

Commonwealth of Virginia Statewide Interoperability Executive
Committee (SIEC)

All-Virtual Meeting

September 19, 2024

Attendees (Individuals & Agencies Noted in Roll Call):

- **Office of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security:** Assistant Secretary Sonny Daniels
- **Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM):** Chief Deputy State Coordinator Sean Polster, State Coordinator Shawn Talmadge, Mike Keefe
- **Virginia State Police (VSP):** Rich Schoonover, Tom Bradshaw, Bill DeCoste
- **Virginia Department of Fire Programs:** Chief Michael Paris (not noted as present during roll call)
- **Department of Health, Office of EMS:** Sam Burnette
- **Department of Health, Office of Emergency Preparedness:** Brad Bradley
- **Department of Military Affairs (DMA):** Mike Pitman
- **VITA:** Stephen Smith
- **VDOT:** Earl Sharp
- **VDOF:** Not present
- **Counsel:**
- **SWIC:** Gabe Elias
- **Region One RPAC-I:** Steve Parrott
- **Region Two RPAC/Vice Chair:**
- **Region Three RPAC-I:**
- **Region Four RPAC-I:** Curtis Crawford and Paul Hoyle
- **Region Five RPAC-I/Chair:** Terry Hall
- **Region Six RPAC-I:** Zach Beckner, Curt Berry
- **Region Seven RPAC-I:** Stu Sanz, Jeffrey Holmes

- **VACO:** Jeremy Bennett
- **VACP:** Dana Schrad
- **Virginia Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (VACLEA):**
- **Virginia Fire Chiefs Association (VFCA):** Chief John Prillaman
- **VMSa:**
- **Virginia NENA:** Stephen Willoughby
- **Virginia APCO:** Doug Campbell
- **VML:** Michelle Gowdy
- **VALGITE:** Vanessa Bohr
- **Virginia Sheriffs:** Also represented by Terry Hall
- **Virginia State Firefighters:**
- **Amateur Radio:** Martin Krupinski (on behalf of Jack Smith, ARRL)
- **Virginia Professional Firefighters (VPFF):**
- **Remaining Unfilled Seats:** State Police Association, Tribal Governing Councils, State Council of Higher Education, Virginia Military Advisory Council

I. Opening Remarks & Welcomes

- **Sonny Daniels** (Office of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security) thanked the committee for their work, highlighting the importance of radio interoperability based on recent stakeholder meetings in the southwest region. He emphasized his personal connection to 911 dispatch and radio operations, having spent 5 years in a dispatch center.
- **Sean Polster** (Chief Deputy State Coordinator, VDEM) appreciated the prior cyber event and looked forward to building on past collaborations.
- **Shawn Talmadge** (State Coordinator of Emergency Management) expressed support for the team's important work and Terry's leadership.

II. Roll Call

- Gabe Elias conducted a roll call, noting representatives from various state agencies, regions, and associations.

III. Review and Approval of Previous Minutes

- The distributed minutes were presented for approval.
- **Motion to approve:** Steve Willoughby
- **Second:** Jeremy Bennett (VACO)
- **Discussion:** None
- **Vote:** All in favor said "Aye." **Motion carried.**

IV. Approval of Agenda

- The draft agenda was presented for approval.
- **Motion to approve:** Steve Willoughby
- **Second:** Stephen Smith
- **Discussion:** None
- **Vote:** All in favor said "Aye." **Motion approved.**

V. Discussion on the Emerging Technologies Conference

- The conference was held in partnership with **VACP**, with Dana Schrad leading significant efforts.
- **Successes:**
 - Goal of 100 attendees was exceeded.
 - Financially, the conference is "definitely in the plus". VACP will act as the fiscal agent for remaining funds and committed to future support.
 - The event aimed **not to interfere with existing vendor funding** for other associations (like VA APCO, NENA, VACP), and this was achieved.
 - It **focused on IT and IP-based technology** and was kept local in Central Virginia (Richmond).
 - **Presentations** were robust, covering a day and three-quarters worth of content. Keynote speaker was **Timothy Ramsey** (Global Cyber Security Leader from Mandiant/Google Cloud), who delivered a "stellar keynote".

