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NTIA



FEMA

Commerce's NTIA and FEMA Release Report on Improving Public Safety Communications Nationwide

For Immediate Release: Nov. 25, 2008
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Washington, D.C. – The U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) released a joint report today that analyzes proposed projects for the nearly \$1 billion Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) Grant Program. In September 2007, grants were awarded to help state and local first responders improve public safety communications and coordination during natural and man-made disasters.

In the report, titled "Improving Interoperable Communications Nationwide: Overview of Initial State and Territory Investments," NTIA and FEMA revealed findings from their analyses of state, territory and local communications initiatives. The agencies also established a baseline for measuring each program's anticipated impact on interoperable communications across the nation.

"The PSIC Program results will have a significant impact on communications interoperability," said Acting NTIA Administrator Meredith Baker. "I am proud of the staff's hard work to ensure that the states' and territories' PSIC investments advance spectrum-efficiency goals and strengthen public safety communication networks nationwide."

"PSIC is a unique program that promotes advanced technological solutions, spectrum efficiency and all-hazards mitigation," said W. Ross Ashley, the Assistant Administrator for FEMA's Grant Programs Directorate. "The projects funded by the program are required to be aligned with the state or territory's Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan, which ensures that PSIC-funded investments fill identified interoperable communications gaps and are coordinated between state and local public safety agencies," explained Ashley. "This coordination is just one example of many benefits the PSIC Grant Program imparts."

Some of the report's key findings include:

- 1:** More than \$811 million of PSIC funds will be invested by state and local agencies in the acquisition and deployment of equipment to increase emergency communications interoperability;
- 2:** Forty-seven states and territories will allocate portions of their PSIC funds for equipment reserves that are pre-positioned, deployable and able to re-establish communications. Together

with pre-existing assets, PSIC will provide a nationwide capability to address infrastructure gaps as identified in the National Emergency Communications Plan;

3: PSIC was the first grant program to require states and territories to align their investments to a DHS-approved Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP). This strategic alignment will ensure that investments are not only coordinated across multiple jurisdictions and disciplines, but also across multiple federal and state funding sources; and

4: The PSIC program requires grantees to provide non-federal, matching funds for acquisition, deployment and administrative costs. Jurisdictions have proposed more than \$256 million in matching funds, which contributes to more than \$1.2 billion in interoperable communications improvements when combined with federal PSIC grant funds.

The report and additional PSIC information are available on the NTIA Web site at www.ntia.doc.gov/psic. Investment summaries detailing approved PSIC projects for states and territories are available on the Web site and in the appendices.

Background:

Pursuant to the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (P.L. 109-171) and the Call Home Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-459), the PSIC Grant Program assists public safety agencies in the acquisition, deployment and training of interoperable communications systems to enhance interoperable communications of voice, data and/or video signals. NTIA, in coordination with FEMA's Grant Programs Directorate, administers the nearly \$1 billion one-time, formula-based, matching Grant Program. In September 2007 NTIA and FEMA awarded the grants to assist public safety agencies with the planning and coordination, acquisition of, deployment of, or training for the use of interoperable communications systems.

NTIA is working with public safety agencies to achieve meaningful improvements in communicating during an emergency, and to fill gaps identified in the Statewide Communications Interoperability Plans. To address these goals, states and territories needed to consider advanced technological solutions that enhance capabilities for responding to all hazards when selecting projects for PSIC funding. In particular, the states and territories needed to consider solutions that efficiently use the nation's airwaves, are cost-effective and enhance communications in high-threat urban and metropolitan areas at high risk for natural or man-made disasters. Grant-funded projects must be completed by September 30, 2010.

NTIA is responsible for the development of the domestic and international telecommunications policy of the Executive Branch.

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror. Also within DHS, the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) coordinates interoperable emergency communications policy and is responsible for the development and implementation of the National Emergency Communications Plan-the strategy used to align PSIC and future grant investments for interoperable communications. Additionally, OEC assisted in the development of Statewide Communications Interoperability Plans for 56 states and territories.