

Interoperability & Emergency Communications News Clips
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Higher level communications

January 9, 2009

Government Computer News

By William Jackson

URL: <http://gcn.com/Articles/2009/01/09/Higher-level-communications.aspx?Page=1>

New network provides spot-to-spot links that bypass all terrestrial infrastructure

Washington, D.C., Chief Technology Officer Vivek Kundra yesterday participated in a panel at the CES Government conference in Lake Las Vegas via video hookup over a new satellite communications system being touted as an emergency alternative to terrestrial networks during disasters.

The session was part discussion of the challenges of information sharing and part demonstration of a satellite service being launched by Hughes Network Systems LLC.

The Inter-Government Crisis Network operates over the Spaceway 3 satellite, which does onboard switching and routing to provide point-to-point communications without a ground switching station or other terrestrial infrastructure. Hughes claims it is the smartest, fastest and most powerful communications satellite now in orbit.

“We put the smarts of the hub into the satellite,” said Dave Tuscano, senior director of sales operations for Hughes Government Solutions. “As long as you can convert anything to IP, the system can handle it.”

The demonstration was a three-way video and audio link between participants in Nevada, Kundra in Washington and Hughes officials at the company’s headquarters in Germantown, Md. Each site used third-party video conferencing equipment attached to Hughes terminals with 1.2 meter antennas to communicate with the satellite at rates of about 2 Mbps and to the other two sites with no additional network connections. Despite a noticeable delay of several seconds, the video from each site was full motion and the audio clear.

Kundra said he was excited about the potential of innovative new satellite systems for emergency response. The Washington area now has an interoperable 700 MHz public safety radio system and a standard satellite communications backup, but Kundra said communications between agencies during emergencies remains one of the biggest challenges in disaster response.

Kundra’s position in Washington is unique in that he operates at the federal government level, as well as at the state and local government levels in coordinating technology. He has won praise in technical circles for his efforts to expand the use of IT and to expedite the sharing of information. Kundra said that “democratizing” information and making it

available to the public and to the private sector can spur innovation and create a more participatory democracy.

“It changes the culture of government,” he said.

Kundra had to cancel plans to speak in person at the CES Government conference because of planning for the inaugural events in Washington and the presidential transition. Both events require coordination among and establishing communications with many different agencies and organizations at the federal, state and local level.

The IGCN service is one of a number of commercial services offered by Hughes on its Spaceway 3 satellite, which became operational last year.

The satellite, built by Boeing, operates in the Ka band and has a total capacity of 10 Gbps. Its 784 spot beams allow it to focus broadcast energy and bandwidth capacity based on demand. It is in a geosynchronous orbit over North America that provides coverage for all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and parts of southern Canada. The onboard routing and switching mean that packets are switched to the appropriate beam and terminal address at the satellite, so that no hub or routing facility is needed on Earth.

It has a downlink speed of about 8 Mbps and an uplink speed of about 2 Mbps. Terminals can be grouped into pre-defined user groups protected by VPNs using either AES built into the system’s software or external Type 1 encryption devices. The system can provide bandwidth on demand or at a constant rate, with quality of service for data, voice and video.

“Obviously, you can do all of this with the Internet,” said George Choquette, senior vice president for engineering speaking from the Hughes headquarters. But the Spaceway service is not subject to the congestion or outages that the Internet or local network links are subject to during an emergency when infrastructure is damaged or overloaded.

“IGCN is not the Internet” was the mantra of the demonstration. It is being sold instead as a robust, high-availability alternative that can provide diversity in communications routes for emergency responders and public safety officials.

IGCN is a fixed rather than a mobile or portable system. Equipment includes a terminal with a 1.2 meter dish and a radio transceiver that is linked to a modem and computer equipment at the site being served. The cost is about \$3,000 per site, plus subscription fees based on the type of service being bought.

“The system has been built to support millions of terminals accessing the satellite,” said Mike Cook, Hughes senior vice president of North American sales. “We expect hundreds of thousands of terminals operating simultaneously.”

The IGCN being marketed to government is not functionally different from the Spaceway services already being used by commercial customers. But the new service will cater to the user groups and virtual private networks established by government users.

“We are willing to work with governments to create the architecture they will need to communicate in an emergency,” Cook said.

###

Residents: Better communication needed for outages

January 9, 2009

Poughkeepsiejournal.com

By Rasheed Oluwa

URL: <http://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/article/20090109/NEWS01/301090001>

RHINEBECK — Though they waited the better part of a week to get power back, northern Dutchess County residents said it was a lack of communication, not the delay that they had a problem with.