- Other strong sessions included **Cybersecurity and AI panel** (led by VALGITE), discussion on the **current legislative framework**, and a highly engaging talk on **drones from the state program** by DJ Smith (VSP).
- A panel including **AT&T FirstNet, FirstNet Authority, and Verizon**, with subject matter experts from **CISA** (Tom Gagnon), aimed to look ahead in emergency communications technology.
- **Vendor participation** was strong, with vendors also learning from participants.
- **FBI / Public Safety Threat Alliance (PSTA) Tabletop Exercise:**
 - Shawn Talmadge and Terry Hall attended an event in Texas where the **FBI and PSTA** (Motorola-supported, evolving into a nonprofit for public safety cyber concerns) conducted a tabletop exercise on cyber attacks against public safety infrastructure.
 - The exercise allowed practitioners, vendors, and public safety to learn from each other and sharpen agency plans.
 - Motorola has offered continued support, and there is a possibility for a **pre-conference event** with them for the October (Fall Conference) event.
- **Yonkers Real-Time Crime Center Visit:** Terry Hall visited Yonkers, NY, to observe their real-time crime center, which utilizes 200-300 cameras and drones for live crime solving. This highlighted the **convergence of technologies** and the potential for Next Generation 911 to meld these for real-time crime solving.
- **Attendee Feedback:**
 - **Michelle Gowdy (VML):** Praised the event, surprised by attendee retention, interested in the Motorola nonprofit, noted the "powerful discussion" on video in 911 centers from a crime scene perspective. Suggested adding more networking time for vendors and participants.
 - **Sean Polster (VDEM):** Emphasized the importance of stakeholder conversations about vulnerabilities and a holistic approach to the public safety ecosystem.
 - **Brad Bradley (VDH):** Impressed by the focus on **systems thinking versus linear thinking** and process improvement.

- **Lori Stone (FirstNet Authority):** Commended the quick organization and good turnout, liked the small, concentrated vendor section which prevented overwhelming attendees, and showcased the **Mini Compact Rapid Deployable** technology.
- **Shawn Talmadge (VDEM):** Stressed the importance of **leveraging and innovating through the convergence of technology** to inspire public safety teams. Envisioned integration of UAS, LTE, sensors, and NG911 for rapid data sharing.
- **Dorothy Spears-Dean (VDEM 911/Geospatial Services Bureau):** Found the conference a "great experience" and "informative," and confirmed their team would attend future events.
- **Motion to Continue Conference for 2025:**
 - Proposal to continue with a second annual conference, maintaining the focus on **emerging technologies, IT, IP, and convergence**, and **avoiding competition** with APCO and NENA.
 - **Motion:** Michelle Gowdy to continue the emerging technologies conference for the calendar year 2025.
 - **Second:** Stu Sanz (Region 7)
 - **Discussion:** None
 - **Vote:** All in favor said "Yes." **Motion carried unanimously.**
 - **Next Steps:** A committee will be formed to work with VACP on locations and planning. Members are asked to consider how they can contribute to planning.

VI. COMLINC Update

- **Rich Schoonover (VSP)** reported that **COMLINC is working great** with no major showstoppers.
- Henrico County is joining, and other sites (potentially Fort Barfoot) may come online in the next 6-7 months.
- Future funding will be needed for a "COMLINC 3.0".
- Members are encouraged to **email Gabe with COMLINC success stories** to help with future messaging and funding for interoperability solutions.

- Gabe will work with Rich to provide a **statewide deployment status via email**.
- **Steve Parrott** highlighted the successful use of **RIOS LiTE clients** on smart devices for quicker access to the COMLINC system.

