

# Capitol Region Council of Governments

## Public Safety Communications Interoperability Audit Services

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Revised Final Assessment Report

September 25, 2006



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**Document Purpose**

This document provides the overall results of the MTG Management Consultants, LLC, team’s assessment of the 39 Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) agencies. The report includes an overview of the assessment process, identifies trends from the agency evaluations, and presents several recommendations for CRCOG to improve interoperability across the region.

Version	Date	Description/Changes
1.0	6/22/06	Initial unedited version.
1.1	6/26/06	Discussion draft.
2.0	7/28/06	Updated with comments and revised town assessment scores.
2.1	9/25/06	Revised based on comments from the City of Hartford.

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## I. Executive Summary

This report presents the results of the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) interoperability audit. The key goal of this document is to describe the trends that emerged from the agency assessments and provide recommendations for CRCOG based on those trends. For context, the report gives an overview of the interoperability audit project and the assessment process. This executive summary briefly discusses the assessment results and the recommendations for CRCOG.

### A. Assessment Results

The MTG Management Consultants, LLC, team conducted agency assessments for each of CRCOG's 39 towns. The assessment had two components: a survey and an interview. For the interviews, the team asked agencies several questions to measure their performance in nine assessment areas:

- Incident Response.
- Emergency Operations.
- Preparedness.
- Logistics.
- Information Interoperability.
- Technology Infrastructure.
- Communications Survivability.
- Communications Capability.
- Communications Interoperability.

After completing the assessments, the MTG team analyzed the results and discovered a number of trends. The trends are organized into three categories: scoring trends, business trends, and interview trends. They are listed below by category.

- Scoring trends.
  - » Most towns have a medium readiness level.
  - » There is a wide range of readiness ratings.
  - » Towns scored well on communications survivability and capability but poorly on information interoperability.
  - » A correlation exists between readiness and town size.

- Business trends.
  - » Tolland County Mutual Aid Service (TN) provides communications advantages.
  - » Colchester Emergency Communications (KX) provides communications advantages.
  - » Small town information technology (IT) limits interoperability.
  - » Smaller organizations are more informal.
- Interview trends.
  - » Strong town preparedness reflects town emphasis.
  - » Weather events are the primary threat to the region.
  - » Interoperability is a mind-set, not a capability.
  - » Basic needs impact preparedness and interoperability.

The trends formed the basis for the recommendations presented in this report.

## **B. Recommendations for CRCOG**

This report makes several recommendations for CRCOG to improve interoperability and preparedness in the region. Some of the recommendations have a long term planning horizon whereas others can be implemented more quickly. We have divided our recommendations into regional and CRCOG categories depending on who should lead the effort, although they all will normally require both regional attention and CRCOG support. The recommendations are listed here:

- Regional.
  - » Improve the RAFS offering.
  - » Improve regional communication offerings.
  - » Implement “pod” Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs).
  - » Use emergency warning sirens.
  - » Focus on weather events as the primary planning priority.
  - » Develop common Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) functional capabilities.
  - » Promote FEMA’s online National Incident Management System (NIMS) certification.

- CRCOG.
  - » Provide a planning facilitator.
  - » Resolve state and regional Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) differences.
  - » Provide additional regional IT services.

Section V of this document describes these recommendations in greater detail.

### **C. Conclusion**

The assessment process provided towns with a rating that assessed overall interoperability. The average score was a 59 or medium readiness. A high readiness level was any score above 66, and several towns reached this level. It is important to note that this is a difficult level to achieve and requires consistently average and good scores across most of the areas assessed. Towns should focus on the areas of their assessment that have medium or low “Meets Business Needs” (MBN) scores. These are areas in which towns can and should improve interoperability. The capability ratings require greater funding or discipline than is practical or necessary for many communities.

Of course, the aggregation of these scores resulted in the recommendations listed above. The region as a whole and CRCOG, as the regional facilitator, should assist town efforts to achieve the readiness levels through cooperative programs, support and, where possible, regional and pod funding.

## II. Introduction

CRCOG engaged MTG's team of consultants to perform the Public Safety Communications Interoperability Audit. The purpose of the audit was to assess the CRCOG organizations' communications technologies and, more specifically, the communications equipment's operability and survivability in the event of natural or man-made incidents. CRCOG is the largest of Connecticut's 15 regional planning organizations and acts as a voluntary association of municipal governments serving the City of Hartford and 28 surrounding suburban and rural communities.

