

Safe Environment Engineering Joins Over 60 Organizations in Calling on Congress and Agencies for Comprehensive Emergency Communications Policy

Washington, DC – August 7, 2006 – Safe Environment Engineering joined together with over sixty other organizations to urge Congress and federal agencies to include all emergency response agencies and all forms of communications in federal policymaking and funding. The organizations specifically called for expanding current policies to include inter-organizational communications and data communications – not just radios. The message came in the form of two letters, one to Congressional leaders and one to the Secretaries of the Departments of Homeland Security (DHS), Health and Human Services (DHHS), and Justice (DOJ).

“Recent disasters have shown us the importance of providing response agencies with all forms of communications and information technology,” said Robert Bohlmann, CEM, of the International Association of Emergency Management (IAEM) and Director of the York County (ME) Emergency Management Agency. “Emergency communications needs a holistic approach: radios and inter-organizational data.”

The letters were signed by national and regional emergency response agencies, technology associations, and numerous private sector companies. They addressed a series of laws, bills and agency policies that purport to address interoperability for emergency communications, but do not include all agencies, stipulations for communication between organizations, and data.

The letters were critical of the legislation and the agencies for allocating funds almost exclusively to radio systems and failing to acknowledge the importance of data exchange between emergency agencies and organizations. The legislation also failed to require that all emergency agencies be included in emergency communications planning.

“Integrated, inter-organizational data communications will not only enhance today’s first responder radio communications, but will also help create a more seamless and reliable response in both day-to-day and mass casualty incidents,” said Chief Will Chapleau, EMT-P, RN, TNS of the Chicago Heights (IL) Fire Department and a Director of the National Association of EMTs (NAEMT).

While recognizing the critical importance of modern, interoperable radio communications, the letters stated: “Unless Congress makes its intent crystal clear, we are concerned that due to the momentum of tradition, local and state officials may continue to treat voice communication as the only emergency responder emergency communications issue and neglect the importance of inter-organizational data.”

Safe Environment Engineering and its partners closed its letter encouraging Congress to specifically require in legislation that all agencies participating in emergency preparation and response need to also participate in planning, deployment, and use of multi-mode communications systems.

Interoperability, as defined in many of the various proposed laws, means “the ability of emergency response providers and relevant Federal, State, and local government agencies to communicate with each other as necessary, utilizing information technology systems and radio communications systems, and to exchange voice, data, or video with one another on demand, in real time, as necessary.” The organizations endorsed that broad definition, but said the policy and spending provisions of the same proposed laws used a very narrow definition of interoperability, and thus have effectively inhibited the United States’ ability to improve emergency response capabilities.

The letters also assert that an emergency network must be multi-use, multi-user, and be able to address all potential hazards in order to effectively facilitate emergency response measures in the event of natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina or human-instigated catastrophes like 9/11, as well as day-to-day emergencies

Richard Taylor, COMCARE Chair and Executive Director of the North Carolina Wireless 9-1-1 Board, noted, "It is critical to the safety of our public that legislation, appropriations and policies include both voice and data communications, and communications between organizations, as well as between individuals."

To read a copy of the letters, visit Safe Environment Engineering's homepage at www.safeenv.com. A list of the signatories is listed below.

Emergency Response Organizations

American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP)
American Disaster Reserve
American Public Health Association (APHA)
American Systems Association of Air Medical Services (AAMS)
Brain Trauma Foundation (BTF)
COMCARE
Emergency Management Association of Texas (EMAT)
Emergency Nurses Association (ENA)
International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM)
Kristin Brooks Hope Center
National Association of EMTs (NAEMT)
National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP)
National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO)
National Emergency Number Association (NENA)
National Mental Health Association (NMHA)
National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC)
Orthopaedic Trauma Association (OTA)
State and Local Health Informatics Consortium, Inc (SLHIC)
Chicago Heights (IL) Fire Department
Nashville (TN) 9-1-1
Spartanburg County (SC) Office of Emergency Services
Tennessee State Emergency Communications Board

Technology Associations

Alliance for Public Technology
CTIA-The Wireless Association®
Emergency Information Infrastructure Project (EIIP)
Emergency Interoperability Consortium (EIC)
Government Electronics & Information Technology Association (GEIA)
Information Technology Association of America
Integrated Justice Information Systems (IJIS) Institute
Network Centric Operations Industry Consortium (NCOIC)

Private Sector

Aegis Assessments, Inc.
Amcom Software
ATS Public Safety
ATX Group
Buffalo Computer Graphics
Cingular Wireless
Citilabs, Inc.
CompassCom Software Corporation
DaProSystems, Inc.

Deloitte & Touche
EastBanc Technologies
eCorridor
Hunter Research, Inc.
Information Builders, Inc.
Intergraph
Intrado
National Center for Crisis and Continuity Coordination (NC4)
Network Designs, Inc.
OnStar Corporation
PatienTrak
Perennial Strategy Group
Proxicom Corporation
Roaming Messenger
Safe Environment Engineering
SpectraCom Corporation
STERIS
Stream Communications
Syscon Justice Systems Ltd.
Telecommunication Systems, Inc. (TCS)
Tritech Software Systems
Vayusphere, Inc
VisionAIR
Warning Systems Inc.
Ygomi LLC

Corresponding documents

[Letter to Michael Chertoff](#) | [Letter to Congress](#)

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