Nine area residents turned out at Rhinebeck town hall Thursday night to talk to a representative of Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corp. about the utilities’ response to the Dec. 11 ice storm that left 75,000 without power throughout the Hudson Valley at the peak of the storm.

Dutchess County Legislator Joel Tyner, D- Clinton, hosted a forum entitled “Speak Out: Response to Ice and Snow Storms,” Thursday night. The purpose of the forum was to give northern Dutchess County residents a chance to voice their concerns regarding power restoration and emergency response in the wake of the ice storm.

Rhinebeck resident Jeff Romano said he was without power for five days following the storm. He wasn’t told when he might have his power restored, until the day the light were turned back on.

“I just wanted to know when the power was going to come up,” he told Steve Burger, manager of New Business Services for Central Hudson. “I wish you had did a better job of telling when the power was going to be restored.”

Members of the panel included Burger, Kathy Kinsella, the Rhinebeck town highway superintendent, and Henry Campbell, the Rhinebeck town emergency management coordinator.

Burger explained Central Hudson's approach to deal with major outages, saying the priority is to repair substations and work out from there, repairing lines as they go. He said municipalities were informed about restoration plans and information was sent to area media outlets to keep the public informed about progress.

Kinsella acknowledged the efforts of Central Hudson's crews. But, she wishes there was better communication between the utility and municipal highway crews.

She thinks the utility should have a dedicated line, clear telephone line for road crews to call in the event of another storm.

"I applaud their efforts, but I think we can take this going forward and improve communications better," Kinsella said.

###

OASIS Members Approve Emergency Data Exchange Standards for Resource Messaging and Hospital Availability

January 8, 2009

Business Wire

URL: <http://br.sys-con.com/node/802730>

OASIS, the international open standards consortium, today announced that its members have approved the Emergency Data Exchange Language Resource Messaging (EDXL-RM) 1.0 and the EDXL Hospital Availability Exchange (HAVE) 1.0 specifications as OASIS Standards, a status that signifies the highest level of ratification.

EDXL-RM describes a suite of standard messages for sharing data among information systems that coordinate requests for emergency equipment, supplies, and people. HAVE specifies an XML document format that allows a hospital's status, services, and resources (including bed capacity, emergency department status, and available service coverage) to be communicated. Both standards were developed through an open process by the OASIS Emergency Management Technical Committee.

"Both EDXL-HAVE and EDXL-RM represent significant achievements in messaging standards development," said FEMA DM Program Manager Sarah Hyder.

"Implementation of these standards not only enhances emergency management, but also improves the speed and quality of response activities. Once in the hands of emergency

responders and managers, data messaging standards such as HAVE and RM will tremendously improve the exchange of information in real time.”

“Specific, standardized messages are critical for coordinating emergency response-- particularly when more than one profession or governmental jurisdiction is involved,” noted Elysa Jones of Warning Systems Inc (WSI), chair of the OASIS Emergency Management Technical Committee. “EDXL-RM and HAVE make it possible for critical information about life saving resources to be shared across local, state, tribal, national and non-governmental organizations to support a coordinated response to an emergency.”

“It is vital that practitioners across all levels of government continue to partner with industry in the development and use of messaging standards that improve data communications during emergency response operations,” said Dr. David Boyd, director of the Command, Control and Interoperability Division (CID) of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security/ Science and Technology Directorate. “We are committed to working with standards development organizations, including OASIS, to integrate EDXL data messaging standards into the resources that emergency responders rely upon to keep the Nation safe.”

EDXL-RM specifies a document format that allows the communication of information about resources, such as requests for obtaining resources, responses to these requests by potential suppliers, and information on the status and location of resources.

HAVE allows emergency dispatchers and managers to make sound logistics decisions on where to route victims based on accurate hospital bed availability, status, services, and capacity data. Although some hospitals currently use proprietary technology to publish this kind of information, only those parties with the same systems can access their data.

“Isolated pockets of communication are simply not sufficient for large-scale emergencies,” said Laurent Liscia, executive director of OASIS. “By presenting data in a standardized format, HAVE removes this barrier, enabling all parties involved in emergency response (other hospitals, EOCs, 9-1-1 centers, EMS responders, etc.) to view the information they need.”

In accordance with eligibility requirements for all OASIS Standards, successful use of EDXL-RM was verified by NICTA, NuParadigm, and OSS Nokalva; HAVE was verified by ESI, Evolution Technologies, and NuParadigm. Both standards were developed under the Royalty-Free on RAND mode of the OASIS Intellectual Property Rights Policy.

