



Baltimore Metropolitan Council
PARTNERS IN PROGRESS

CENTRAL MARYLAND AREA RADIO COMMUNICATIONS (CMARC)

During incidents involving first responders from different agencies and different jurisdictions, there is a critical need for personnel to communicate with each other to resolve the situation at hand. In the past, layers of interoperability included sharing radios, sharing electronic keys, and patching radio communications through various means. Resolving interoperability issues was a key priority of the Baltimore Urban Area Work Group (UAWG), chaired by Baltimore City Fire Chief William Goodwin.

The National Public Safety Planning Advisory Committee (NPSPAC) set aside one calling channel and four tactical channels of the 800MHz radio spectrum for regional mutual aid communications. CMARC's goal was to deploy this additional layer of interoperability in Central Maryland.

CMARC will benefit the region in many ways:

- CMARC does not care about jurisdictional boundaries. Towers in one jurisdiction can serve another jurisdiction.
- CMARC does not care who manufactures a radio. Any make or model of 800 MHz radio can be programmed to operate on the CMARC infrastructure.
- CMARC does not care who wants to use the system. The user can be from federal, state or local government. The user can be from fire, EMS, law enforcement, or public works.
- CMARC does provide five more channels for use during major incidents. Normal communications channels will not be overloaded as an incident is resolved. In addition to the calling channel, there are four tactical channels that can be allocated to specific groups of users, such as fire, police, or EMS.

CMARC will be activated by MEMA at the request of a local dispatch center. MEMA staff will monitor the calling channel at all times.

CMARC is being implemented in two phases:

Phase I – funded by a \$915,000 Urban Area Security Initiative Grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Emergency Preparedness, through MEMA

- Linked 800 MHz tower sites, covering Carroll and Howard Counties, Baltimore City, BWI Airport, the I-95 and I-795/Maryland Route 140 corridors with MEMA
- Provided for the purchase of 800 MHz radio sets for the City of Annapolis, Baltimore City, and Baltimore, Carroll and Harford counties

Phase II – funded by a \$5 million COPS grant from the U.S. Department of Justice

- Identified tower sites to provide on-street portable radio coverage for the entire Central Maryland region
- Provided for installation of an improved and enhanced network management subsystem

The CMARC Project Team included representatives of all jurisdictions in the Baltimore Metro Statistical Area, as well as representatives of state and federal agencies.