

NTIA Blog, March 15, 2012 by NTIA

Supporting our First Responders' Communications Needs

Last week, over 350 representatives from public safety organizations, Federal agencies, industry and academia converged in Broomfield, Colorado to learn about the latest developments in public safety broadband technologies. The conference was sponsored by the **Public Safety Communications Research** (PSCR) program, a joint effort between NTIA's **Institute for Telecommunication Sciences** (ITS) research laboratory and NIST's **Office of Law Enforcement Standards**. Public safety workers have long been hampered by incompatible communications, and the PSCR program is working with the public safety community and industry to address this critical issue through research, testing, evaluation, and standards development on behalf of its Federal agency sponsors at the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice.

The conference was timely because just last month President Obama signed **legislation** to create a much-needed nationwide interoperable broadband network that will help police, firefighters, emergency medical service professionals and other public safety officials stay safe and do their jobs.

The law provides a framework for creating the nationwide network, charging NTIA with some of the responsibilities. In her **remarks** at the conference, Deputy NTIA Administrator Anna M. Gomez told attendees that the agency is both "humbled and privileged" to be entrusted with "serving the first responders, carriers, manufacturers, and state, local and Tribal governments that all have a role in creating the single interoperable public safety network the statute envisions."

Deploying the network will indeed be a complex challenge that requires strong collaboration among stakeholders at the national and local level. But existing initiatives at the PSCR program will provide a strong foundation for the work needed to the develop uniform, open technical standards necessary for interoperability on the nationwide network.

For example, PSCR is building and testing a public safety **broadband demonstration network**, providing manufacturers and first responders a location for early deployment and testing of 700 MHz broadband technologies in a multi-vendor, neutral, host environment.

In addition, **research** from NTIA's ITS Labs on in-building radio enhancement systems for public safety can help public safety communication professionals assist building owners in fulfilling in-building public safety communications requirements -- by providing a description of the technology, its problems, and methods to mitigate those problems, supported by experimental evidence and detailed calculations.

These are just a few examples of how the PSCR program is supporting improvements in public safety communications. Their work will be an important resource as development of the interoperable nationwide public safety broadband network moves forward.

Additional resources:

[Remarks of Deputy Assistant Secretary Gomez at PSCR Demonstration Network Stakeholders Meeting \(March 6, 2012\)](#)

[Slidedeck presentation: Public Safety Communications & Electromagnetic Spectrum Auctions \(March 15, 2012\)](#)