



**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**TMT Communications Working Group Meeting**  
**November 29, 2005**  
 DeIDOT TMC  
 Conference Room B



**Meeting Date:** November 29, 2005  
**Location:** DeIDOT TMC, Conference Room B  
**Purpose:** The goal of the Communications Working Group is to improve communications among local, state, and federal agencies by understanding, standardizing, and documenting communication processes.

**List of Meeting Attendees:**

<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Email/Phone</u>
Carey	Allen	DE Fire Police Association	abctow8757722@yahoo.com
Carpenter	Dave	NCC OEM	dcarpenter@nccde.org
Clacher	Jim	DeIDOT	jim.clacher@state.de.us
Dempsey	Dick	Kent 911	dickie.dempsey@co.kent.de.us
Donaldson	Gene	DeIDOT/TMC	gene.donaldson@state.de.us
Duval	Jen	Edwards and Kelcey	jduval@ekmail.com
Fantini	Maria	DeIDOT/Central District	maria.fantini@state.de.us
Faust	Patricia	DeIDOT/TMC	patricia.faust@state.de.us
Gillespie	Glenn	DEMA	glenn.gillespie@state.pa.us
Hufnagle	Louis	Edwards and Kelcey	lhufnagle@ekmail.com
Huttie	Joe	DSP – Troop 3 (Traffic)	joseph.huttie@state.de.us
Kibler	Larry	Civil Air Patrol	lkibler20@comcast.net
Lankford	Tom	DeIDOT/Central District	tom.lankford@state.de.us
Leonetti	Joseph	NCC Emergency Preparedness	jleonetti@co.new-castle.de.us
Metheny	Allen	KentCOM	allenmetheny@yahoo.com
Quinn	Dennis	NCC 911	dmquinn@co.new-castle.de.us
Reed	Jeff	DeIDOT South District	jeff.reed@state.de.us
Wagner	Regis	Edwards and Kelcey	rwagner@ekmail.com
Walls	Charlie	Kent Co. Fire Police Assoc.	302-335-5766

**Handouts provided during the meeting:**

- Meeting Minutes from October 25, 2005
- Inter and Intra Agency Communication Diagram
- TMC Coordination and Communication Checklist

Meeting schedules, minutes, and other relevant documents can be found on the TMT website:  
<http://www.deldot.net/static/projects/tmt/>

**Opening Remarks**

Gene Donaldson opened the meeting with a brief welcome and introductions from the meeting attendees. There were no comments regarding last meeting's minutes.

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**Open Discussion on Communications**

Gene explained that the goal of the Communications Working Group is to improve communications and incident response. The present level of communication at the scene of incidents among the primary responding agencies could use improvement. These agencies include Police, Fire/Ambulance, and DeIDOT. It has been noted that all three parties could greatly benefit from each other if there was more effective means of sharing and transferring data. Gene emphasized that his role in the Communications Working Group discussions is to facilitate the group and lead discussions among the responding agencies. It is important for responders to understand what each agency is responsible for during incidents and how they initially respond when an incident is reported. Gene asked a member of each of the three primary responding agencies to walk the group through how they initially react when they receive a phone call reporting an incident, what initial data they collect and how that information can benefit other responders.

First, Gene asked Dennis Quinn (NCC 911) to comment on what happens when someone calls the 911 center to report an incident. Dennis explained that they ask the caller for the location of the incident, the severity, if anyone is hurt, are trucks involved, the potential of a hazmat situation, the number of vehicles involved and if the roadway is being obstructed. The center will initially dispatch a police car and an ambulance. Based on this basic information gathered from the caller, the 911 center could also dispatch additional vehicles if the severity of the incident calls for it.

Next Gene asked Jim Clacher (DeIDOT TMC) to comment on the procedure that the TMC goes through when they receive a call reporting an incident and to explain what information regarding the incident they collect. Jim stated that the TMC will ask the caller for the location, if there is lane blockage, what type of incident occurred, how severe the incident is, how many vehicles are involved and if it is near a ramp.

Joe Huttie (DSP Troop 3) commented that the responders all need similar information. The number of State Police vehicles and personnel dispatched depends upon the severity and location of the incident. Once the police have had a chance to evaluate the situation, they can determine whether or not more police/vehicles are necessary. Joe also expressed that when he arrives on scene, as well as anyone else who is responding to an incident, it is necessary to stabilize the situation as best as possible before communicating any information with other agencies. Joe stated that when he arrives on scene of an incident, he does a brief site assessment, ensures the situation is stable and then proceeds to call the TMC as well as the corresponding County and reports updated information regarding the incident's location and severity. The accuracy of this updated information greatly aids in response times as well as the overall effectiveness of the incident management.

Gene asked Joe Leonetti to comment on what information his agency gathers when responding to an incident. Joe explained that they ask for similar information as the other agencies including location, if there are any injuries, if it is a hazmat situation, the type of roadway, and the severity of the incident. Joe also noted that different people have different perceptions about how severe an accident is. Joe explained that at times, five different individuals may report the same incident and all will state different levels of severity depending on how much experience that person has involving

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witnessing accidents. There may also be discrepancies about the location of the accident, as people are unsure of where they are exactly or how to accurately report the location. These issues emphasize the importance of the first responder on scene evaluating the situation and relaying accurate information back to their agency so they can relay the information to other groups of responders.

Gene summarized the responses from the different agencies and noted that all responders need the same basic information. That information includes:

- Location
- Severity
- Number of vehicles involved
- Level of injuries (if any)
- Hazmat or environmental condition

It would be greatly helpful to all parties in this group to develop a communication strategy that streamlines the incident information gathering and sharing process.

