


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 3, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MICHELE R. EVANS, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: SUBMISSION OF INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATIONS GRANT
APPLICATION TO THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT TO PURCHASE COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT

ISSUE: City Council consideration of a grant application, in the amount of \$100,000, for the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) Interoperable Communications Grant.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the submission of the grant application totaling \$100,000 to VDEM to purchase four mobile repeaters, four satellite phones, and four 800 MHz radios; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: The Commonwealth of Virginia created an Interoperability position to coordinate initiatives, communicate information, and facilitate discussions on interoperability between and among the Commonwealth's regions and jurisdictions. The Commonwealth, in conjunction with the local municipalities, developed a strategic plan to serve as the basis for defining the key goals, initiatives, and performance measures to assess progress. The Commonwealth Preparedness Working Group (CPWG) set aside \$1.7 million to support local interoperability projects. The projects included funding requests for planning, evaluation, or equipment related to improving communication interoperability in Virginia.

DISCUSSION: This grant proposal is seeking funds to help enhance the City's current communication system by providing funds to purchase four mobile repeaters, four satellite phones, and four portable radios. The proposed project will augment the City's communication system with a modest amount of equipment that can be deployed immediately to provide short-term coverage for improved communications. The equipment is portable and can be used by City agencies and surrounding jurisdictions. Also, the equipment can be used to communicate with our regional and state partners in the event that traditional methods fail.

The equipment will help solve the problems that are encountered when our teams respond outside of the area, when calls are dispatched to high-rise buildings and garages without radio coverage, and when a catastrophic event occurs and cellular towers are overloaded.

The four portable repeaters will be placed on our Regional Hazmat Response unit, Technical Rescue Team apparatus, and two Battalion Chief vehicles. The four satellite phones would be placed on our Regional Hazmat Response unit, and in our Emergency Operations, Fire Communications, and Police Communications Centers. These locations would allow the communications centers, EOC, and field operations to communicate. The four 800 MHz radios will be given to the Health Department, which will ensure that all the first responding agencies are on the radio system, including Police, Fire, EMS, Emergency Management, Transportation and Environmental Services, and Schools, as well as the Health Department.

FISCAL IMPACT: The Interoperability Grant is designed to cover the total project budget for interoperability projects. The total cost of the equipment would be \$100,000. The mobile repeaters with the hardware and software cost approximately \$15,000 each, and the cost for four units would be \$60,000. The dual-purpose, satellite phones with voice and talk-group capabilities cost approximately \$6,000 per unit, and the cost for four units would be \$24,000. The 800 MHz radios cost approximately \$4,000 each, and the cost for four units would be \$16,000. There is no City match for this grant.

In addition, the City is also responsible for normal administrative costs associated with this grant. These costs include financial and reporting oversight provided by the administering agency (Alexandria Fire Department) as well as the Office of Management and Budget and the Finance Department.

The Fire Department has submitted the grant application in order to meet the deadline of December 21, 2004, with the understanding that subsequent City Council authorization would be required to accept this grant award.

A copy of the submitted grant application may be reviewed in the Office of Management and Budget, Room 3600, City Hall, during normal business hours.

STAFF:

Gary A. Mesaris, Fire Chief
Mark Penn, Emergency Management Coordinator
Laura Pettus, Emergency Management Analyst