### A. Project Summary

MTG's team of consultants consisted of professionals from MTG, the prime contractor; Whys Solutions, LLC; and L-Tronics Inc. The team initiated the project by conducting a series of meetings with CRCOG management to identify project parameters and establish the project governance structure. The MTG team published an assessment guide describing the assessment process and outlining the specific criteria used to evaluate each agency. The assessment of each agency consisted of two components: a survey to gather basic information and a site visit. The MTG team conducted interviews with personnel from each CRCOG member agency and evaluated the municipality on several criteria. The interviews allowed the MTG team to develop the assessment matrix and fulfill the objectives presented below.

### B. Objectives

The overall objective of the audit project was to determine the interoperability, compatibility, and survivability of CRCOG's communications systems and identify actions necessary to improve them.

Specific objectives of the project included:

- Determining the capability of CRCOG's technologies and organizations to survive:
  - » Natural disasters such as wind, floods, earthquakes, and wildfires.
  - » Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosives (CBRNE) incidents.
  - » Concurrent acts of terror.
  - » Public safety human resources emergencies.
- Identifying areas for improvement regarding several elements of response planning that CRCOG agencies have established.
- Outlining activities, improvements, and courses of action that can be implemented by CRCOG to enhance the communications environment of its members.

All of the objectives identified at the outset of the project have been met within the scope defined below.

### **C. Scope**

The project examined all of the agencies within CRCOG for interoperability, compatibility, and survivability with respect to:

- Radio.
- PSAP.
- EOC.
- Telephonic services.

The scope of the assessment centered on CRCOG's member municipalities, but it also included some additional organizations that provide communication and response services to the member towns.

In addition, the assessment was a responder-based analysis of CRCOG's ability to act in response to natural and man-made incidents. A key element in incident response is the capability developed beforehand in both interoperability and the capacity to survive events and operate in the aftermath. The assessment examined three critical aspects:

- Interoperability on a day-to-day basis.
- Survivability.
- Interoperability in an incident.

The scope provided the basis for the interoperability audit that was completed.

### **D. Document Organization**

The remainder of this document is organized as follows:

- *Section III – Assessment Process Overview.* This section reviews the assessment process that was followed by the MTG team for each of CRCOG's member municipalities.
- *Section IV – Assessment Trends.* This section discusses some of the major trends that emerged from the towns' assessments.

- *Section V – Recommendations.* This section offers several recommendations to improve overall emergency management, preparedness planning, and communications interoperability in the CRCOG member municipalities.

In addition, the following documents support this report:

- Assessment Guide, dated May 26, 2006.
- Agency Assessment Reports (for each town, provided directly to the towns), various dates.

### III. Assessment Process Overview

MTG conducted a three-step process for the town assessments. In the first step, the MTG team developed and distributed a survey for the agencies to complete. The purpose of the survey was to gather basic information about their organizations, services, communications capabilities, equipment and systems, emergency operations capabilities, and documentation. Agencies were asked to complete and return the survey in time for the MTG team to review it prior to the site visit. Even after repeated requests, several surveys were never returned to the MTG team.

In the second step, the MTG team conducted site visits to interview representatives of each CRCOG member agency. Where applicable, the team confirmed the information provided in the survey and requested any clarification needed. The team members asked each town a number of questions in several assessment areas:

- Incident Response.
- Emergency Operations.
- Preparedness.
- Logistics.
- Information Interoperability.
- Technology Infrastructure.
- Communications Survivability.
- Communications Capability.
- Communications Interoperability.

For each of the above assessment areas, there were four to six specific criteria that were meant to measure the area. Each criterion was evaluated based upon its **Capability** and degree to which it **Meets Business Needs (MBN)**. The capability was a rating (high, medium, or low) of the criterion's capability to grow and mature with the organization. The MBN was a rating (high, medium, or low) of how well the criterion actually met the specific business needs of the organization. A shaded cell in the scoring matrix indicated the rating that applied to that criterion based on capability and MBN.

For the final step, the MTG team presented the assessment to the agency for its review and to ensure that the facts were accurate and reflected the conditions of the organization. Where applicable, the MTG team incorporated the comments received from the CRCOG member agencies into the final assessments. Once all of the reports were finalized, the MTG team analyzed the assessment results, using the process described in subsection III.B below.

