

Title: Managing Talkgroups – Interoperability Talkpaths

Index: 204-K

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1. Purpose

- a. The purpose of this procedure is to support the use of interoperability talk-paths: talkgroups and channels.

2. Background

- a. In order to facilitate interoperable communications, wide area talkgroups, Direct channels, mobile Digital Vehicular Repeater Systems (DVRS) channels, mutual aid channels in both 800 and 700 MHz and Arizona Interagency Radio System (AIRS) channels have been identified for use during interoperable situations, including planned multi-agency special events, emergency situations and other unplanned operations.
- b. Generally, when talkpaths are used for interoperability they will be used in the clear; non-encrypted. An exception involves situations where the interoperability participants are equipped with compatible encryption and are working a joint operation where encrypted communications are desirable.
- c. In most cases day-to-day communications will take place on internal agency dispatch and operational talk-paths. In the following situations, agencies may need to move communications to interoperability talk-paths:
 - i. To communicate with other users who do not have the agency's internal talkgroup(s).
 - ii. To allow another user to monitor communications when they do not have the agency's internal talkgroup(s).

3. Procedure Statement

- a. PCWIN Interoperability talkgroups are intended to be programmed in Zone C (in portable radios) for ease of use in operations, as well as uniformity for programming and training. These talkgroups are designed to be the primary method of interoperable communications among PCWIN members.
 - i. The interoperability talkgroups have been allocated by PCWIN user discipline

1. The first eight talkgroups (1-8) in the interoperable zone are allocated per the radio user's discipline: Fire/EMS; Law; or Public Works (PW)
 2. The next eight talkgroups (9-16) in the interoperable zone are the same interoperable talkgroups in every PCWIN member agency's radio: COMMON9-COMMON16. This collection of interoperable talkgroups allows any PCWIN agency the ability to communicate with another, regardless of their respective disciplines
- ii. The interoperability talkgroups in positions 1 and 16 should be used for unplanned, emergency situations (each is at the end/stop of the rotary knob) and should only be used for lower priority or planned events if all other interoperability talkgroups are already being used.
1. Prior to beginning operations the utilizing agency should monitor the talkgroup to ensure that another agency is not already using the talkgroup.
 2. COMMON16 should only be used when an emergent situation requires interoperability between the different disciplines. Intra-discipline operations should be restricted to discipline-specific Interoperable talkgroups
 3. In a multi-agency operation that utilizes an Interoperable talkgroup, the initiating agency has the responsibility for providing dispatcher support during the event. While dispatch responsibilities can be transferred between the different PCWIN agencies involved in a multi-agency operation, if the Interoperable talkgroup is utilized in a patch only the radio console that initiated the patch can manipulate (add or remove talkgroups from the patch) while the Interoperable talkgroup is utilized in a patch. This is a radio system limitation and not dictated by any PCWIN policy or procedure
- b. When the same talk-path(s) are requested for two or more incidents, assignments should be based on the descending priority levels listed below:
- i. Disasters, large scale incidents, or extreme emergencies requiring mutual aid or interagency communications.
 - ii. Incidents where imminent danger exists to life or property.
 - iii. Other incidents requiring the response of multiple agencies.
 - iv. Pre-planned events requiring mutual aid or interagency communications.
 - v. Drills, tests and exercises.

