

Notes/Minutes  
RNUG meeting  
December 8, 2005

RNUG (RACOM Network User Group) convened at 8:45AM on December 8, 2005 at 201 West State Street in Marshalltown, IA. Sixty nine members from 42 agencies were registered to attend, but snow storms prevented several from attending. Users attendance was 43 and several RACOM employees participated.

The meeting was hosted by Sheriff Rick Penning and led by Terry Brennan of RACOM.

Tom Boeckmann, IDPH; Mark Shearer, IDALS; Captain Phil Fordyce, Fusion/LEIN; and Tony Crandell, CAP/HLSEM each introduced their agencies objectives and how they have used the network to improve their communication and meet these needs. Each of their agencies also has a likely need for direct radio-radio communication with other users on the network.

Gregg Miller, President of RACOM, addressed the issue of *Interoperability* and the impact it is having in the United States. Interoperability is not a technical issue, rather policy and procedure. He presented the question to the group about having a common system-wide talk group that would enable any agency to communicate directly with any other agency, radio to radio. GID (Talk Group Identification #) 911 has been designated for this purpose in the RACOM database.

He stated that GID 911 has been programmed into all of Dubuque County's 600+ units. Ken Runde stated Dubuque County had used the talkgroup when working with Aquila.

Issues surrounding this talk group to be discussed and determined by RNUG are:

- Is a state-wide GID/talkgroup necessary?
- Should GID 911 be forced to every site (It was explained that traffic from any talk group is not sent to tower sites that don't have someone logged into that talk group. Therefore, in order for a radio to hear traffic on a talk group that is in its scan list, someone else must already be logged onto that talk group at the same tower site. "Forcing" the GID 911 talk group to every tower site would alleviate this problem, and every radio that was scanning GID 911 would hear it. The potential downside of "forcing" to all tower sites is that folks will hear more traffic that doesn't pertain to them.
- Should GID 911 be programmed into every radio on the RACOM network? or just dispatch centers and key personnel?
- What should be the protocol/procedure for using this GID?
- Is this GID programmed to be assigned when radio powered up OR in each radio's scan list?
- Should the GID be programmed for "receive only"
- Is more than one interoperability GID needed?

Much discussion was centered around how a state-wide GID could be utilized and the impact it would have on all RACOM users. Phil Fordyce suggested the GID only be used to alert users and give instruction to move to another GID for communication for the affected user(s).

Ted Kamatchus, Marshall County Sheriff, stated he believed a forced state-wide GID is necessary, and that it should be forced to all communication centers. He also felt this user's group would need to set policies for the use of such a GID. Using GID 911 as a "calling channel", the state could then be divided into areas (1 through 4 for example) and further GIDs could be assigned to each of those areas. These GIDs would not be forced or scanned. Therefore, only those directed to these area GIDs would have to listen to the traffic on them. This allows the whole state to be aware of the problem/disaster, and provides an avenue to channel the problem to a certain area. Fordyce agreed to this method of use, but suggested a name or color be used instead of a number so that it doesn't cause confusion with other state subdivisions (like EMA Regions 1-6, or LEIN Regions 1-6).

Miller stated that all of these efforts are in support of the longer term state initiatives to secure funding and new technology. In fact, he's had several discussions about RACOM providing its channels to the state and creating a "Port Authority" to oversee the statewide communications. That's the ultimate solution, but would take at least a few years. We need a sense of urgency getting prepared for events that could happen yet tomorrow and should pursue these efforts.

Discussion was held about having a directory of all LIDs (each radio has a unique Logical Identification #, or LID) and publishing them on the RACOM website, [www.racom.net](http://www.racom.net). This would enable anyone with a full keypad on their radio to individually call (a one-to-one call) others outside their agency. A suggestion was also offered to consider listing only the dispatch center LID instead of every individual LID for that agency. A list of GIDs could also be addressed. It was decided that RACOM should contact each agency to determine which agencies want to be a part of this directory.

Sandi Hutchcroft, Dubuque County Consolidated Dispatch, stated she would like to have all members of RNUG take a proactive role on purchasing new units as a group to reduce the cost of replacing units or purchasing new units. This discussion led to the possibility of RNUG applying for grant money that would benefit all RNUG members. Kamatchus felt that a 501C3 or 28E corporation would need to be formed. The funds received through this group could then be channeled to the private entities. There was overwhelming agreement that this statewide representation would have significantly more influence in securing major funding than any smaller, local or regional attempt. Dennis Rudolf of LEIN suggested this notion aligns with the mission of the Fusion Centers too.

Ken Runde stated he believed a governing body would need to be established to provide the leadership and direct RNUG. Rick Penning nominated Ken Runde to resume role of chairperson. Ken accepted. The group agreed the remaining committee members are: Tom Boeckmann, Tony Crandell, Ted Kamatchus, Phil Fordyce and Sandi Hutchcroft. Decisions about the interoperability talk group, procedures, LID directory, 28E's, etc. will be tasked to this leadership committee.

Fordyce believed a user's agreement needed to be written and then signed by all users.

Brian Krumm talked briefly about the rebanding that will begin in the next 6-12 months. He explained the affects this will have on the RACOM network and the users. Frequencies currently owned by public safety customers will not change. All frequencies owned by RACOM will be changed. He explained to the group that MDXs, MDRs and PCSs radios will not work on the new frequency band. Nextel is required to replace all of these radios.