## **A. Assessment Methodology**

A separate document titled “Assessment Guide” is available that explains the assessment scoring and how each criterion is aggregated at an area level and then again as a composite score. The document also explains each of the criteria so that towns can review the findings and comments with an idea of what the evaluation team was looking for. This should help towns improve on specific points.

## **B. Assessment Conclusion**

After receiving the surveys and conducting the agency interviews, the MTG team analyzed the results. We looked at the information from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. For the quantitative analysis, we compared the performance ratings of certain groups of towns (e.g., geographic regions and centralized dispatch services). We also looked for correlations between the towns’ ratings and demographic features that may explain some of the variation in preparedness across the region.

There were also several qualitative results that emerged from the agency interviews. These trends are presented in the following section and provide the basis for the recommendations in this report.

## IV. Assessment Trends

This section presents three specific types of trends that were evident from the town evaluations: scoring, business, and interview trends. The scoring trends subsection below presents overall context trends derived from the assessment process. The business trends subsection identifies trends derived from scoring in specific areas that were common between towns with common business situations. The interview trends subsection describes common assessment trends that were apparent to the MTG team as we conducted interviews.

### A. Scoring Trends

Specific trends are apparent from the scoring process used in the evaluation. These trends highlight general situations but cannot be attributed to any apparent business causes or specific business issues for the region. Rather, these trends present general observations that establish a context for more specific trends in the next two subsections.

#### 1. Most towns have a medium readiness level.

All towns scored a medium or high level of interoperability readiness. The overall readiness average score was 59. The low score was a medium rating of 40 and the high score was a 78. Overall, the standard deviation of the scoring was 9.9, meaning the majority of scores were between 48.1 and 67.9. EXHIBIT I portrays the towns that received high and medium readiness ratings.

Our conclusion is that the town scoring level of medium is a regional trend that is likely to continue until the Capitol Region Emergency Planning Committee (CREPC) and regional efforts can have meaningful impact on town preparedness programs.

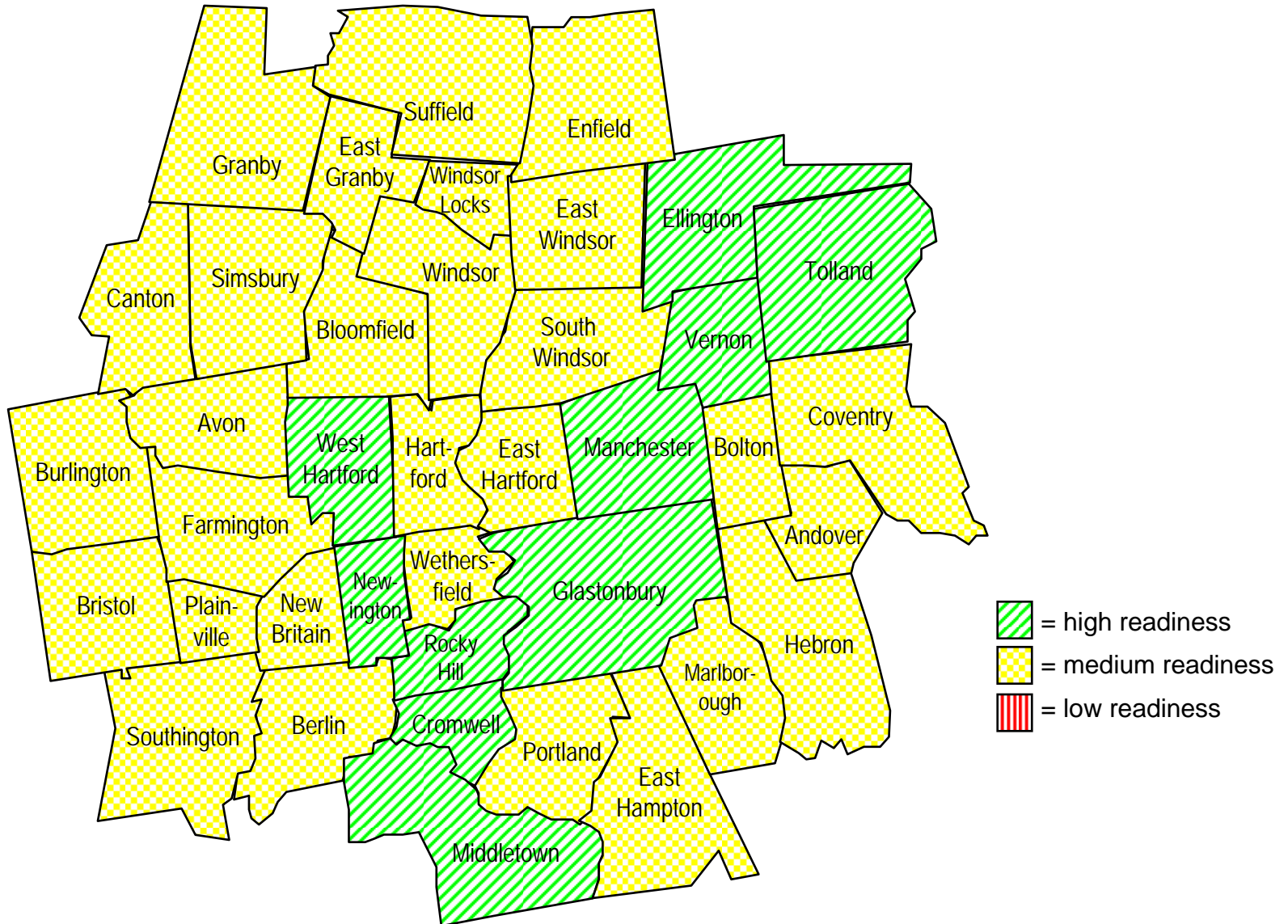
#### 2. There is a wide range of readiness ratings.