- vi. Incidents involving a single agency where supplemental communications are needed for short term agency use.
- c. The interoperable talk-paths are for official use only and not intended for inter or intra agency talk-around usage
- d. Only personnel involved in the incident(s) working on the interoperable talk-path may transmit on the talk-path with the exception of priority transmission related to the incident(s) or specific personnel involved in the incident(s).
- e. In the event multiple simultaneous incidents, within the same priority level, are competing for interoperability talk-paths, consideration should be given to reallocating operations to other communications talk paths based upon:
 - i. Severity of the events
 - ii. Number of agencies involved
 - iii. Whether or not involved agencies are from different disciplines
 - iv. The ability of one or more of the involved dispatch operations having the ability to patch other talk-paths together
 - v. Any other common talk-paths the involved agencies may be able to use
 - vi. When at all possible, agencies already using an interoperable asset during an event should not be redirected to another resource
- f. Interoperability talk-paths may be used by PCWIN member agencies at any time, pursuant to this policy. By design, the PCWIN interoperability talkgroups, along with the Direct channels (PCWIN and mutual aid) and the AIRS2 channel are always in a ready state
 - i. PCWIN member agencies are responsible for making arrangements with other involved agencies to meet on a specific interoperable talk-path. This may be accomplished in-person while in the field or through the involved Dispatch Center(s)
 - 1. For preplanned or protracted events coordination for use of interoperability talk-paths should be accomplished via [ICS Form 205 \(Incident Radio Communications Plan\)](#) at least one business day prior to the planned use.
 - ii. PCWIN member agencies may check if interoperable talkgroups or AIRS2 are already busy or reserved
 - 1. Prior to using an interoperability talkgroup or AIRS2, the agency should first monitor the selected talk-path for activity, and then announce on the talk-path the intention to use it. If the talkgroup is deemed busy, the process should be followed for the next

interoperable talkgroup in line. If AIRS2 is busy, the [AIRS MOU](#) dictates priority of use

2. The agency requesting to use an interoperable talk-path is generally responsible for providing dispatcher support. However, the involved agencies may agree on one of the other available dispatch centers, involved in the incident, to provide dispatcher support
 3. Although it is recommended to utilize dispatcher support while operating on an interoperability talk-path, it is not mandatory
- iii. A PCWIN agency may reserve the use of the interoperable talkgroup or AIRS2 for a planned event
1. The PCWIN website (www.pima.gov/pcwin) hosts a shared calendar where interoperability talkpath reservations should be annotated. Pre-planned events or protracted emergencies should be listed on the calendar with appropriate point of contact information. Agency dispatch center personnel and PCWIN staff will have access to the login information to manipulate the calendar and will be responsible to update the calendar with reservations.
 2. All reservations must include: point of contact information, including phone number and agency name; type of event; start date/time; expected duration; agencies involved
 3. PCWIN members do not provide dispatch support for interoperability talk-paths on a day-to-day basis. Agencies must make arrangements for dispatch monitoring while planning their event
- iv. Only PCWIN member agencies may reserve an interoperability talk-path for a planned operation

g. There is no support for emergency button activations on interoperability talk-paths

- i. PCWIN member agencies may seek programming of their radios to revert to one of their own talkgroups monitored for emergency button activations. As a reminder, a radio initiating an emergency call with the radio programmed to change (revert) to a different talkgroup, by design the radio will no longer be on the original (in this case interoperable) talkgroup
- h. If an encrypted talk-path is patched to an unencrypted talk-path both should be treated as non-secure or unencrypted

- i. The interoperability talkgroups are recorded. The AIRS2 channel, designated for use in Pima County, is recorded. Mobile DVRS channels are not recorded but they could be connected to a talkgroup which may be recorded. Direct channels and mutual aid channels are not recorded
- j. With regard to the interoperable talkgroups, the involved PCWIN member agency will use the dispatch console to raise the priority. By so doing, the interoperable talkgroup will be visually identifiable as in-use by all other dispatch consoles on the PCWIN system. It will also raise the priority level to a two (2)
- k. PCWIN member agencies may patch their talkgroups with interoperable talkgroups to enhance operations
 - i. The agency making the initial patch is the only agency that can add or subtract from the patch
- l. Agencies using the interoperability talk-paths must use the following protocols
 - i. Use only plain language, no codes or call types
 - ii. Identify their agency and unit call sign at the start of each transmission
- m. PCWIN interoperability talk-paths shall be labeled the same on all subscriber radios and dispatch consoles

4. Applies to

- a. All Members including Associate, Conditional and Interoperability Participants that have access to PCWIN interoperability talk-paths
- b. This policy does not apply to member assigned or “owned” talkgroups shared among PCWIN member agencies

5. Supporting Rules

- a. [Arizona Interagency Radio System \(AIRS\) Memorandum of Understanding including the AIRS Standard Operating Procedures \(SOP\)](#)

6. Conditions for Exemption or Waiver

- a. None