### **Stages of Incident Response**

Gene reviewed the five basic stages that happen when an incident occurs on a roadway. They are as follows:

- Detection - An incident has occurred and it is reported to emergency response personnel, either through 911, the TMC or by other means.
- Verification - Responders confirm the reports of the incident by confirming the location and severity.
- Response - Based on the verification, it is determined how many responders to dispatch to the scene and what kind of equipment is needed to effectively handle the situation.
- Clearance - Responders perform their roles at the scene of the incident to clear the roadway.
- Recovery – The final stage when the roadway is restored to normal and responding agencies can regroup and prepare for the next incident.

Effectively communicating this information can save each agency time and effort that would be best spent in a more productive way than gathering the same information that has already been collected by the other agencies. Every minute lost can prove costly when lives may be on the line. Trish Faust (DeIDOT TMC) added that improved training within DeIDOT can help increase the efficiency and effectiveness of response as well.

### **Incident Environment**

Jeff Reed (DeIDOT) expressed that it is important that all responders know who is in charge at the scene of the incident. The first emergency responder on the scene is assigned the Officer in Charge (OIC) or Incident Commander and that person continues to operate as the OIC until the Fire Chief or a higher ranking official arrives on the scene and officially assumes command. As each agency

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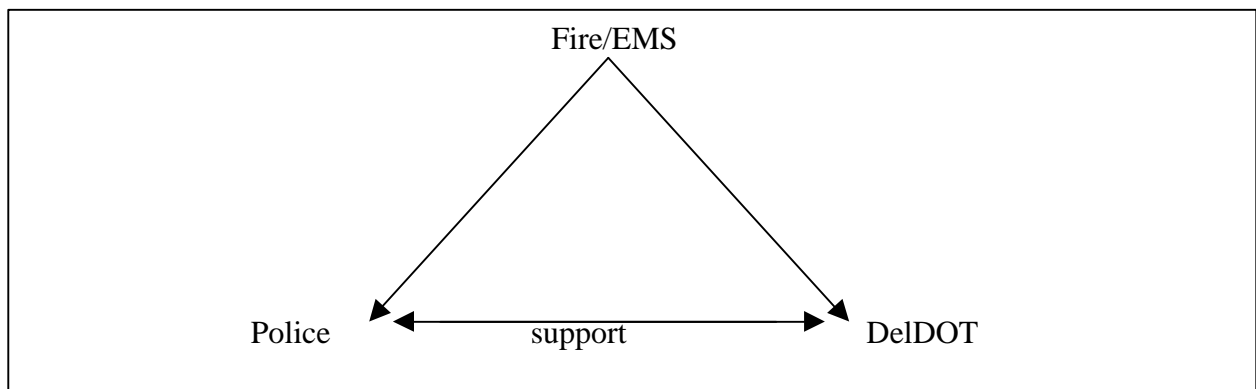
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completes their responsibilities, authority over the scene is transferred to the other agencies. The order is as follows:

- First Responder on Scene- The first person on scene (regardless of agency) is temporarily in charge of the scene until they are officially relieved by the Fire Chief and/or a high ranking official.
- Fire Chief- The Fire Chief is the primary OIC once they are on scene. They are in charge until rescue efforts are made and the situation is safe from fire and other hazards that the fire company can mitigate. While the Fire Chief is in charge, they have the power to delegate responsibility to the other responding agencies. If the Chief is unable to delegate this responsibility, then the other agencies perform their roles as they feel is best until the Chief directs them otherwise. It was recommended that the Chief assign someone to coordinate the activities of all of the agencies and keep the lines of communication open.
- Police- If there is an investigation, the police are in charge of the incident scene once the fire and ambulance responders are finished with their roles.
- DNREC- When there is a hazmat situation, The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control takes command. This happens once the investigation stage is completed by the police and it is determined that hazardous materials are a threat. If there are no signs of a hazmat situation, then DNREC does not play a major role in the incident management.
- DeIDOT- DeIDOT is the final agency to take command. Restoration of the roadway is the primary role. It is up to DeIDOT to clear the road of debris, and make the highway safe for travel. During the incident they provide support to other agencies by maintaining maintenance of traffic.

“Triangle of Command”



Allen Metheny (Kent Comm) added that there is concern over the ability to identify the person in charge of the incident. In many cases, it is difficult to discern the OIC from everyone else on the scene. Suggestions were made from the group to wear identifying clothing or have a highly visible Velcro patch that attaches to the standard orange vests that responders are required to wear when working.

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**Closing Comments**

It was noted how each responding agency requires similar data when responding to an incident. It was also noted that most responders have had frustrations communicating with other agencies in the past when managing incidents. Effective communication techniques and a clear communication strategy can mitigate many problems responders face and can greatly aid in response times and the overall effectiveness of incident management and mitigation. Gene added that there are many lessons to be learned from major incidents that have occurred recently throughout the country. The 9-11 incident in New York City was a major communications breakdown between the fire, police and public works responders. The Katrina evacuation in New Orleans is another example where better communications could have helped save lives. This Communications Working Group has the ability to structure incident management communication procedures with all three primary responding groups avoiding costly communication problems in the future.

**Next Meeting**

**The January meeting is scheduled for Wednesday January 11, 2006 at 10:00am at the Kent County Communications Center.**

Any questions or concerns can be directed to Gene Donaldson at [gene.donaldson@state.de.us](mailto:gene.donaldson@state.de.us) or (302) 659-2404. Additionally, Edwards and Kelcey is providing consulting support and helping assist DeIDOT in coordinating the efforts. Regis Wagner can be reached at [rwagner@ekmail.com](mailto:rwagner@ekmail.com) / (610) 701-7000.