The overall readiness ratings in each area varied greatly. Of the nine areas:

- The greatest variance was exhibited in the area of preparedness. Preparedness scores ranged from a low of 11 to a high of 91, with an overall average of 52.
- The area with the least variance was incident response. This area's scores ranged from a low of 37 to a high of 94, with an overall average of 66.

Figures 1 and 2 below depict the overall and area scores of the all the towns in the study. These results show the wide range of scores and overall differences between the various areas.

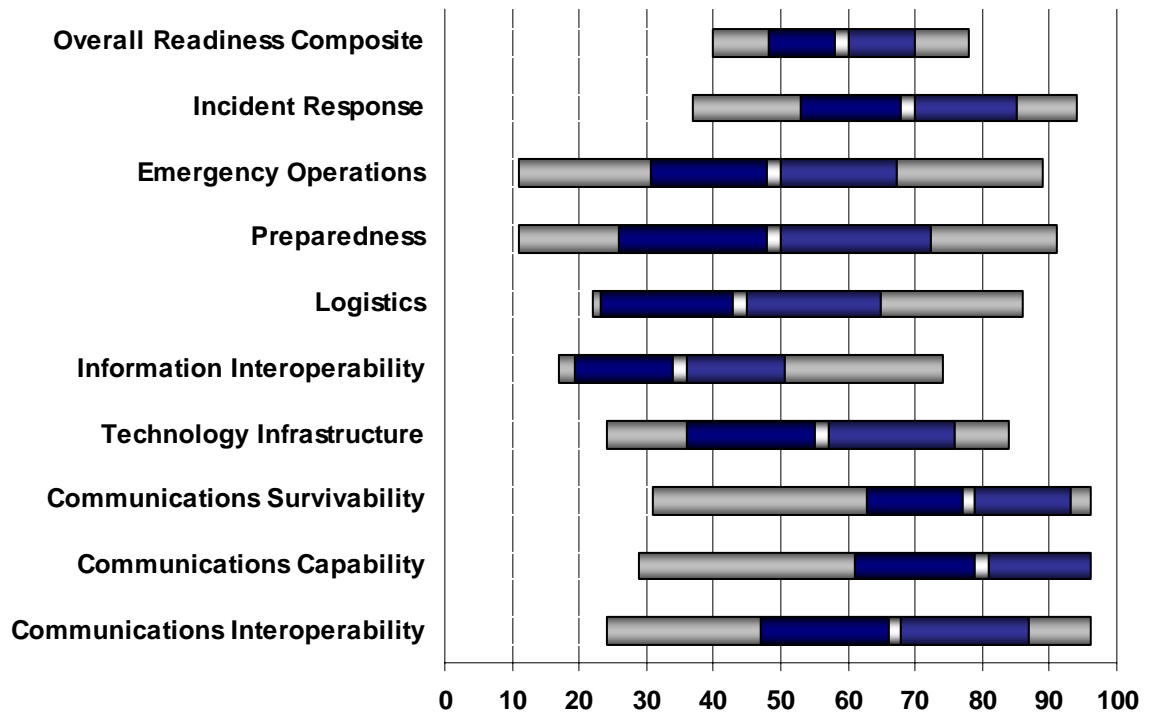
CAPITOL REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS INTEROPERABILITY AUDIT SERVICES  
**CRCOG OVERALL READINESS COMPOSITE**