VII. Storm Debbie Recap

- **Mandatory Disaster Roaming Initiative (MDRI):** Gabe highlighted this new FCC program (effective June 2024) allowing states to request cellular carriers to enable roaming on partner networks during widespread outages. Virginia executed this during Storm Debbie for VDEM regions 3 and 6, and parts of region 2, to position carriers for readiness.
- **Statewide Communications Sector Call:** During the declared emergency, a daily 1-hour call was convened with federal, state, local, private sector (including multiple carriers) partners to discuss operations, plans, and gaps.
- **Future Plan:** Gabe intends to make this a **monthly stand-up call** to build connections and touch points across the entire communications ecosystem (911, radio managers, field responders, executives, private sector, volunteers).
- **Feedback:** Terry noted the challenge of many acronyms and specialized language for new participants.

VIII. Carrier Updates at Future Meetings

- Discussion to modify carrier updates at future meetings to focus more on **success stories and emerging technologies** rather than general capabilities.
- Gabe will initiate outreach to carrier partners to prime them for this new format.

IX. Training Update

- **Virginia Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) Review:**
 - Virginia Code requires an annual review of the SCIP.
 - Michelle Gowdy (Chair of SCIP committee) reported that the committee (including Michelle, Dana Schrad, Sam Burnette, Steve Parrott, Terry Hall, Gabe) had productive meetings and a good document ready for review.
 - Gabe will recirculate the SCIP document before the October meeting for technical edits, with the intent to **vote for adoption in October** and present it for signing by the Secretary before year-end.
- **CISA Training Restructuring:**

- CISA (Cybersecurity Infrastructure Security Agency) has restructured its training, introducing a more structured process with submission windows (October and April) and constraints.
- States can submit up to five training priorities. Regional (multi-state) trainings are prioritized.
- Gabe's intent: Submit for a **Communications Unit Technician (COMT) field class in October**, aiming for a multi-state draw. Also, leverage existing state-sponsored classes from train-the-trainer events.
- **Shawn Talmadge's Idea for CISA TA:** Proposed leveraging CISA technical assistance for two novel problem sets related to a **"nation at war" cyber attack scenario**:
 1. Developing a **robust communications plan for public safety entities** across the state when traditional comms systems are under threat.
 2. Creating a plan for **communicating with the public when cell phones are down** and digital platforms (like Twitter) are unavailable.
- **Tom Gagnon (CISA)** confirmed that **custom TAs are possible** and have been successfully delivered in the past, even becoming standard offerings.

X. State Agency Updates

- **VDEM (Sean Polster, Shawn Talmadge, Mike Keefe, Dorothy Spears-Dean):**
 - **Mike Keefe** noted that the **STARS program will be fully encrypted in the next 60 days**, but three zones (interop/mutual channels) will **remain unencrypted** to ensure interoperability.
 - **Dorothy Spears-Dean** (911 & Geospatial Services Bureau) is awaiting the **100th Next Generation 911 (NG911) deployment** (Twin County).
- **Virginia Department of Health (VDH):**
 - **Brad Bradley (Office of Emergency Preparedness)** reported significant progress on updating a **statewide H.323 video network**, with only 50 out of 270 sites remaining. This encrypted network will be available during emergencies and integrates with Teams, WebEx, and Zoom.
 - Sam Burnette (Office of EMS) reported no significant updates due to technical difficulties.

- **Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) (Earl Sharp):**
 - The **511 system is undergoing a significant update** (website, mobile apps), with soft testing underway. No expected impact on TVD, dedicated video, or one-way CAD feeds.
 - VDOT is collaborating with State Police on **end-user training for STARS and COMLINC**, aiming to maximize the use and return on investment for portable radios during both blue-sky and dark-sky days. They also plan to work with Gabe's team on interoperability aspects for major incidents.
- **Department of Military Affairs (DMA) (Mike Pitman):**
 - STARS updates are complete, and control stations are fixed.
 - DMA will be teaching a **SHARES class on November 2nd at Fort Barfoot** and will deploy 6-7 SHARES kits after the training. SHARES is a high-frequency radio capability for resilient communications and PACE planning.
- **VITA (Steven Smith):** No updates.
- **Virginia State Police (VSP) (Bill DeCoste):**
 - VSP is deeply involved in encryption, with the **entire fleet expected to be encrypted in about four weeks**.
 - Three zones will remain unencrypted for interoperability, coordinated with VDEM.
 - The **Phase 5 project should close out by November 1st**, and the system will very shortly thereafter become **P25 Phase 2**.
- **CISA (Tom Gagnon):** Reiterated the importance of submitting technical assistance requests sooner rather than later.

