



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

People serving people.

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DIRECTOR

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MERA Executive Board
95 Rowland Way
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Re: Update to VHF Overlay Plan

Dear Directors:

On May 20, 2009, the MERA Executive Board accepted the VHF Overlay Plan. The Operational Issues Working Group has reviewed the attached updated version.

The purpose of the VHF overlay is to provide for radio coverage and to provide radio procedures if the MERA system goes into fail soft, site trunking or overload. It is another tool in the tool box to be used in connection with MERA primarily to divert tactical traffic off to VHF as necessary. The movement of traffic would occur after consulting with Dispatch as directed by Duty Chiefs and Incident Commanders.

Each agency is responsible for dissemination of the plan contents and training of their staff. A VHF Overlay drill is being planned for May/June.

It is recommended that the Executive Board review, accept, and make available the VHF plan.

Very truly yours,

Craig Tackabery
MERA Operations Officer

Attachments

Accounting

Airport

Building Maintenance

Capital Projects

Certified Unified Program
Agency (CUPA)

Communications
Maintenance

County Garage

Disability Access

Engineering & Survey

Flood Control &
Water Resources

Land Development

Purchasing

Real Estate

Reprographic Services

Road Maintenance

Stormwater Program

Transportation &
Traffic Operations

Waste Management

VHF OVERLAY PLAN

I. VHF Overlay

a. Purpose of VHF Overlay

- i. To provide for radio coverage and radio procedures if the MERA system goes into fail soft, site trunking or overload
 1. This plan is meant to serve as a framework of the VHF frequencies available should fire agencies opt to migrate from the MERA system and onto the VHF frequencies
 2. This plan is meant to be flexible and it is advised to phase resources into the use of this plan rather than migrate all fire agencies from the MERA system and onto the VHF frequencies
 3. This plan is to be used in conjunction with the existing MERA resources
 4. The use of this plan is very similar to the use of VHF frequencies during a large wildland fire
 5. For the purpose of this plan, "Local Government" refers to all DPW, Fire and Law Enforcement agencies
 6. To continue interoperability with DPW and Law Enforcement agencies, the resources described are available to these agencies

b. Procedure for Migration to the VHF Overlay

- i. When a MERA fail soft, site trunking or overload situation occurs all Dispatch Centers shall notify the resources they are responsible for on the radio or by phone and notify field commanders by pager
- ii. During periods of extreme MERA demand it may be advisable to migrate some MERA users off the MERA system and onto the VHF Overlay
 1. It is unlikely that all users will need to be migrated off the MERA system
 2. The decision making process for migrating users off the MERA system can be based on demand, region or discipline
 3. Dispatch routines must stay on the MERA system and migrate tactical traffic onto the VHF Overlay first, followed by Command traffic and finally Control traffic
- iii. During a MERA fail soft, site trunking or overload situation, consider alternate forms of communication and divert non-essential, non-emergency traffic to MDCs, fax, cell phone, land line, etc. when possible
 1. Radio discipline is vital, keep conversations short and pertinent
- iv. The decision to migrate MERA users of the MERA system can be made by Duty Chiefs, Incident Commanders and the Director of Marin County Department of Public Works (or designee).
 1. If field personnel decide to migrate from the MERA system, their respective Dispatch Center should be consulted prior to migration