**Figure 1 – Scoring Averages**

Assessment Area	CRCOG Average	Lowest	Highest
Overall Readiness Composite	59	40	78
Communications Survivability	76	31	96
Communications Capability	73	29	96
Incident Response	66	37	94
Communications Interoperability	65	24	96
Technology Infrastructure	57	24	84
Emergency Operations	53	11	89
Preparedness	52	11	91
Logistics	50	22	86
Information Interoperability	38	17	74

**Figure 2 – Scoring Range and Deviation**



The information in Figure 1 shows the overall areas sorted by the average scoring for that area. The interesting trend highlighted in Figure 1 is the overall success of incident and communication efforts within the region. It also underscores the necessity to focus on town-level preparedness and supporting technology.

Figure 2 provides a more sophisticated examination of the scores. Each bar represents the median score, one standard deviation above and below, and finally the range of scores outside the standard deviation where applicable. This visualization shows where towns were concentrated within the overall ranges. This figure shows more clearly the strengths and weaknesses observed in Figure 1. Variations in strong areas are near the upper range while variations in the weaker areas are near the bottom of the range for these areas.

### **3. Towns scored well on communications survivability and capability but poorly on information interoperability.**

As mentioned above, the scores clearly exhibit trends showing the following areas are strong:

- Communications Survivability – 76.
- Communications Capability – 73.
- Incident Response – 66.
- Communications Interoperability – 65.

In contrast, the trends also show these areas are weak:

- Emergency Operations – 53.
- Preparedness – 52.
- Logistics – 50.
- Information Interoperability – 38.

The results show that the efforts that towns have invested in Incident Command System (ICS) and NIMS training are affecting incident-level responses, and the regional focus on interoperability is positively impacting the town communication systems.

The extremely low average rating in information interoperability is a reflection of the need to be able to share information beyond the face-to-face communications in the command post. The lower scores are also reflected in other trends because business priorities and technology tend to impact the weak areas directly.

### **4. A correlation exists between readiness and town size.**

The larger town and cities tended to score higher on the overall readiness composite. This reflects two primary trends:

- Larger organizations have more resources to spread across the various requirements evaluated in each area, making it more likely that an agency will address some portion of the assessment area.
- Conversely, smaller organizations, although nimble and reactive, do not have enough staff or resources devoted to the routine tasks necessary to keep the preparedness project running, share information, and maintain a high level of overall preparedness.

This information demonstrates the correlation between size and scoring.

**Figure 3 – Size Versus Score**

Size Range (2004 Population)	Towns Scoring < 51	Towns Scoring Medium	Towns Scoring High	Towns Scoring > 70	Total
< 10,000	4 (44%)	5 (56%)	0	0	9
10,000 to 20,000	4 (31%)	5 (38%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)	13
> 20,000	0	11 (64%)	2 (12%)	4 (24%)	17

This is clearly a linear progression that is supported by observations that will be discussed in the subsections below.

**B. Business Trends**

The business trends are derived from scoring in specific areas that were common between towns with common business situations. The trends highlighted demonstrate how towns in a particular situation will likely react to preparedness and interoperability issues.

**1. Tolland County Mutual Aid Service provides communications advantages.**

Towns that are served by TN on average performed higher than the rest of CRCOG in the following areas: incident response, emergency operations, logistics, communications survivability, communications capability, and communications interoperability. This difference is depicted in the table below.

