Alaska Land Mobile Radio Communications System

High Level Communications Strategy

Version 14

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Document Revision History

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Acronyms and Definitions

Alaska Federal Executive Association (AFEA): federal government entities, agencies and organizations, other than the Department of Defense, that operate on the shared ALMR system infrastructure.

Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) Communications System: the ALMR Communications System, which uses but is separate from the Alaska Public Safety Communications Services, as established in the Cooperative and Mutual Aid Agreement.

Alaska Municipal League: a voluntary non-profit organization in Alaska that represents member local governments.

Alaska Public Safety Communication Services: the primary maintainer of the State's microwave system.

Department of Defense – Alaska: Alaskan Command, US Air Force and US Army component services operating under United States Pacific Command and United States Northern Command.

Executive Council: governing body which is made up of three voting members and two associate members representing the original four constituency groups: the State of Alaska, the Department of Defense, Federal Non-DOD agencies (represented by the Alaska Federal Executive Association), and local municipal/government (represented by the Alaska Municipal League and the Municipality of Anchorage).

Local Governments: those Alaska political subdivisions defined as municipalities in AS 29.71.800(13).

Member: a public safety agency including, but not limited to, a general government agency (local, state or federal), its authorized employees and personnel (paid or volunteer), and its service provider, participating in and using the System under a Membership Agreement.

Municipality of Anchorage (MOA): the MOA covers 1,951 square miles with a population of over 300,000. The MOA stretches from Portage, at the southern border, to the Knik River at the northern border, and encompasses the communities of Girdwood, Indian, Anchorage, Eagle River, Chugiak/Birchwood, and the native village of Eklutna.

Operations Manager: the Operations Manager represents the User Council interests and makes decisions on issues related to the day-to-day operation of the system and any urgent or emergency system operational or repair decisions. In coordination with

the User Council, the Operations Manager establishes policies, procedures, contracts, organizations, and agreements that provide the service levels as defined in the ALMR Service Level Agreement.

Operations Management Office (OMO): develops recommendations for policies, procedures, and guidelines; identifies technologies and standards; and coordinates intergovernmental resources to facilitate communications interoperability with emphasis on improving public safety and emergency response communications.

Protocol: a standard that governs network communications by providing a set of rules for its operation.

State of Alaska (SOA): the primary maintainer of the State's microwave system, and shared owner of the System.

System Management Office (SMO): the team of specialists responsible for management of maintenance and operations of the System.

User: an agency, person, group, organization or other entity which has an existing written Membership Agreement to operate on ALMR with one of the Parties to the Cooperative and Mutual Aid Agreement. The terms user and member are synonymous and interchangeable.

User Council: governing body responsible for recommending all operational and maintenance decisions affecting the System. Under the direction and supervision of the Executive Council, the User Council has the responsibility for management oversight and operations of the System. The User Council oversees the development of System operations plans, procedures and policies under the direction and guidance of the Executive Council.

1.0   Introduction

The High-Level Communications Strategy is an embedded part of the Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) Communications System Operations Management Office (OMO) and System Management Office (SMO). The standard working practice is to make information available, so stakeholders understand and conform to the ALMR policies, processes, protocols, and procedures.

In order to effectively reach, inform, educate, advise and support all of the stakeholders and others with an interest in ALMR, the OMO/SMO must solicit comments, listen to input and react appropriately to the given circumstance. Succinct communications are an essential part of the process to explain to the stakeholders, and others, how they have helped shape the way we work.

This strategy is one part of the on-going communications process. It will be reviewed and revised each year, as needed and as the OMO/SMO adapts and reshapes the communications methodology to meet the challenges in the coming years.

Communications strategy:

- Build structure and internal awareness
- Increase recognition and differentiation from other organizations
- Ensure that information delivered is widely available and accessible
- Ensure that communication is genuinely two way
- Continue to do all this consistently, despite challenges

2.0   Communications Strategy Goals

All internal and external stakeholders must recognize their role in on-going communications. The OMO/SMO are responsible for raising awareness of ALMR at all levels of government, as well as providing input to the national interoperability profile. This is accomplished by developing external relationships with national communications interest groups, other states and government organizations owning or implementing similar systems.

A communications strategy describes the processes in meeting communications goals. The following define those processes:

- Defining the types of information that needs to be communicated within, and outside, the organization
- Identifying the individuals that will do the communicating

- Identifying the tools available to communicate this information
- Developing a communications matrix that identifies, for each type of information, the responsible person, the intended audience, the media and the frequency of delivery

2.1 Methodology

The methodology for implementing the strategy consists of five steps:

2.1.1   Identification of the audience. For ALMR, the audience consists of all stakeholders, potential stakeholders and other agencies that interoperate with ALMR stakeholders and government executive and legislative branch entities.