XI. Regional Updates

- **Region One (Steve Parrott):**
 - Meetings continue on the first Friday of even months.
 - Working on a **model document for localities to establish interoperability links with VDOT Traffic Operations Centers (TOCs)**, aiming to share best practices for coordinating incidents.

- Initiative to **clear up old push-to-talk (PTT) and legacy VHF/UHF channels** in old radios to streamline programming. Goochland County is leading this effort by coordinating with neighboring jurisdictions and 911 centers.
- Chair Hall reinforces need to review licenses and not renew licenses (FCC) just to renew. If not using channels, release licenses for wider community to utilize.
- **Region Two (William Martin):** No one present.
- **Region Three (Jamie Shumaker):** No one present.
- **Region Four (Curtis):** Next meeting date to be sent out soon. Region is focused on **multiple radio projects**.
- **Region Five (Mr. Hall):**
 - Using grant money to bring another **Orion site back online in Franklin**.
 - Working with a consultant to review governance of the existing Orion system, addressing issues with new agencies deploying 700/800 MHz systems without purchasing mixed-mode equipment or using incompatible encryption.
 - Bringing more colleges to York regional radio system (e.g., Thomas Nelson Community College) onto the system.
- **Region Six (Zach Beckner):**
 - Adding members and meeting monthly.
 - Working with Rich on **COMLINC channel options** and deep diving into Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) to PSAP communication.
 - Several localities are migrating to 700/800 MHz systems, leading to planning for **ISSI (Inter-Subsystem Interface) connections** for these new systems.
- **Region Seven (Stu Sanz):**
 - Stu Sanz will be reaching out to VSP to ensure **interoperability for the Marine Corps Marathon and Army 10 Miler**, having identified potential issues in the 205s.

XII. Association Updates

- **Virginia APCO (Doug Campbell):** The Fall Conference is just over a month away, with good turnout expected.
- **Virginia NENA (Stephen Willoughby):** No updates.
- **Virginia Fire Chiefs Association (John Prillaman):** No updates.
- Other associations either had no one present or no significant updates to report.

XIII. New Business: 4.9 GHz Spectrum

- Public safety has had access to the **4.9 GHz spectrum for broadband** since around 2003.
- The FCC initiated rulemakings due to perceived underutilization by public safety.
- The FCC proposes to shift to a **national band manager model** for this spectrum, and one question is whether the **FirstNet Authority** (a federal agency, not AT&T) should serve as this manager.
- **Diverse and controversial positions** exist among various associations, organizations, states, and localities:
 - Some support the national band manager model.
 - Some oppose any band manager.
 - Some support keeping it as is (direct licensing).
 - Some support state-level management.
 - Some support a competitive process for a band manager.
 - Others directly support the FCC's proposal to allocate the role to the FirstNet Authority.
- **Crucially, all public safety entities are united in the need for this spectrum**, recognizing that greater spectrum capacity ("biggest and most pipe") enables more capabilities in the future world of convergence and broadband.
- The FCC will need to review extensive public input before making a final rulemaking.
- Gabe will provide a link to the FCC docket for further review.

XIV. Public Comment

- No unidentified participants were present to offer public comment.

XV. Closing Remarks & Adjournment

- Kudos were given for the successful first virtual meeting.
 - Attendees were encouraged to attend the upcoming APCO conference in October, as well as the SIEC meeting held there.
 - The "Between Zero and COML" pre-conference course at APCO is full.
 - **Motion to adjourn:** Earl Sharp
 - **Second:** Stephen Smith
 - **Vote:** All in favor said "Aye." **Motion carried.**
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