**Figure 4 – TN Increase**

Communications Survivability	Communications Capability	Communications Interoperability
1	12	7

The numbers in the table indicate the difference between average TN agency scores and the average overall non-TN or non-KX agency score. It is important to note that this is not a statistically valid sample, but it was backed up by evaluation team observations.

**2. Colchester Emergency Communications provides communications advantages.**

Towns that are served by KX on average performed higher than the rest of CRCOG in the following areas: communications survivability, communications capability, and communications interoperability. This difference is depicted in the table below.

**Figure 5 – KX Increase**

Communications Survivability	Communications Capability	Communications Interoperability
9	23	6

The numbers in the table indicate the difference between average KX agency scores and the average overall non-TN or non-KX agency score. It is important to note that this is not a statistically valid sample, but it was backed up by evaluation team observations.

**3. Small town IT limits interoperability.**

As Figure 6 shows, the ability of the smaller towns to effectively use technology as a tool for information interoperability is limited. This results from a combination of many factors but follows the common sense logic that these organizations just do not have the necessary funding or resources.

**Figure 6 – Size Versus Information Interoperability**

Size Range (2004 Population)	Average Score	Total
< 10,000	30	9
10,000 to 20,000	37	13
> 20,000	42	17

This is a direct trend that also reflects a town’s emphasis on programs.

**4. Smaller organizations are more informal.**

Smaller organizations tended to score 10 percentage points less in areas that related to specific procedures and formal practices. This was often explained as a matter of knowing everyone and not needing to document a process that everyone knows.

## **C. Interview Trends**

The interview trends were common assessment trends that were apparent to the MTG team as we conducted interviews. The trends observed below were repeated in many of interviews but were not specifically supported by scoring or other results from the assessments. The trends identified below are situations that affect interoperability and preparedness and were often the most significant elements of various towns' assessments.

### **1. Strong town preparedness reflects town emphasis.**

Towns that scored higher in the preparedness area had key leaders that were actively involved in the preparedness program. The leadership provided motivation for all town organizations to participate, update plans, and generally consider and prepare for significant events. Another key difference in these towns was that although one individual was assigned to conduct the preparedness efforts, leadership from the town and agencies supported the work.

### **2. Weather events are the primary threat to the region.**

Although a few towns have specific threats, the common and most likely threat to Capitol region communities is a significant weather event. Unfortunately, many of the towns focus on mandated events that are important but less likely. In fact, many towns concentrate planning efforts around the more unlikely events and rely on common sense and "normal" practices to handle the weather events.

### **3. Interoperability is a mind-set, not a capability.**

This conclusion was drawn by all members of the assessment team. Towns that viewed interoperability as a way to conduct day-to-day business exhibited the higher interoperability capabilities. This was more often than not because the town was working to eliminate barriers to interoperability. Most of the efforts are focused on internal barriers; however, most towns are aware of the need to address external barriers as well. Communities that did not believe they needed to have interoperability were also less capable internally.

### **4. Basic needs impact preparedness and interoperability.**

Routine town needs overshadowed most of the preparedness efforts. Even the better equipped EOCs were a result of desires to have a training facility as well. When examining day-to-day preparedness activities, the priorities of routine town business trumped preparedness concerns and efforts. Of course, with limited resources, towns must focus on the core and immediate business needs of the community, but it has impacted preparedness.

## V. Recommendations

The assessment information and trends above create an overall picture for the region. This picture is one of strong communication capabilities and acceptable preparedness. There are some specific areas in which the region can act as a group and through CRCOG to further enhance and improve interoperability and preparedness. The recommendations below are divided into regional and CRCOG categories although they will normally require both regional attention and CRCOG support. The division indicates our recommendation on where the leadership should be placed.

### A. Regional

The following recommendations are actions and programs that the regional leadership should emphasize and enact through the various committees, organizations, and CRCOG support activities already in place such as CREPC. All of the recommendations are stated in the heading, then described in further detail below each recommendation.

#### 1. Improve the RAFS Offering

The primary concern with RAFS is that it was reported that there are coverage holes in some areas. Specific recommended actions are to:

- Enhance the RAFS system to provide reliable regional coverage.
- Develop a radio system, similar to RAFS, for the fire departments, beyond Intercity Fire.

This may not be an immediate need; however, getting the coverage gaps corrected will increase the use of RAFS within the region.