2. The Marin County Communications Division (Radio Shop) may be consulted to provide MERA system data; furthermore, the Marin County Communications Division may advise dispatch agencies that it would be advisable to migrate users from the MERA system
 3. A Dispatch Center may recommend to an Incident Commander or Duty Chief the migration of resources to the VHF Overlay
 4. Anytime resources are migrated from the MERA system within a region, agencies should consult with their partner agencies and notify like agencies from other regions
 - a. For example: if the Marin County Fire Department migrates users from the MERA system, the MCFD Duty Chief should consult with the MCSO Watch Commander and the MCDPW Yard Supervisors and should contact neighboring fire agencies and inform them of MCFD resources migrating to the VHF Overlay
 - v. When the decision is made to migrate MERA users from the MERA system, all dispatch agencies will notify their resources and all other dispatch centers that users will be migrated from the MERA system and will advise which users are to be moved and conduct a roll call of the affected resources and notify field commanders by pager
 1. Command personnel will continue to monitor the appropriate MERA talkgroups to maintain interoperability with resources that have not migrated to the VHF Overlay
 - vi. If users are to be migrated onto the VHF Overlay based on the type of traffic, the following order of traffic types should be used
 1. Tactical
 2. Command
 3. Control
 - vii. Users may be migrated onto the VHF Overlay based on demand of one incident or the demand of a region
 - viii. The use of COMM/OES requires approval from the Marin County Communications Division (Radio Shop) prior to use
 - ix. Dispatch Center Identifiers
 1. The call sign for the Marin County Communications Center (Comm Center) is "Marin Comm" followed by the VHF channel being used
 - a. Example: "Marin Comm, Engine 19 on COMM/OES"
 2. The call sign for the Marin County Fire Department Emergency Command Center is "Woodacre" followed by the VHF channel being used
 - a. Example: "Woodacre, Engine 1586 on MRN Local"
- c. Channel Allocation
- i. Tactical Frequencies
 1. Use Fire CONV 13, Fire CONV 14, PD Car 1, PD Car 2, UTAC 1, UTAC 2 UTAC 3, CALAW 4, DPW FLAG 1 and DPW FLAG 2 for tactical use before using VHF tacticals

2. Marin County Local Government
 - a. CDF Tac 1, VTAC 11 – Tomales, Pt. Reyes, Inverness, Throckmorton, Bolinas, Stinson Beach, Muir Beach and Marin City
 - b. CDF Tac 4, VTAC 14 – Hicks Valley, Nicasio, Lucas Valley and Woodacre
 - c. VFIRE 22, VTAC 12 – Novato Area, Central Area
 - d. VFIRE 23, VTAC 13 – San Rafael Area, Southern Marin Area
 - e. CALAW 2 or 3 and CalCord – All areas
 - i. CALAW 2 and 3 can be used when interoperability with law enforcement resources with VHF radios is needed
 3. Novato Local Government
 - a. VFIRE 22, VTAC 12, CALAW 2, CalCord
 - i. CALAW 2 can be used when interoperability with law enforcement resources with VHF radios is needed
 4. San Rafael Local Government
 - a. SNR Tac, VTAC 13, CALAW 3, CalCord
 - i. CALAW 3 can be used when interoperability with law enforcement resources with VHF radios is needed
 5. Central Marin Local Government
 - a. VFIRE 22, VTAC 12, CALAW 2, CalCord
 - i. CALAW 2 can be used when interoperability with law enforcement resources with VHF radios is needed
 6. Southern Marin Local Government
 - a. VFIRE 23, VTAC 13, CALAW 3, CalCord
 - i. CALAW 3 can be used when interoperability with law enforcement resources with VHF radios is needed
 7. With the exception of CALAW 2 and 3, dispatch centers cannot communicate on VHF tactical frequencies
- ii. Command and Control Frequencies
 1. MRN Local
 - a. Novato and Marin County Local Government
 - i. Moving both regions at once to MRN Local should be avoided
 - ii. If CDF CMD 2 is available it may be considered for Novato or Marin County Fire Department
 2. SNR VHF
 - a. San Rafael Local Government
 3. COMM/OES
 - a. Central and Southern Marin Local Government

4. VFIRE 21 and CDF CMD 2
 - a. Large scale incidents requiring a large out of county mutual aid response
 - b. Consider requesting additional CDF and NIFC Command Nets
 5. MED M/A
 - a. Out of county medical mutual aid and air ambulances
 6. Command and Control frequencies are the only VHF frequencies the Dispatch Centers can communicate on
- d. Immediate Fire Migration
- i. If a large scale, unexpected event occurs (such as an earthquake), it may be advisable to migrate all fire service users to the VHF Overlay to eliminate MERA overload
 1. The decision to move all fire resources must be made by the County Fire Chief (or designee) as the Mutual Aid Coordinator
 - ii. Immediate Fire Migration Process
 1. After the decision has been made to migrate all fire resources to the VHF Overlay all dispatch centers will notify their resources of the migration and perform a role call of all resources
 2. Dispatch functions will remain of the MERA System
 3. Control, Command and Tactical functions will migrate to the VHF Overlay
 4. The "All Fire Service to VHF" Communications Plan will be distributed to all fire agencies
- e. When the MERA fail soft, site trunking or overload situation abates, all Dispatch Centers shall contact the resources they are responsible for by radio, phone or pager and advise to return to routine communications