

**Mark**
CBP Pilot**News**[Press Releases](#)**Speeches**[Testimony](#)[Publications](#)[Multimedia](#)[Contacts](#)[En Español](#)**Remarks by Under Secretary Rand Beers at the Technologies for Critical Incident Preparedness (TCIP) Conference and Expo**

Release Date: August 31, 2011

Remarks as Prepared

Introduction

Thanks for that warm welcome. It's great to be here today, among first responders and those working to improve our ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters and incidents of all kinds.

I want to thank the DHS Science and Technology Directorate, and our co-sponsors, the Departments of Justice and Defense, for hosting this conference.

It's a good opportunity for all of us to, first and foremost, thank our first responders for everything they do in our states, cities, and communities, to support prevention, protection, preparedness and response efforts across our country.

It has been a busy year for our first responders – from the response to major floods and tornadoes across the Southeast to Hurricane Irene.

Tomorrow is also the start of National Preparedness Month – our month-long effort to promote emergency preparedness in homes, businesses, and communities.

This is a time for everyone to take basic steps to be more prepared for emergencies and disasters, which helps expedite recovery and helps our first responders focus on those truly in need of help.

That's a message we're going to continue to share over the coming month, and beyond, and I hope you take back to your communities.

Of course, we are also less than two weeks from the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which we know took a devastating toll on our first responder community, including those who so heroically responded at Ground Zero and the Pentagon.

We've come a very long way since 9/11 to deal with threats to the United States, and to enhance the capabilities of our first responders, not only against terrorism, but disasters of all kinds.

But we also know that we still have a ways to go – in developing the technology we need for critical incident preparedness, but also implementing that technology in a way that's practical, affordable, and works in a real-world, operational environment.

So today, I'd like to discuss where we stand with respect to some of the Department's priorities for critical incident preparedness technology, where we hope to go in the future, and how we might get there, with the help of many of you in the audience today.

Progress Since 9/11 / Threats

There is no doubt our nation is stronger than we were 10 years ago. We've bounced back from the worst ever terrorist attack on America, and we've made progress on every front to protect ourselves.

We've also become smarter about the threats we face and how to deal with them. But we know these threats didn't begin on 9/11, and they certainly didn't end with the death of Osama bin Laden.

Today's threats are rapidly evolving. They require our constant vigilance. They require us to continue to adapt and be flexible. And because they can come from anywhere – even within our own borders – everyone must play a role in being vigilant.

In addition, we know the threats we face are not confined to terrorism alone – but to natural disasters, pandemic diseases, threats in cyberspace and many others that directly impact the communities you serve.

So our response, therefore, must be equally broad and comprehensive, and technology must play a role in helping improve our capabilities.

DHS Support for First Responder Technology

At DHS, we put a lot of time, energy, and resources into technology development, acquisition, testing and evaluation, and implementation.

Much of this work is led by our Science and Technology Directorate, which has made one of its top priorities serving the needs of the first responder community.

First responders need new tools to help you respond to day-to-day challenges in your communities, or large-scale events, safely and effectively.

And that is why last year, within S&T, we created the First Responders Group, or FRG to focus specifically on the response community. The FRG works directly with first responders through all stages of the technology process, from identifying needs to conducting operational testing.

And this work is not only about technologies alone, but also providing products – including assessments of technical problems and solutions; analyses of complex technology issues; tests of proposed technologies; and the creation of standards.

Through the FRG, we have developed some valuable technologies and products to support our first responders. For example:

- We have worked with fire fighters to develop the Next-Generation Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) – a pack that is lighter, thinner, and more flexible than any previously on the market.
- We collaborated with emergency medical services to produce a Backboard Cover, which reduces contamination and cleaning issues for reusable equipment. This product protects patients and responders, and helps prevent the spread of disease.
- S&T is developing the GLANSER, which will allow incident commanders to locate and track first responders during an incident through locators, alarms, communications, and visualizations that can be integrated into Personal Protection Equipment.
- We also have pulled together an S&T-wide team to focus on improving and streamlining information-sharing efforts for the first responder community.
- For example, the Virtual USA initiative – although still in its development and piloting stage – was used to share data across jurisdictions in preparation and response to the Southeast flooding earlier this year. It also was recently successfully piloted with the Central U.S. Earthquake Consortium states, and supported the response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill

We're proud of this work to help the first responder community, and we want to continue to hear from you about what the needs are and how we can meet them.

Emergency Communications

But one area in particular that remains a priority for us is the challenge of effective emergency communications and interoperability. In other words, making sure first responders can talk to each other during emergencies, which is a core recommendation of the 9/11 Commission.

It was a lack of communication – and an inability to have situational awareness of events and surroundings – that impacted the work of so many first responders at the World Trade Center. Responders also faced significant communications issues in the response to Hurricane Katrina.

These are lessons we have taken to heart at the Department of Homeland Security – as I know you have – and we have been working across all levels and disciplines to identify what worked and what went wrong and what we can do collaboratively with public and private sector partners to fix these issues.

Interoperability Challenges and Progress

This challenge is not solely a technology problem that can be solved with the "right" equipment or the "right" communications system.

A successful interoperability solution requires effective governance, standard operating procedures, training and exercises, daily operations – in addition to technology. It also requires partnering with emergency responders as well as non-governmental organizations, the public, and our communities.

Moreover, we know that first responders in each state have their own public safety missions, emergency response procedures, communication protocols, and radio frequencies.

No single group can address interoperability challenges alone; rather, it requires the partnership, leadership, and coordinated planning of everyone involved.

Within our Department, the Office of Emergency Communications has been leading many of our efforts, with federal, state, and local stakeholders, to identify solutions to some of these shared communications challenges.

For example, we developed the National Emergency Communications Plan in coordination with more than 150 public safety practitioners at all levels and across responder disciplines.

The National Emergency Communications Plan is our nation's first nationwide strategic plan to improve emergency communications and drive progress at all levels of government.

This plan has led to some very significant results, including enhanced statewide coordination; the development of common protocols, plans, and procedures; targeted technical assistance to states and cities; increased training; and improved governance.

It also has advanced our work with Canada and Mexico to develop a cross-border communications system to help coordinate joint responses at the border.

More specifically, under this plan we have worked with 60 urban areas to assess emergency communications in an actual, real-world environment.

And, I'm pleased to note, all 60 urban areas successfully demonstrated response-level emergency communications, which is a good illustration that the investments we have made to promote interoperable communications are making a difference.

In all, we have provided more than \$4 billion in dedicated grant funding for state and local interoperability efforts, and the development and deployment of new technologies. Through the Office of Emergency Communications, we are using those grant funds more strategically.

We also have worked with more than 140 jurisdictions to develop Tactical Interoperable Communications Plans, which help define governance, policies, procedures, and equipment.

And more than 30 states are now implementing plain language protocols to simplify and standardize the language used to share information and communicate during an emergency.

We also have trained more than 3,500 first responders, technicians, and planners to lead communications at incidents across the nation. This training contributed to recovery efforts outside of the United States, such as the response to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

Technology, of course, does play a role here. And that is why DHS has been working on a number of projects.

For example, S&T has made great strides through the development and piloting of the Multi-Band Radio – which is a single mobile radio that provides effective communications with all partner agencies – regardless of the radio band in which they operate.

Through the Voice over Internet Protocol project, we are also working to enable first responders to seamlessly connect voice radio systems over Internet Protocol networks, regardless of the manufacturer.

S&T is also coordinating with Customs and Border Protection on its Wireless Broadband Technology Demonstrator project, which will develop a device to enable our DHS operational components as well as local and state first responders to migrate to a broadband network.

And we're working on a Next-Generation Incident Command System to improve first responder situational awareness, collaboration, and interoperability during large disaster response efforts.

In addition, FEMA continues to develop our nation's next-generation infrastructure of alert and warning capabilities, which expands upon the traditional audio-only radio and television Emergency Alert System.

This system – known as the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, or IPAWS – will enable emergency managers to send geographically targeted alert and warning messages to

citizens on mobile devices.

Broadband Network / D-Block

Of course, we also know that part of our challenge is getting beyond outdated systems and wireless technologies that first responders have been relying on for decades.

To fully achieve the vision of the 9/11 Commission, we believe our emergency responders must have a nationwide, interoperable public safety network that leverages new, high-speed, wireless broadband communications.

As President Obama noted in his State of the Union Address, these advancements can enable a firefighter to use a handheld device to download the design of a building before arriving at the scene of an emergency. These types of capabilities have the potential to save lives.

That is why earlier this year, the President announced the Wireless Innovation and Infrastructure Initiative to develop and deploy a nationwide, interoperable wireless broadband network for public safety.

DHS, through the Office of Emergency Communications, has been supporting the deployment of this network by helping to set the broad policy framework and incorporating the views and requirements of the public safety community in planning and implementation efforts.

We want to make sure we build this network with all of our stakeholders at the table and with a clear plan in mind that supports our current communications capabilities and builds for the future.

As part of this process, we are now updating the National Emergency Communications Plan to support the operational and technological changes needed to enable the use of broadband technology for voice and data communications.

We are also encouraging the inclusion of broadband planning into Statewide Communication Interoperability Plans.

And we are providing technical assistance to state, local, territorial, tribal, and regional users to help them understand and implement options for the use of broadband technology in public safety.

In addition, Congress must do its part as well, which means freeing up the necessary broadband spectrum, known as D-block, to enable this network to operate. We appreciate the bipartisan Congressional leadership on this issue that crosses committees of jurisdiction, including Chairman Lieberman, Chairman Rockefeller, Chairman King and Senator McCain. We are confident that through continued cooperation with Congress, we can deliver a network that meets the needs of America's first responders whom all Americans rely upon.

Conclusion

Not all of these issues can or will be solved overnight, but they will be solved – and they need to be solved – because we know the safety of our first responders and our citizens is at stake.

So we look forward to continuing to engage with this community and our broader network of partners who contribute to the homeland security enterprise.

I want to thank you for everything you do to support our states, cities, and communities, and everything you do to keep our nation safe and secure.

We appreciate your partnership. We want to continue to hear from you. And we look forward to working with you.

This page was last reviewed/modified on August 31, 2011.

I Want to

- Check the National Terrorism Advisory System
- Find Career Opportunities
- Use the Job Finder
- Contact the Department

Featured Components

- Customs and Border Protection
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- Transportation Security Administration

Information For

- Travelers
- First Responders
- Business
- Veterans

Connect with DHS

- The Blog @ Homeland Security
- Homeland Security Feeds
- Homeland Security Tweets
- Homeland Security Videos

[File a Travel Screening Complaint](#)
[Learn about biometric identification](#)
[Learn about E-Verify](#)

Popular Searches

[Careers, ESTA, E-Verify, Forms, Green Card, I-9, Internships, Jobs, Passport, Training, Visa](#)

[U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#)
[U.S. Coast Guard](#)
[U.S. Secret Service](#)
[Office of Inspector General](#)

Resources

[Contracts & Grants](#)
[Science & Technology](#)

[Students](#)
[Government](#)
[Citizens](#)

[Follow DHS on Facebook](#)

About the Department

[Secretary Janet Napolitano](#)
[DHS's Recovery.gov](#)
[DHS Components and Agencies](#)
[Budget, Performance and Accountability](#)
[NoFEAR Act Data](#)
[DHS's Open Government Initiative](#)

[Home](#) [Contact Us](#) [Site Map](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Plug-Ins](#) [Notices](#) [FOIA](#) [USA.gov](#) [GobiernoUSA.gov](#) [The White House](#)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security