



Greater Boston Police Council

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BOSTON MARATHON BOMBINGS HIGHLIGHT THE NEED FOR CONTINUED POLICE RADIO INTEROPERABILITY

**Greater Boston area police agencies raise concerns about a federal mandate that will
eliminate the critical wide-area police radio network used during the
Boston Marathon Bombings and Manhunt**

Boston, MA, May 13, 2013— Police agencies from across eastern Massachusetts are very concerned about the planned loss of the area-wide radio network that was used for communications throughout the week of the Boston Marathon Bombings. The Boston Area Police Emergency Radio Network (BAPERN) is used by 166 local, state, county, campus and federal law enforcement agencies¹ and spans a coverage area of over 2,000 square miles from the New Hampshire border to the Cape Cod Canal and to Route 495 to the West. Despite its daily usage and many years of successes in catching criminals on the run, BAPERN is slated to be cut from the airwaves by the FCC in the next 10 years. As public safety executives across the Greater Boston area continue to process the law enforcement response to the Marathon bombings during the week of April 15th, one constant has emerged – police radio communications could not have worked any better.

“To say BAPERN radio communications was crucial during the week of the Marathon Bombings is an understatement. BAPERN was the primary means of communication – not only did it help coordinate the local, state, and federal response, but it got critical officer safety issues out to the officers on the street. To lose that ability would be a tremendous loss for law enforcement in Massachusetts.” (Brookline Police Chief Daniel C. O’Leary)

¹ The 166 members of BAPERN include: 130 local police agencies, 17 college police agencies, 8 federal agencies, 5 Sheriff’s Departments, 4 state agencies, and 2 hospital police.

In the 1970's, long before the events of September 11th and current efforts towards protecting our homeland from threats of terrorism, the Greater Boston Police Council (GBPC) implemented BAPERN to facilitate radio communications among police agencies in the greater Boston area. Since that time, BAPERN has been relied upon on a daily basis for the communication of urgent law enforcement information and to facilitate incident command during special events and operations.

Supported by a robust backbone consisting of 22 simulcast sites and 22 receive sites, BAPERN is arguably one of the nation's largest multidisciplinary and multijurisdictional networks used on a daily basis in the interest of public safety. With this system in place, well over 11,000 sworn police officers in Massachusetts have immediate access to BAPERN channels on their portable and cruiser radios, allowing for both continuous monitoring for law enforcement notifications, as well as the capability to make wide-area or district-only broadcasts to personnel across all other member law enforcement agencies.

Like most of local Massachusetts public safety agencies, BAPERN utilizes T-Band channels, which the FCC is requiring GBPC "give back" by 2021, less than 10 years away. According to Boston Police Commissioner Ed Davis:

"If we lose T-Band, which is scheduled to happen in the next 6 to 7 years according to the FCC rules, virtually every police department in the metropolitan area of Boston will be adversely affected. During the marathon bombings and the subsequent manhunt, intra-agency law enforcement communication was vital to the safety of police officers and the public. Quite simply, we can't afford to lose T-Band."

Responsible for directing the Metropolitan Law Enforcement Council's response from the Tactical Operations Center (TOC) in Boston, Canton Police Chief Kenneth Berkowitz, conveys:

"With so many agencies involved, BAPERN was a huge piece of the puzzle. Communications was one thing we didn't have to worry about it. It's an asset we can't afford to lose."

As BAPERN is a T-Band system, considerable measures need to be taken to ensure this essential public safety interoperable communications system is not discarded in favor of implementing the current mandate. The GBPC communicated the organization's concerns regarding the scheduled T-Band "give-back" in a May 9, 2013 filing with the FCC.

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Please visit www.gbpc.org to download GBPC's written comments to the FCC regarding the T-Band issue.

Questions regarding the Greater Boston Police Council and the Boston Area Police Emergency Radio Network can be directed to Diana Chidsey, GBPC Director of Planning and Operations, (978)360-4481, or dchidsey@verizon.net.



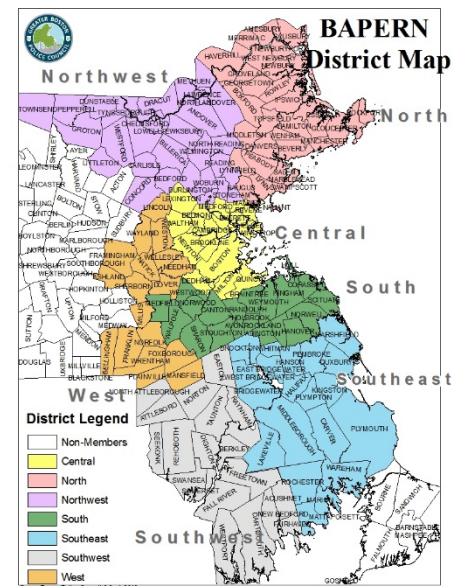
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HOW THE BOSTON AREA POLICE EMERGENCY RADIO NETWORK (BAPERN) SUCCESSFULLY DELIVERED INTEROPERABLE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS DURING THE RESPONSE TO THE BOSTON MARATHON BOMBINGS

In the 1970's, long before the events of September 11th and current efforts towards protecting our homeland from threats of terrorism, the Greater Boston Police Council (GBPC) implemented the Boston Area Police Emergency Radio Network (BAPERN) to facilitate radio communications among police agencies in the greater Boston area. Since that time, BAPERN has been relied upon on a daily basis for the communication of urgent law enforcement information and to facilitate incident command during special events and operations. The GBPC can now also state that BAPERN was utilized in the week following the Boston Marathon Bombings by all responding law enforcement agencies to effectively and immediately communicate critical information across local, state, and federal lines of government.

