equipment.

### Prioritization and Shared Use of Regional Interoperability Assets

In response to events or incidents which cross over political jurisdictions, there will potentially be competing demands and priorities for interoperable communications assets.

Until such time as Incident Command is established, the lead agency designee (i.e., communications supervisor/command personnel), in cooperation with assisting agencies, will have the authority to designate the use of interoperable assets. Once Incident Command has been established, Command Staff or Communication Unit Leaders (when designated) direct the further coordination and delegation of the interoperable communications assets assigned to the event or incident in question.

Agencies should judiciously activate needed interoperable assets so as to both effectively respond to the event and/or incident and also minimize any negative impact on surrounding agencies or jurisdictions. Specifically, interoperable communications should be attempted with the following order of operations in mind (subject to variability based on the agencies involved and the nature of the event/incident):

1. Leverage face-to-face communications wherever appropriate. For example, the co-location of all Command and General Staff at the incident command post (ICP) provides the best direct communications and reduces the demand on interoperability resources.
2. Employ local communications assets until such time as either those assets become taxed or inadequate based on the nature and/or scope of the incident.
3. If response agencies are users of a shared system, utilize that shared system to establish interoperable communications.
4. If response agencies operate on disparate systems, utilize shared or mutual aid channels or a gateway to establish interoperable communications.
5. Where interoperable communications cannot otherwise be established between response agencies, utilize swap or cache radios to establish operable communications for responders.
6. If no other method of interoperability can be established, relay communications through staff members.

When the same resources are requested for two or more incidents, resource assignments should be based on the priority levels listed below:

1. Disasters, large scale incidents, or extreme emergencies requiring mutual aid or interagency communications.
2. Incidents where imminent danger exists to life or property.
3. Incidents requiring the response of multiple agencies.
4. Pre-planned events requiring mutual aid or interagency communications.
5. Incidents involving a single agency where supplemental communications are needed for agency use.
6. Drills, tests and exercises.

In the event of multiple simultaneous incidents within the same priority level, the resources should be allocated with the following priorities in mind:

1. Incidents with the greatest level of exigency (e.g., greater threat to life or property, more immediate need, etc.) have priority over less exigent incidents.
2. Agencies with single/limited interoperable options have priority use of those options over agencies with multiple interoperable options.
3. When at all possible, agencies already using an interoperable asset during an event should not be redirected to another resource.

### Interoperability Testing Requirements

During standardized testing, the testing agency will communicate with participating public safety and public service agencies on interoperability channels.

Agencies should perform standardized tests on interoperable channels that include radio users communicating with each other. Training exercises using all levels of interoperability including local, state and national levels are encouraged, as well as participation from different agencies at the same time.

**There will be two different phases of radio testing:**

* 1. **Communications Center Testing -** This monthly test of interoperability channels [**insert day and time here**]will be done between the public safety and public service dispatch/radio communication centers [**insert appropriate agency names here**]. The agency radio technician will monitor the appropriate channels during testing.
	2. **Operational Testing -** Each agency will decide when testing should take place. All agency heads or designated representatives with radios programmed with interoperability channels will participate in this testing. During this test, technical support will check the accuracy and performance of various sites.

### Agency Responsibilities and Rights

Agencies will retain the following rights and responsibilities:

* Agencies are responsible for considering and, if agreeing to, complying with the MOUs and Agreements developed by the [**Name of Council/Executive Board**] in coordination with their respective jurisdictions.
* Authorized representatives of agencies participating in this plan have the authority to request the use of equipment, including systems and mobile assets, in accordance with Regional Standard Operating Procedures.
* Where applicable, agencies will be responsible for consistently maintaining, testing, and exercising connectivity to interoperable communications.
* Agencies retain the right to decide when and where to participate in interoperable communications. For example, agencies will retain the right to accept or decline a patch to a gateway system to provide interoperable communications during an incident.
* Training Requirements - Participating agencies will be responsible for ensuring that their personnel are familiar with this RSOP and are properly trained in accordance with the guiding principles.

*It is the responsibility of agency heads to ensure that these SOPs are followed as necessary.*

*It is the responsibility of all communication personnel to be familiar with and to comply with these SOPs.*

***An adopted Regional SOP is an initiative in the SCIP and is highly encouraged; but is presently not a requirement for grant funding.***

### RSOP Links to Referenced Documents

#### Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP): <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/LawEnforcementSupport/communications/interop/documents/texasSCIP.pdf>

#### Texas Statewide Interoperability Channel Plan or (TSICP): <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/LawEnforcementSupport/communications/interop/documents/tsicpMOU.pdf>

#### Texas Communication Field Operations Guide: <https://www.dps.texas.gov/LawEnforcementSupport/communications/interop/documents/txCommFldOpsGuide.pdf>

#### Training and Exercises Templates:

#### <https://www.dps.texas.gov/LawEnforcementSupport/communications/interop/index.htm>

#### SAFECOM:

#### <https://www.dhs.gov/safecom>