2.1.2   Analysis of the needs of each of the stakeholders. The information needs of each targeted audience is identified and analyzed in relation to ALMR.

2.1.3   Identification of the information dissemination channels. In light of the stakeholders identified needs, and the content of information to be made available, the methods available for information dissemination are reviewed and an appropriate means of communications will be determined.

2.1.4   Determination of the information to be provided. The information requirements of the stakeholders are assessed in conjunction with available communications media and resources. The goal is that information to be disseminated exceeds the minimum requirements.

2.1.5   Determination of the strategy. Using the prior factors, a strategy is developed for on-going dissemination of information to the stakeholders.

3.0   External Communications

The focus of external communications is to highlight ALMR and the OMO/SMO by using appropriate communications mechanisms.

3.1 Goals

- Ensure a high level of awareness of the vision, roles and missions of the OMO/SMO and their place in ALMR
- Effectively communicate ALMR achievements, activities, status, updates, System performance, operation, processes, policies and procedures
- Communicate current ALMR System status and forward planning

- Promote dialogue at all stakeholder levels on issues related to ALMR to help ensure involvement and support
- Make available all information required for stakeholders to understand ALMR, and to encourage input to derive the maximum benefits of its use

3.2   Objectives

- Effectively communicate ALMR and OMO/SMO achievements and performance to stakeholders and the wider public safety audience
- Announce successes and reaffirm the vision of providing interoperable statewide communications
- Reinforce the ALMR position as Alaska's communications solution for public safety first responders
- Communicate appropriate information in sufficient detail to target audiences, using appropriate language
- Communicate regularly and openly with stakeholders
- Raise awareness of the System and its capabilities to the stakeholders, potential stakeholders and the Alaska public
- Encourage stakeholders, potential stakeholders and the general public to provide feedback on ALMR activities and services
- Provide relevant, clear and concise written materials
- Improve access to information and services, whenever possible
- Ensure communications consider security and follow procedural guidelines

3.3   Mechanisms Employed

A basic function of any organization is to ensure and maintain clear and open channels for information sharing between, and within, the organization and the stakeholder community. This strategy compliments other more familiar and more structured communications practices, as indicated below:

- Person to person
- User Council
- Executive Council
- Web site (www.alaskalandmobileradio.org)
- ALMR informational handouts
- Direct contact (letter, phone, email)
- ALMR quarterly *Insider* newsletter
- Media/Social Media (Twitter®)
- Training opportunities, when funded

- Conferences, briefings, seminars or workgroups (when applicable and when funded)

3.4   OMO/SMO Points of Contact

See Appendix A.

4.0   Internal Communications

The focus of internal communications is to maintain open channels of communication and information sharing, and clear, concise and open dialogue between the Operations Manager and his/her staff, and within the ALMR organization.

4.1   Goals

Contribute toward the development of ALMR by having strong two-way internal communications, ensuring a well-informed and involved workforce.

- Ensure staff feel valued in their roles and become natural ambassadors for ALMR
- Involve and engage staff in decision making processes and in the development of procedures and policies
- Encourage staff to share ownership of ALMR and OMO/SMO objectives
- Ensure staff has access to the necessary information to communicate effectively and to carry out their responsibilities
- Foster open communication between staff members

4.2   Objectives

- Encourage communication with colleagues, and contributions of staff toward planning and development activities
- Consult with staff to develop a coordinated internal communications framework to manage effective circulation of achievements, activities, status, updates, system performance, operation, processes, policies and procedures
- In consultation with staff members, develop relevant and accessible communications methods for senders and receivers of communications
- Prioritize and clarify effective routes of communication
- Ensure staff have the information available, in a relevant format, to accomplish their work in an effective manner

- Implement policy guidelines and protocols that enhance quality of communications, consistency and effectiveness
- Specify with staff clear ownership/responsibility for communications
- Include user-friendly response mechanisms with all communications to encourage feedback
- Comply with confidentiality, privacy and data protection requirements, as appropriate
- Contribute to organizational and policy changes that improve communications
- Ensure communications effectiveness is regularly monitored in consultation with the staff; review regularly and update, as needed, to maintain the highest standards

4.3   Support Services – Communications Subject Matter Experts

- Supplement the OMO/SMO staff on an as-needed basis (when funding permits)
- Maintain availability for consultation services
- Explore new and diverse technologies

5.0   Key Principles

As a representative of ALMR and the OMO/SMO, personnel must have a commitment to providing exceptional communications to all audiences. Representatives must embrace the following key principals:

- Provide honest and open two-way communication
- Provide succinct, accurate and easily accessible communications
- Ensure all communication, spoken and written (paper or electronic versions) are concise, easily understood, timely and kept up to date
- Ensure published materials adhere to the ALMR organizational style and are easily and instantly identifiable
- Ensure communications are readily accessible, appealing and demonstrate inclusion to those who would benefit, including those agencies difficult to engage
- Ensure all parties are in concurrence with communications plans and the message, and tools and timing are agreed upon in advance

6.0   Implementing the Strategy

It is essential that both external and internal ALMR stakeholders and peer group audiences understand the structured approach to communications the OMO/SMO are responsible for, and their roles in making it happen.

