

	<b>Standard Operating Procedure</b>		
	Title / Subject <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Share Channel</u></b></p>	Effective Date <p style="text-align: center;">09/13/11</p>	Revision Date <p style="text-align: center;">09/13/11</p>
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## **1. Introduction:**

For the purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), Shared Channels, also referred to as Shared Talkgroups (trunked radios systems) and/or Mutual Aid Channels/Talkgroups, is defined as National, regional, or local channels that are identified and known as mutual aid or interoperability channels. An example is the NPSTC channels or defined regional talkgroups. They will typically be used exclusively by emergency responders for communications during local/regional incidents, planned events, and multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional emergencies. This SOP will assist in the definition of how to operate on the shared channel. However, because shared channels are agreed to by multiple parties in advance of any emergency or incident; it is recommended that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) be executed in advance of the SOP to establish the Shared Channel Use Authority. This SOP uses the term shared channels to represent shared channels, mutual aid channels, shared talkgroups, and mutual aid talkgroups as they relate to a regional shared channel plan and does not focus on national mutual aid channels.

## **2. Purpose:**

Establish SOPs for the use of a shared channel. The intent of this protocol is to establish an orderly, workable radio resource for the use of operational, as well as command and control, personnel in everyday mutual aid response or in the event of a major response, ranging from an intra-discipline, intra-jurisdictional incident or event, to an inter-discipline, inter-jurisdictional incident or event in West Virginia. The communications capabilities provided by the shared channel(s) will be in operation for the Statewide Interoperable Radio Network (SIRN), and participating agencies using NPSTC Channels or defined regional talkgroups. The objective is to have a SOP in place for pre-established radio resources in support of incident driven interoperable communications.

## **3. Technical Background:**

The shared channels and talkgroups have been designated for mutual aid to give communications capabilities to command and operational personnel responsible for the response to a regional incident requiring multiple jurisdictions and services. This is intended to support multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional communications capabilities during mutual aid incidents and events.

## **4. Operational Context:**

Established mutual aid response protocols between SIRN, and participating agencies will provide the basis for operational activation of the shared channel(s). The following is a hierarchy of projected operational needs based on priority, with the first operation holding the highest priority:

- A large-scale emergency incident that requires a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional response (e.g., a natural disaster such as a hurricane, a terrorist incident involving weapons of mass destruction).
- Everyday response-level communications to emergency or urgent incidents that require mutual aid response from multiple agencies (e.g., high-speed pursuits crossing jurisdictional boundaries, a large warehouse fire requiring mutual aid response).
- Special event control activities, generally of a pre-planned nature, involving joint participation of two or more agencies (e.g., a large sporting event such as a college football game, a dignitary visit).
- Drill, maintenance, and test exercises.

## 5. Recommended Protocol/Standard:

The following bullets define the basic standards that should be in place during the use of the shared channel(s):

- **National Incident Management System** – Depending on the size of the incident, the use of an Incident Command System (ICS) compliant with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) is recommended when using any regional interoperability resource for large-scale multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional incidents.
- **Plain Language** – All interoperable communications during multi-agency, multi-discipline incidents should 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 communications situations when utilizing the shared channel(s).
- **Encryption** – All encrypted radio users must operate in a clear mode when a shared channel is used, unless otherwise arranged in advance. If all potential users have access to the encrypted channel(s), then the use of encryption may be appropriate.
- **Monitoring** – If ICS is established and it is deemed appropriate, the Incident Commander, or his/her designee, will ensure that the shared channel(s) is/are monitored while in use. In a smaller mutual aid response, the Agency Lead may also require that the shared channel(s) be monitored.

## 6. Recommended Protocol Procedure:

### 6.1 Dispatch Center Responsibility

The dispatch center of the agency initiating the incident is responsible for all primary dispatch tasks unless the decision is made by the Incident Commander, Agency Lead, or the incident dispatch center to transfer the responsibilities to another center where authorized.

### 6.2 Shared Channel Request

The agencies using the shared channel(s) for incident or event communications support should provide the following information to the agency supporting the operation:

- What agencies and entities are involved?
- Who has the responsibility for incident command—or, who is the lead relevant to the mutual aid request?
- Which shared channel(s) will be used?
- How long do the emergency responders need to be operating on the shared channel(s)?
- Does the connection require monitoring? If so, who (e.g., dispatch center, incident command, Radio Operator [RADO]) will serve as the responsible agent?
- What is the primary purpose (e.g., command and control, tactical response, logistical support) of the shared channel(s)?

### **6.3 Shared Channel Activation**

Once shared channel resources are identified, the procedures for establishing communications connectivity are:

- Select the predetermined channel(s) for use.
- Verify the system-wide availability of required resources (coordinate among control point dispatchers).
- Provide radio call sign/designator information to connected agencies as necessary.
- Notify the requested unit/agency of the channel(s) availability.
- Notify the responding units to the appropriate talkgroup and have the units switch to the designated shared channel(s), if required.
- Confirm responding units are operating on the appropriate shared channel(s). Identify users on the shared channel(s) using their agency name and unit identifier through a roll call when appropriate (users in a secure setting or a mutual aid response may not require dispatcher validation).
- Announce to users at predetermined time intervals, specifically once every hour on the hour, that shared channel and interoperable communications procedures are in effect as deemed necessary by the Incident Commander or Agency Lead.
- Monitor the shared channel(s) to address requests as required.
- Monitor the shared channel(s) for problems that may require technician intervention.
- Monitor for system problems that may require a deactivation of the shared channel(s).
- Record the shared channel(s), if required or where appropriate.
- Monitor designated calling channel where required.

### **6.4 Shared Channel Deactivation:**

When the shared channel(s) are no longer required, agencies should follow these deactivation procedures:

- The supporting agencies identify the shared channel(s) as no longer needed or in use.
- Announcement will be made over the shared channel(s) that use of the channel(s) will be operationally discontinued.
- Prior to discontinuing the use of the shared channel(s), agencies should ensure that all personnel have returned to their appropriate home systems, channels / talkgroups.
- Agencies may want to conduct a roll call of all affected personnel to confirm they returned to their home systems.
- After deactivation of the shared channel(s), normal operations should be resumed.

### **6.5 Shared Channel Problem ID and Resolution:**

- Report any problems with the shared channel(s) to the appropriate point of contact (POC) for that agency.
- A routine shared channel(s) test should be completed regularly to confirm availability and operational use.
- After action reports should be utilized to help identify potential problems and prospective solutions.

## **7. Management:**

The cooperating agencies are responsible for the operational management of their system.