

Port Fourchon Base of Operations

Initial operational area confined to the Port, approximately 5 miles across

Tower set up in the middle of the Port permitting portable radio coverage within the area of responsibility

In building coverage provided within the AOR



Port Fourchon Base of Operations

Operations set up utilizing national NIFOG frequencies 8TAC93 and VTAC34.

These frequencies were not monitored by the local dispatch or local resources.

Native radio system is part of the Louisiana Wireless Information Network (LWIN). LWIN was not full operational.

AOR Expansion

On 7 September the TFL was notified that our mission may be expanded to also provide fire suppression coverage for Grand Isle, nearly 20 miles away from the Port Fourchon AOR. This distance was too great to provide radio coverage with the current tower location.

Objectives –

1. Continue to provide in building portable radio coverage on Port Fourchon
2. Provide portable radio coverage on Grand Isle
3. Permit the TFL to talk with crews in both AOR

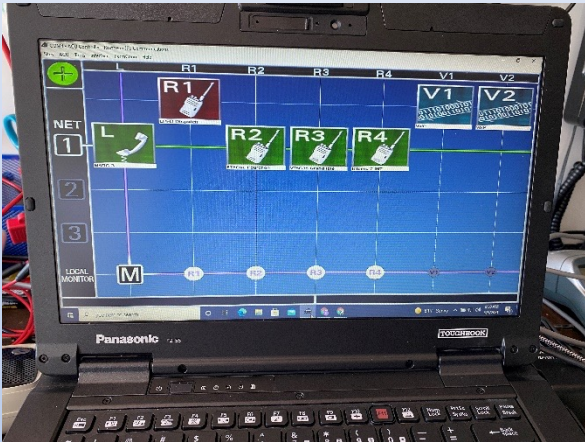
AOR Expansion



Tower was left in Port Fourchon to meet objective 1.

MARC 3's truck has additional repeaters and data satellite. Truck was positioned on the bridge between Port Fourchon and Grand Isle, approximately 70 ft above sea level. A VTAC36 repeater was set up and provided 80% portable radio coverage of Grand Isle, meeting objective 2.

AOR Expansion



A radio patch was set up inside the MARC Truck connecting 8TAC93 on Port Fourchon to VTAC36 on Grand Isle. This permitted the TFL to talk directly to crews in both AOR.



The Florida Communications Unit issued MARC 3 portable radios that were programmed to operate on the LWIN trunked radio system. Talkgroup “Interop7” was assigned to the Florida IMT for coordination and control. Interop7 was added into the radio patch to permit situational awareness at the ICP.

These radio patches required 24 hour monitoring by MARC personnel

AOR Expansion – Lessons learned

- Grand Isle reported in building communications issues on the east side of the island, where the BoO was located. A portabase radio was utilized to overcome these issues.
- 24 hr operations were taxing on personnel, especially when deployed as a type II MARC.
- Due to no shore power, the MARC truck was required to run continuously to provide power. Having a fuel truck imbedded in the EST permitted this to be successful.

LWIN Support

Native radio systems always out perform deployable resources. Deployable communications systems should always strive to bring native systems back online.

MARC 3 worked with the Florida IMT Communications Unit to help bring native systems back. This required multiple initiatives.

1. Programming the MARC radio cache for use on the trunked LWIN system.
2. Installing an 8TAC93 repeater on an existing 300 ft tower eliminating the need for the MARC 3 tower.
3. Assisting with trouble shooting and repair of LWIN repeater sites.
4. Requesting additional radio caches for use on the LWIN system.

LWIN Failure

The installation of an 8TAC93 repeater at the 300 ft LWIN site eliminated the need for the MARC 3 tower. As such, the tower was taken down and stowed on 12 September.

On the morning of 13 September, normal radio tests were conducted and the 8TAC93 repeater and all LWIN repeaters were found to be inoperable.

- No radio coverage on Port Fourchon
- No link with Grand Isle
- No link with Interop7

LWIN Failure – Contingency Plan

Port Fourchon crews were instructed to transition to a direct channel, 8CALL90D to provide direct communications until another system could be brought online.

Upon making access to the LWIN tower the power generator was found to have catastrophically failed overnight.

A replacement generator was requested and installed to bring the repeater site back online within 8 hours.

LWIN Support – Lessons Learned

- Requesting additional resources must be done early in the incident. Additional cache request took 7 days from initial request to be received, programmed and delivered to field personnel.
- Always maintain a redundant system that can be brought online in the event of a failure.

Dispatch Centers

Port Fourchon and Grand Isle are in 2 different Parishes and dispatch centers.

Contact was made with both dispatch centers early in the incident.

Lafourche Parish dispatch did not have NIFOG channels programmed in the dispatch console.

Lafourche dispatch utilized LMR radio, cell phone text messaging and Zello 2 way radio app to dispatch calls. EST1301 set up a separate Zello channel for internal communication.

Thinking “outside the box” helped overcome multiple issues. LMR is not the only answer to communications issues.

Terminology

Lafourche Parish – “Central Dispatch”

Jefferson Parish – “Jefferson Fire Control”

Code 4 – Situation under control, no additional units needed

“Tanker vs Tender”

Camp fire – Fishing camp (aka building) on fire



Terminology

NIIMS deployments should avoid using codes, signals or jargon. However, local terms or lingo may still cause confusion.

- Build a relationship with a local dispatcher/firefighter/liaison and discuss semantics, codes, lingo, jargon. You don't know what you don't know! Ask stupid questions!

Full Scale Operations

- EST Provided fire protection in 2 separate parishes, serviced by 2 different dispatch centers, within 3 different communities – Port Fourchon, Grand Isle, Galliano – Spread along 40 road miles
- Once the LWIN system was back online and reliable, communications were transitioned to LWIN channels.
- A radio patch was maintained between LWIN and a direct channel to provide radio coverage within the M/V Dino Chouest.

Cellular Service

Cellular providers had Cell on Wheels (COWs) deployed providing some coverage.

The Jefferson Parish IMT/Grand Isle BoO did not have adequate cellular coverage from COWs.

Contact was made with both FirstNet and Verizon field representatives who assisted with making adjustments to improve cell coverage, with limited success

Verizon COWs were within ½ mile of the BoO, however the antenna was not at full height.

Successes

- Mission critical communications were maintained for 28 days
- LWIN system was brought back online within 7 days
- In total 3 MARC units were utilized for Ida
 - MARC 5N – Type II
 - MARC 3 – Type II
 - MARC 1 – Type IV
- Assisted Jefferson Parish IMT with creation of an ICS205 Incident Communications Plan and maintained our own ICS205



Hurricane Ida MARC 3



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