

October 19, 2016

It's now 13 days until DaneCom is "live". As you already know, on November 1st the existing countywide radio channels used in Dane County Dispatch will be "turned off" and the new DaneCom trunked radio system will be "turned on" for most countywide communications in Dane County. If you communicate with Dane County dispatch via radio – even occasionally – you most likely will be affected by this exciting radio system cutover!

In a nutshell, here's the current cutover plan for November 1st:

- 5:00am Law enforcement will cut over to the new radio system
- 7:00am Fire & EMS will cut over to the new radio system
- Madison area hospitals will be cut over sometime that morning / early afternoon
 - Plans are in the works to maintain ambulance to hospital communications during these planned cutover time periods. More information will be provided to the area hospitals and EMS agencies once plans have been finalized.

Dane County Highway cut over to the new DaneCom radio system on October 10th and there have been no reported issues over the past nine days they have been using the system.

By now, any entity planning on using the DaneCom trunked radio system should be well into the programming and training process. Here's a reminder of the path to successfully being able to utilize DaneCom. I'm sharing this with this group because I have heard of a few entities that have missed a step or two along the way. I know that most entities have already completed some or all of these steps, but it's important to ensure these steps have been verified as completed correctly. Please see the two examples near the end of this communication demonstrating what can happen if a step in DaneCom readiness is skipped or otherwise completed incorrectly. Some missed steps are easy to "make up", but some are critical to your successful use of DaneCom. Listed below is the path to DaneCom readiness:

1. Acquire DaneCom – compatible radios, including the proper radio features such as the ability for a radio to function on a P25 trunked radio system. (if you haven't completed this step, you're not going to be ready for DaneCom cutover on November 1st)
2. Verify (and acquire if needed) all radios that will utilize DaneCom have proper wideband antennas. Narrowband antennas may allow your radios to work, but will likely result in reduced radio coverage.
3. Create a channel plan (what channels and talk groups do you want in your radios?).
4. Contact the DaneCom Radio System Administrator to verify or assign radio ID numbers for each radio you expect to work on DaneCom prior to asking your radio programmer to commence programming. If you're planning on having the ability to utilize WISCOM, you'll need to provide your radio information to them as well.
5. Submit your channel plan and radio ID information to your radio programmer, who may have additional questions or concerns about your plan(s).
6. Have your radios programmed for DaneCom. If your radios were already programmed for DaneCom "last year" or earlier, they must be reprogrammed in order to work on the current DaneCom system.
7. Train your staff on the use of the radio(s). Every radio manufacturer is different. Finding the push-to-talk and volume buttons should be relatively simple. Depending on how detailed your channel plan is, additional staff training for your specific make/model of radio may be necessary. Different makes/models of radios may have different ways of alerting the user to important events having to do with the radio

and/or radio system as a whole. Ensure your staff is familiar with any programmed radio features, tones, and visual displays. Once again, these notifications may be different from radio model to radio model. Also, radio notifications can also be different depending on your radio programming. This means that even though you may have seen another agency's Harris XG-75 radio "in action" doesn't mean that your agency's Harris XG-75 will perform the same way.

As you have most likely discovered over the past weeks, the path to DaneCom readiness isn't quick or easy. There are steps in the process that can easily (and catastrophically) be overlooked. Real-world examples:

- Following a recent DaneCom roll call, a department called me to advise they tried to participate, but all their radios showed that they were "out of range" and they were not able to get onto the DaneCom system. This was an entity within Dane County and was within six miles of a DaneCom radio tower.
 - It was discovered that although the entity had programmed their radios (and had utilized DaneCom back in 2013/2014), they were never reprogrammed with the updated DaneCom frequencies. Some radios are tolerant of such frequency changes, but others are not, as in this case.
- An entity who's office is less than 1.5 miles from a DaneCom radio tower (and the tower can be seen from their location) reported very poor to no DaneCom signal from inside of their office. Radio Techs found that their portable radios were equipped with narrowband antennas. Once a wideband antenna was attached to the portable, the radio quickly acquired the DaneCom system from inside the office.

These are just two examples of what can happen if a step is missed on the path to DaneCom readiness. The good thing about both of these incidents is they were discovered prior to "go live" and were relatively easy to correct. With only 13 days before we cut over to DaneCom, the ability to quickly correct these types of issues may be limited.

Please continue your preparations for DaneCom cutover. Plan for DaneCom to "go live" on November 1st. Only unplanned or unforeseen issues would change that "go live" date.

If you have any questions, please reach out to me.

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