Krumm, also, introduced the new line of MA/Com radios and described the features of each. The P7100 and M7100 replace the MRK, LPE and Orion radios. These new radios are P-25 compatible.

The newest introductions, the M7200 and P7200 are dual band/multi mode units that will work on 700 MHz and 800 MHz, and P-25, EDACS and OpenSky trunking formats. Krumm stated that these radios will work completely across the existing RACOM network and on any new system that the state would implement. Also, any other organization that is considering a new P-25 system could use these radios to also gain access to the RACOM network and interoperability with RNUG entities.

The last portion of Krumm's presentation addressed the expansion of the RACOM network and briefly addressed RACOM's disaster recovery plan.

Tony Crandell told the group about his experiences talking with all public entities in the state of Iowa and their level of concern and understanding of Interoperability in Iowa.

Metro areas are supportive, but don't have the same sense of urgency. They're very self sufficient.  
Level of interest – Medium                      Priority – Low

The rural areas are not totally informed about the state's vision. Until a major event happens that affects them, they feel able to get along. Funding is low and a big concern for them.  
Level of interest – Low                              Priority – Low

State agencies, mid-sized cities and Counties and all "support agencies" are most affected by the lack of interoperability and are very cognizant of the need for change. These are the agencies most likely tasked in joint operations, and DOT and State Patrol have a need to upgrade their day-to-day communication systems.

Level of interest – High                              Priority – High

#### Issues

- New state system is most likely hundreds of millions of dollars
- No funding source available and the legislators are relatively unaware of the need
- Local and rural are skeptical of a top-down solution from state agencies

#### What we should do now

- Continue working immediately available solutions
- Use existing solutions to define, test and resolve operational and governance issues
- Grass roots education to agencies and legislators
- Stand up an ad hoc leadership team to lead the effort until the Governor/Legislature charters one

After discussion about what can be done to educate and get interoperability as a priority in the state of Iowa; Alan Kakac, Iowa Counter Drug, suggested a state-wide exercise could be established to see the 'needs' of the state. This exercise would, also, show the legislature how important interoperability is to the state of Iowa.

Boeckmann noted that all agencies need to share their knowledge and to "show and tell" what the network has done for them. It is essential to get this knowledge out to everyone.

Mike Miller of RACOM presented Broadband Mobile Data Solutions. Agencies are finding that officers have to spend 2-3 hours per shift in the office doing paperwork. If employees can access all

their information – email, reports, records inquiries, pictures, video, etc from the car, instead of the office, they can spend significantly more time in the field.

Safety is another driving concern. When they can access information is as important as what they can access.

Mike presented the extensive evaluation and testing performed to derive a best-in-class solution that optimizes bandwidth, coverage area and cost. The solution is in several towns already.

For more information on any of these topics, contact Terry Brennan @ (888) 752-1015, [terry.brennan@racom.net](mailto:terry.brennan@racom.net) or RNUG Chairman, Dubuque County Sheriff Ken Runde @ (563) 589-4420, [krunde@dbqco.org](mailto:krunde@dbqco.org).

User Attendees:

Don West	Air Methods Life Flight - Des Moines
Mark Johnson	Black Hawk County Sheriff's Office
Rick Wulfekuhle	Buchanan County EMA
Rob Koppert	Cass County EMA
Tim Vest	Coralville Police Department
Angela Buskohl	Covenant Medical Center
Deb Bagenstos	Covenant Medical Center
Sandi Hutchcroft	Dubuque County Consolidated Dispatch
Ken Runde	Dubuque County Sheriff
Rick Penning	Grundy County Sheriff
Tim Wolthoff	Grundy County Sheriff's Office
Tony Crandell	HLSEM/CAP
Jeffry Gauthier	HRSA Planner - Region 5
Tom Boeckmann	IDPH
Mark Banta	Iowa Army National Guard
Steve Godwin	Iowa Correctional Institute for Women
Alan Kakac	Iowa Counter Drug S&S
Chris Doyle	Iowa Counter Drug S&S
Eric Schuler	Iowa Counter Drug S&S
James Pingle	Iowa Counter Drug S&S
John Kruzich	Iowa Counter Drug S&S
Randall McClain	Iowa Counter Drug S&S
Ronnie Wray	Iowa Counter Drug S&S
Mark Shearer	Iowa Dept of Agriculture
Marvin Shultz	Iowa Dept of Human Services
John Benson	Iowa HLSEM
Randy Goddard	Iowa HLSEM
Ron Roberts	Iowa State Patrol - Communications
Mo Warford	Iowa State Patrol - Communications
Paul Henze	Iowa State Patrol - Communications
Clinton Meadows	LEIN - Region 1
Phil Fordyce	LEIN - Region 3
Dennis Rudolph	LEIN - Region 4
Ted Kamatchus	Marshall County Sheriff
Rock Templeton	Marshalltown Police Department
Teresa Lang	Marshalltown-Marshall County Communications
Scott Raney	MidAmerican Energy
Wayne Rude	MidAmerican Energy
Steve Noland	Polk County Emergency Mgmt
Elizabeth Faber	Public Health Planner - Region 2