#### 2. Improve Regional Communication Offerings

EXHIBIT II shows the patchwork mix of radio frequency usage in the region. This is a common occurrence with independent organizations; however, the regional structure provides an opportunity to set common standards and begin to move communities to a more common solution that will meet daily emergency and major disaster communication needs. Specific recommended actions are to:

- Create a “radio system (and interoperability) task force” to aggressively address interoperability issues throughout the region. The task force should consist of the following types of individuals: radio-knowledgeable staff members from various agencies within the CRCOG region and representatives from the vendors serving the agencies in the region.



- Develop a standard wide-area backup radio system that would serve all entities in the region with a common group of frequencies.
- Attempt to standardize radio frequency usage throughout the region.
- Commit to deploying low-cost interoperability devices (“black boxes”) to every agency in the CRCOG region.<sup>1</sup>
- Develop an area-wide paging system for alerting fire personnel and provide every dispatch location (and at least one fire station) with encoders that are pre-programmed with the tones for every area fire department.
- Develop a statewide EMA radio network, consisting of several simplex frequencies, and assign monitoring and transmitting responsibilities to several regional facilities throughout the CRCOG area.

Many of these recommendations are lesser steps that should improve interoperability. The most challenging of these recommendations is to move to common frequencies throughout the region. EXHIBIT II clearly shows the need to simplify, but getting a single solution deployed is a costly effort and one that will require a gradual migration to common frequencies. Setting the standards and common vision with a single advisory committee will facilitate the process.

### 3. Implement Pod EOCs

EOC capabilities in the region range from excellent facilities and good activation and operational plans to little or no EOC capability.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the EOC capability was not directly correlated to the size of the organization. Rather, EOC capabilities were a combination of political will to establish an EOC and organizational will to support and maintain it. Although the Regional Emergency Disaster (RED) Plan and the Regional Communications Centers (RCCs) are excellent regional resources, we recommend that small groups of the towns with common borders establish pod EOCs.

The pod EOC is a location where any of the three or four communities that share the facility can go to activate its EOC. Several things must be accomplished for a pod EOC to work correctly:

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<sup>1</sup> This recommendation uses the term “black box” as an interoperability device between existing town frequencies, not a STOCS-like solution. One sample product is a “briefcase radio repeater” by Daniels Electronics Ltd. (see [www.danelec.com/products/hardware/packaging.asp](http://www.danelec.com/products/hardware/packaging.asp)). There are several other products and manufacturers.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the need for the pod EOC is high. Town EOCs are inconsistent and generally do not afford the benefit to the community that they should. By combining several EOCs into a single pod EOC, communities can logically pool resources and share response efforts. This does not reduce a community’s control over its assets; rather, it seeks to greatly enhance capabilities by strengthening bonds across communities.

- Pod communities must formalize an agreement to jointly operate from the facility. Further, the specific procedures should be clearly documented.
- Pods must identify and assign responsibility for routine support and upkeep processes.
- Each agency must ensure that its voice and data communication links are available at the pod location.
- Existing EOC equipment should be moved to the pod EOC.
- Interoperability exercises should be conducted between pod communities.
- Formal relationships to one of the RCCs should be established so that the RCC can function as a backup for the pod EOC.
- Periodic tests of the facility should be conducted, with all members of the pod rotating testing responsibility.

The pod EOC can be established at an existing EOC location, public facility, or private facility, as long as the use of the EOC by any member of the pod is an understood priority over any other use.

#### **4. Use Emergency Warning Sirens**

Several communities can make more use of their warning sirens. Consider area-wide emergency warning sirens to alert the public and warn citizens of impending danger and to seek public alert information provided through the various mechanisms in place. This should be clearly coordinated with the current WARN plan.

#### **5. Focus on Weather Events as the Primary Planning Priority**

As noted above, the key threat to the region's communities is weather. Several weather-related events were reported during the assessment. In some cases, lessons learned have been incorporated into the preparedness plans. However, most of the towns do not focus their EOPs on the primary threat, weather.

We recommend that all of the region's plans be updated to focus on the serious weather events that affect each community. This will engage towns in the preparedness programs, get them used to practicing their plans, and set the towns up to routinely exercise their plans. With that as a base, alternative tasks and activities can be defined for activities that are necessary to support other types of events. This is a fundamental shift in approach. The critical success factor that results from this recommendation is to get towns practicing what they are most likely to face.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Weather-focused EOPs are intended to be NIMS-compliant but use weather event responses as the primary examples and response focus.