Today, BAPERN is used by 166 local, state, county, campus and federal law enforcement agencies¹ and spans a coverage area of over 2,000 square miles from the New Hampshire border to the Cape Cod Canal. Supported by a robust backbone consisting of 22 simulcast sites and 22 receive sites, BAPERN is arguably one of the nation's largest multidisciplinary and multijurisdictional networks used on a daily basis in the interest of public safety. The GBPC provides its membership with a total of twelve BAPERN channels on which they can communicate: two Area Wide Channels, six District Channels, and four District Digital Tactical Channels. With this system in place, well over 11,000 sworn police officers in Massachusetts have immediate access to BAPERN channels on their portable and cruiser radios, allowing for both continuous monitoring for law enforcement notifications, as well as the capability to make wide-area or district-only broadcasts to personnel across all other member law enforcement agencies. Like most of local Massachusetts public safety agencies, BAPERN utilizes T-Band channels.



As public safety executives across the Greater Boston area continue to process the law enforcement response to the Marathon bombings during the week of April 15th, one constant has emerged – police radio communications could not have worked any better. The greater Boston area witnessed none of the interoperability challenges that faced first responders on 9/11, due to the long-standing use and local familiarity with BAPERN. In fact, BAPERN has been used for decades to help manage communications during major events like the Boston Marathon, and the system was already in use for Marathon operations prior to the bombings on April 15th. At several points during the week following the bombings, BAPERN channels were patched with additional local (Boston, Cambridge) and State Police channels, further enhancing interoperability for the system's users. It is without

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question that BAPERN was an extremely valuable tool for law enforcement, and was instrumental in both the effective coordination of resources following the bombing incident, as well as the successful apprehension of the two perpetrators of the Boston Marathon bombings. Without the BAPERN system in place, the responding local, regional, state, and federal law enforcement personnel would not have had a method for communicating during this large-scale incident. Some of the more critical uses of BAPERN throughout the week, include the following:

Immediate Notifications of Critical Information. The first BAPERN notifications made following the bombings on April 15th included broadcasts from Boston Police requesting outside assistance and communications between several agencies regarding the need to shut down the Marathon route and close Boston to any additional incoming runners. The system was also used to great advantage shortly after midnight on Friday when a BOLO was issued by Cambridge Police over BAPERN with a description of the vehicle containing the two Marathon bombing suspects. Perhaps the most significant example of BAPERN effectiveness was the multiple times BAPERN was used to advise the hundreds of responding personnel of critical officer safety issues, including: extremely dangerous emerging situations (e.g., shots fired, explosives being thrown at responding officers), the need for Command Vehicles to avoid a particular street that had fully charged overhead transit wires, the locations of plainclothes police officers, personnel positioning during potential crossfire situations, and the urgent mandate to power off cell phones to prevent any additional remote detonations.

Communication of Tactical and Other Operations. As a result of the Marathon Bombings, reports and subsequent investigations of suspicious devices reached levels never previously witnessed. To facilitate communications for these time-sensitive investigations, a BAPERN channel was assigned to several local and state EOD teams for the coordination of their efforts. Similarly, regional SWAT Teams were assigned to their own BAPERN channels to coordinate tactical and sniper operations. Everything from communicating suspicious activity to local, state and federal agencies during President Obama's visit to Boston, to obtaining up-to-the-second information from the State Police helicopter about suspect #2's positioning in the boat was broadcast to all responding personnel simultaneously using BAPERN channels.

Coordination of Personnel and Resources. Throughout the week, Boston received an unprecedented response from local, regional and state law enforcement agencies. Leveraging the consistent access to BAPERN, Boston Police commanders were able to simultaneously advise hundreds of responding personnel of the various Command Post, staging area and security detail locations that were utilized during the week.

The GBPC is looking forward to engaging in discussions with members of Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regarding the value of existing T-Band systems, like BAPERN, in preserving officer safety, communicating critical law enforcement information, and serving as an essential public safety tool for executing operations during critical incidents. It is our hope that members of Congress and the FCC will reflect on the great communications successes achieved with BAPERN over the past 40 years when considering next actions regarding the implementation of Section 6103 of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (Act) as it applies to the 470-512 MHz band (T-Band). As BAPERN is a T-Band system, considerable measures need to be taken to ensure this essential public safety interoperable communications system is not discarded in favor of implementing the current mandate.

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