Key communications priorities should be identified, organizationally supported and used as the cornerstones for strategic implementation plans.

Examples of priority communications are:

- ALMR System updates
- System/site maintenance notifications, scheduled and unscheduled
- Policy, processes, protocols and procedural notices

7.0   Request/Complaint Resolution Procedures

All information requests or complaints will be tracked and/or coordinated through the following:

- Via telephone, email, other written correspondence or in person
- Logged into the tracking database by the SMO and a Service Work Order is generated
- Operations Manager reviews the information request/complaint and determines the responsible agency/group to address the issue
- Email or letter is sent to the initiating individual/agency notifying them of the status of their request/complaint
- Operations Manager reviews the status of outstanding request(s)/ complaint(s)
- The initiating individual/agency is updated via email/letter, as appropriate
- When the information request/complaint is resolved, the Service Work Order is closed
- Operations Manager, or staff, sends an email/letter to the initiating individual/agency informing them of the issue closure and requesting confirmation of the resolution
- Copy of the agency email/letter and the corresponding response is filed

Requests for general ALMR information will be received and addressed immediately by the Operations Manager or Documentation Specialist. The requesting party will be referred to the web site for general information and sent any additional information via email or US Postal Service.

Help Desk contacts and hours of operation.

Normal Operations		
Contact Type	**Hours of Operations**	**Contact Detail**
In Alaska - Telephone	24/7 Coverage	907-334-ALMR (2567) in Anchorage or 1-888-334-ALMR (2567) for calls within Alaska, but outside of Anchorage
Outside Alaska – Telephone (including mobile phones)	24/7 Coverage	Out-of-State callers (personnel or agencies not residing in Alaska must dial 907-334-ALMR (2567)
E-mail	E-mail responses are sent Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. AST (except State and Federal holidays)	ALMR-helpdesk@beringstraits.com
In Person	Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. AST (except State and Federal holidays)	Visit the Help Desk at 5900 E. Tudor Road, Suite 121, Anchorage, AK during normal business hours

Complaints are submitted using the Customer Complaint Record (Attachment C to the SMO Customer Support Plan), which can be located on the ALMR web site.

8.0   Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review

The achievement of the goals and objectives of this strategy relies upon efficient and consistent use of a number of communications media. The OMO/SMO will continually interface with member agencies and the stakeholder community through face-to-face and telephonic interactions, as well as the distribution of pertinent information via electronic media (newsletters, website, Twitter® or email).

An analysis of the information regarding the OMO/SMO performance will be prepared annually by the User Council and presented to the Executive Council.

9.0   Communications Strategy Responsibility

The Operations Manager is responsible for driving the communications strategy by actively demonstrating and applying his/her principles to all aspects of his/her work. The Operations Manager will take responsibility for ensuring the successful implementation of the communications strategy by ensuring timely

contribution of relevant information through all ALMR communications avenues identified in this strategy.

Full implementation of the goals and objectives contained in this High Level Communications Strategy are dependent upon adequate funding from the cooperative partners.

10.0 OMO/SMO Staff Communications Responsibilities

OMO communications responsibilities are located in the OMO Customer Support Plan, Section 4.0. SMO communications responsibilities are located in the SMO Customer Support Plan, Section 6.0.

Appendix A
Operations/System Management Office Personnel

Operations Manager – Chris Letterman   907-334-2636
                                                  chris.letterman@wostmann.com

Documentation Specialist – Sherry Shafer   907-269-8408
                                                  sherry@wostmann.com

System Manager – Travis Conant   907-269-5062
                                                  tconant@inuitservices.com

System Technologist – Nikalus Fahnestock   907-334-2567
                                                  nfahnestock@beringstraits.com

System Technologist – David Rice   907-269-2567
                                                  drice@beringstraits.com

System Technologist – Dalton Conant   907-269-2567
                                                  dconant@beringstraits.com

Asset Manager – Claire Wittschiebe   907-269-2567
                                                  cwittschiebe@beringstraits.com

Help Desk – 1-888-334-2567 (outside the Anchorage area, but within Alaska) or
907-334-2567 (within the Anchorage area and outside Alaska) or
almr-helpdesk@inuitservices.com.