## 6. Develop Common PSAP Functional Capabilities

Although many of the dispatch locations could be consolidated as a matter of economics and efficiency, most towns are unwilling to explore and fully consider that option. In the absence of consolidated services like TN and KX, key features should be explored for existing 9-1-1 centers.

- At every PSAP, institute a manually operated switch that can be activated by dispatch personnel to effect an instantaneous transfer of the 9-1-1 calls to a pre-designated backup PSAP. (This system is in place in Ohio and works well.)
- Procure and implement “reverse 9-1-1” on a regional basis.
- Expand the “intercom” system that is currently used to connect the state and regional dispatch facilities to include more dispatch centers in the CRCOG region.

We understand that some of these elements, such as reverse 9-1-1, are currently under review and acquisition.

## 7. Promote FEMA’s Online NIMS Certification

Many but not all towns actively support ICS training and NIMS certification. This should be continued, and some type of statistics should be maintained and reported on the degree of each town’s certification. Use of the ICS in actual incidents is something CREPC could monitor and assist communities with. In addition, overall exercising and certification should be a regional summary that is kept up to date. This is intended to enhance existing capabilities, such as the Connecticut Fire Academy training.

### B. CRCOG

These recommendations are actions and programs that CRCOG could potentially lead. The areas discussed in this subsection focus on support for which regional support is practical or appropriate. All of the recommendations are stated in the heading, then described in further detail below each recommendation.

#### 1. Provide a Planning Facilitator

CRCOG should hire a planning facilitator who is assigned to spend specific amounts of time each month assisting the towns with their EOPs. This will accomplish several key things:

- Having individuals work with all of the plan and contacts will provide more consistency between plans and community preparedness.
- A dedicated person to handle specific actions and staff roles for a town will increase the level of participation that the towns demonstrate.

- CRCOG will develop a greater awareness of the town needs across the region. Inventories can be collected, staff information shared, and regional communication can be increased.

This is a great opportunity to make a difference for the towns in the region.<sup>4</sup> This support for the towns is essential. Towns require both planning assistance and administrative support within their preparedness programs. Some towns are providing minimal support, and most are reliant on individuals completing preparedness work as additional assignments.

## **2. Resolve State and Regional EOP Differences**

The region and DEMHS use different planning models, which has created different formats for the towns. This difference should be resolved and an updated format should be published for the towns. Coupled with the recommendation to match EOPs with the weather threat as the primary planning issue, a significant level of effort may result from this recommendation.

## **3. Provide Additional Regional IT Services**

CRCOG should provide services to meet some of the key IT needs within the region. The services can be staffed by CRCOG staff or by contracted individuals that provide defined services. The key needs are to:

- Implement an automated wide-area personnel callout system that could be used to supplement personnel in any sector of the CRCOG region, when needed.
- Start discussions regarding centralized dispatch/computer-aided dispatch (CAD)/ records management system (RMS) facilities for the CRCOG entities, patterned after the Tolland County Mutual Aid dispatch center.
- Develop a CRCOG intranet with a town-based folder of information.

The last item in this list will allow towns to openly share the integration information between towns and the pod town. Many of the towns do not have the staff or funding available to adequately complete plans.

## **4. Continue to Promote Multiagency and Regional Drills**

CRCOG should continue to support drills in which agencies are able to exercise their plans for a limited duration training event. These drills should focus on multiple levels and have goals for each level so that no person is standing around without key mission-based training

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<sup>4</sup> During the initial briefings on this report, it was noted that the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) is funding four or five of these positions across the state. CRCOG has filled this position but may need to modify the roles and responsibilities to accomplish this recommendation.

occurring. Failure to use personnel during events will detract from the event and lessen future participation.

### **C. Conclusion**

Many of the recommendations above are complex, expensive, and far-reaching; however, some are near-term solutions or critical efforts that should be implemented without delay. The five activities that MTG believes CRCOG and the region should focus on are listed below.

- Pod EOCs.
- Planning coordinator.
- Black boxes.
- Single planning template.
- Weather-focused EOPs.

These represent efforts that will have tangible and beneficial results for both the region and the towns within the region.