

Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response System (ARMER) Standards, Protocols, Procedures

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1. Purpose or Objective

The purpose of this standard is to establish a policy that allows disaster relief organizations (DROs) to be included as Authorized Users of the ARMER system for communications services.

2. Policy Background

DROs providing disaster relief services are defined as Eligible Users of the ARMER system, as provided for in section 90.20(a)(2)(vii) of the FCC Rules and Regulations. The Statewide Emergency Communications Board (SECB) is empowered under Minn. Stats. §403.36, Subd. 2, to enter into system use agreements with such eligible DROs.

3. Operational Context

In Minnesota, there are the multiple DROs that operate in times of emergency and disaster. The American Red Cross and the Salvation Army provide initial response disaster services for both large and small-scale emergencies occurring in the community. These organizations often work directly with public safety agencies, and direct communication is often necessary.

The other volunteer organizations that are under the umbrella of the Minnesota Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (MNVOAD) are coordinated through the local incident command and/or state Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Usage of DRO talkgroups will be assigned to the organizations, as set forth in paragraph 4 of this State Standard.

4. Recommended Protocol/ Standard

DROs will be authorized to use the system for the following types of communications: leadership coordination in times of disaster for coordination between Government Agencies to DRO members; DRO members to Government Agencies; coordination between DRO members to other DRO members. All communications using the system shall be limited to the protection of life and property, emergency situations, disaster relief planning,

response, mitigation, recovery and related supporting operations, including planned drills. Internal day-to-day, administrative, and other non-disaster relief related communications are not permitted. These types of operations include but are not limited to:

Volunteer Coordination
Damage Assessment

Bulk distribution of goods
Mass Care facilities

Clean up and debris removal
Mobile feeding operation

Assignment of priorities and use of the system by DRO members for internal DRO communications will be considered public service and non-critical operations, as defined in Appendix 2 of the SECB State Standards.

The following four priority 7 talkgroups will be established for internal DRO operations: DRO-1, DRO-2, DRO-3, and DRO-4. These talkgroups will not be capable of encryption.

DRO-1 primary use by the American Red Cross Disaster Services

DRO-2 primary use by the Salvation Army Disaster Services.

DRO-3 and DRO-4 will be assigned to a DRO, as needed, through coordination with Incident Command (IC) and MNVOAD.

Operation on other public safety, public service, and interoperability talkgroups by MNVOAD members will be at the direction of the Responsible Government Official coordinating the incident.

5. Recommended Procedure

The SECB or any Authorized User, at their discretion, may loan cache radios, lease, or otherwise temporarily provide radios to a DRO for the authorized purposes provided for within this standard.

The acquisition cost of radio equipment for use on the ARMER system is the direct responsibility of the DRO. There will be no access fee charged by the SECB for access to the ARMER system; however, users will be responsible for their radio programming and any future upgrade costs. Programming shall be done by a vendor approved in accordance with State Standard 4.10.0.

DROs shall enter into a User Agreement with the contracting entity, as defined under State Standard 1.9.0.

6. Management

DROs providing disaster relief services will be managed by the System Administrator for the contracting entity. For further information on contracting entities, refer to the flow chart found in State Standard 1.9.0.

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS), Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM), is the lead agency for planning and coordination of a DROs communications operation. DRO radios, even if purchased by the DRO, shall be considered part of the State of Minnesota subscriber fleet for purposes of FCC licensing. Radio IDs will be allocated by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT).