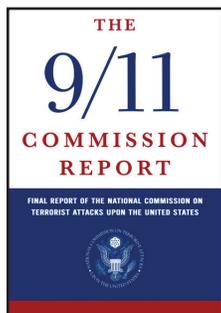




# The Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network: First Steps

## MILESTONE FOR PUBLIC SAFETY

February 22, 2012 will long be remembered as a landmark day for public safety and emergency communications. It was on that day that President Barack Obama signed into law the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (H.R.3630). The signing of that Act was a significant win for the public safety community nationwide. It was the culmination of over a decade of advocacy to see the reallocation of the 'D Block' spectrum to public safety and to fulfill one of the last outstanding recommendations of the 9/11 Commission: the development of a nationwide interoperable communications network.



In addition to the reallocation of the D Block to public safety, the Act provides authorization and funding to establish the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN). This includes \$7 billion to build the network, including funding for research and development,

a nationwide governance structure to oversee the network, and access to the network for Federal, State, and local public safety and secondary users such as utility companies, transportation, and other critical infrastructure providers.

The development and deployment of a Nationwide Network will be an accomplishment that will significantly advance the Nation's public safety communications capabilities, and enhance the ability of first responders across the country to provide life-saving services. But this network will not be developed overnight. There remains a great amount of work to be done at every level of government to make this new network become reality.

## EVOLUTION OF EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

As this work progresses, public safety will need to remain attentive. The lessons learned and missteps made in the development of the Nation's current land mobile radio (LMR) infrastructure must be foremost in the minds of those tasked with development of this new network. Concurrently, this same LMR system must not be abandoned in favor of new technology on the horizon. To be as effective and efficient as possible, and to meet the needs of its end users, the Nationwide Network will take time to develop and deploy. While this development process unfolds, the Nation's first responders will still rely on the current LMR technology already in place. This technology must be maintained to prevent system failures and gaps in services.

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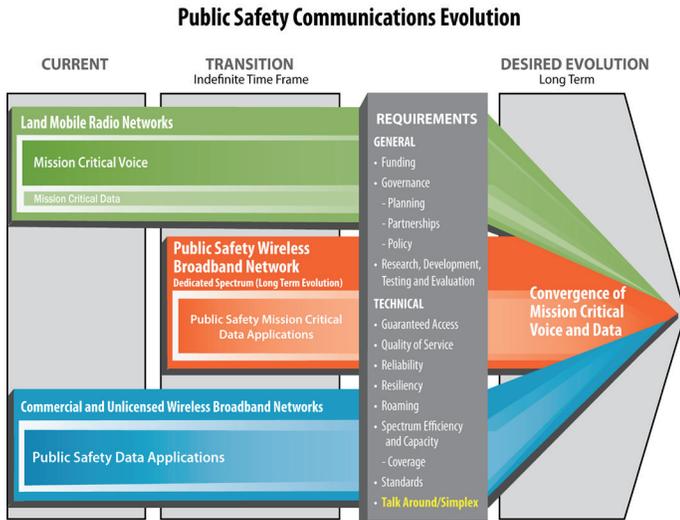
- OEC Director Chris Essid

At the same time, it is imperative that State and local agencies prepare for this new network, and ensure their jurisdictions are poised to incorporate this new tool into their public safety operations and governance structures. As always, the US Department of Homeland Security Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) is prepared to support our State and local stakeholder partners in these efforts.

## STATEWIDE PLANS

Each US State and territory currently has a Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan

in place. These Statewide Plans are locally-driven, multi-jurisdictional, and multi-disciplinary plans to enhance emergency communications. They provide strategic direction for those responsible for interoperable communications at the State, regional, and local levels, and are designed to align State-level efforts with the goals, milestones, and objectives of the National Emergency Communications Plan.



To be successful, Statewide Plans must be living documents updated regularly. As efforts unfold for the Nationwide Network, States should be working with their Statewide Interoperability Coordinators to incorporate broadband and other emerging technologies into their Statewide Plans. OEC continues to work with the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators to disseminate the most current and accurate information regarding the development and deployment of the Nationwide Network to assist with these vital updates.

## GOVERNING BODIES

As part of that process, States should be reviewing the current structure of their Statewide Interoperability Governance Bodies. State and local jurisdictions should ensure their governing bodies are prepared to address the development and deployment of a Nationwide Network

by determining if they truly have the best representation based on these recent developments. As the Nationwide Network is deployed, the work of these governing bodies will incorporate new technology roles. States should be exploring the inclusion of chief information officers and chief technology officers into their existing governing bodies. This level of expertise and authority will be essential to ensuring a jurisdiction is truly prepared. OEC’s Technical Assistance program is currently conducting workshops across the country, at the State level and regionally, to educate governing bodies on the importance of making these updates and to the enhanced roles and responsibilities of State and local governments in developing and deploying this network.

**“The Nationwide Network will dramatically impact emergency communications, and will improve capabilities like few advancements before it. State and local jurisdictions must remain attentive as efforts progress to ensure they are prepared to incorporate broadband into their public safety operations.”**

– OEC Director Chris Essid

## THE PATH FORWARD

As the work to develop and deploy a Nationwide Network progresses, there will be periods of uncertainty. During these times, it is important that public safety remembers that there is now a path forward and the goal is in sight. The entire public safety community must remain united in their efforts to meet this goal – a Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network that will provide interoperable emergency communications, and will meet the needs of emergency responders at every level. For additional information, visit OEC’s Broadband information page at [www.dhs.gov/publicsafetybroadband](http://www.dhs.gov/publicsafetybroadband)

### FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please contact [OEC@dhs.gov](mailto:OEC@dhs.gov) or visit [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov) (keyword OEC).