Participation in the Emergency Management Technical Committee remains open to all companies, non-profit groups, government agencies, academic institutions, and individuals. Archives of the work are publicly accessible, and OASIS offers a mechanism for public comment.

Support for EDXL-RM and EDXL-HAVE

AtHoc

"The new EDXL-RM and EDXL-HAVE standards provide the ability to accurately communicate critical emergency information regarding equipment, supplies and personnel. The industry as a whole has made great progress in enabling emergency collaboration and interoperability, promoted significantly by the work accomplished through OASIS. By creating standards with these higher levels of information, collaborating agencies can dramatically improve the effectiveness of their emergency responses," said Aviv Siegel, CTO, AtHoc.

U.S. National Integration Center's Incident Management Systems Integration Division

"These latest additions to the EDXL suite of standards should help increase the interoperability of incident communications. We've been actively participating in their development. This includes developing the requirements in collaboration with practitioners, as well as participating in the technical standards committee."

WSI

"The world's recent experiences in the aftermath of hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods clearly demonstrate how vital the standardization and adoption of EDXL-RM and EDXL-HAVE are. These new OASIS Standards literally have the potential to save lives on a tremendous scale. WSI is proud to play a part in this work, having provided leadership to the OASIS Emergency Management Technical Committee since this effort began. Our experience integrating emergency alert systems is highly dependent on open data standards, especially where secure and reliable exchange of such information is mission critical," said Patrick J. Gannon, President & COO, WSI.

Additional information:

OASIS Emergency Management Technical Committee

<http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/emergency/>

About OASIS:

OASIS (Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards), drives the development, convergence, and adoption of open standards for the global information society. A not-for-profit consortium, OASIS advances standards for SOA, security, Web services, documents, e-commerce, government and law, localisation, supply chains, XML processing, and other areas of need identified by its members. OASIS open standards offer the potential to lower cost, stimulate innovation, grow global markets, and protect the right of free choice of technology. The consortium has more than 5,000 participants

representing over 600 organizations and individual members in 100 countries.
<http://www.oasis-open.org>

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IAFC, IAFF, CFSI Support Keeping FEMA in DHS

January 8, 2009

Fire Chief

URL: http://firechief.com/news/fema_dhs_0107/

The International Association of Fire Chiefs, International Association of Fire Fighters and the Congressional Fire Service Institute sent a letter to President-Elect Barack Obama, urging him to leave the the Federal Emergency Management Administration in the Department of Homeland Security. In the letter, the organizations warn that moving FEMA out of DHS could endanger emergency response capabilities nationwide.

"By separating FEMA from DHS, the new Administration would create a bureaucratic barrier between FEMA and the other DHS preparedness and response components, such as the Office of Intelligence and Analysis, the Office of Health Affairs, the Office of Infrastructure Protection and the U.S. Coast Guard," the organizations wrote in the letter. "In addition, if FEMA were removed from DHS, it would separate the agency's work with local first responders from the department's communications interoperability programs at the Offices of Emergency Communications and Interoperability and Compatibility. We also are concerned that the months of Congressional deliberation required to enact this change would create bureaucratic instability within DHS and FEMA, which would prevent FEMA's ability to perform its core preparedness and response mission."

They cited the improvements in FEMA since Hurricane Katrina. They said of the Post-Katrina Emergency Reform Act (P.L. 109-295), "This law protected FEMA's budget from arbitrary reprogramming and the agency from arbitrary reorganization by DHS. To strengthen FEMA, the law rolled most of DHS' preparedness activities into FEMA, including management of all of the major grant programs. ...Both these legislative changes and the experienced leadership of Chief R. David Paulison and his staff have created a strong, autonomous FEMA within DHS."

They also noted the assessment of FEMA's response to the Midwest floods by Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-MS), chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee. "FEMA's success demonstrated a continuing integration within DHS to implement the mandates of the Post-Katrina Emergency Reform Act (P.L. 109-295)," Thompson said. "Simply put, this FEMA is better prepared, as a critical component of the Department of Homeland Security, to prepare for and respond to acts of terror, natural disasters, and other man-made emergencies."

The IAFC, IAFF and CFSI leaders' letter concluded: "The federal response to Hurricane Katrina demonstrated the problems that can occur when a federal agency is trapped in a period of continued transition. In 2006, Congress wisely acted to strengthen FEMA's autonomy; adequately fund its programs; and ensure experienced leadership for the agency. As a result of this legislation and Congressional appropriations, the new FEMA is better managed, staffed, and prepared to respond proactively to all hazards. Considering FEMA's recent accomplishments, we urge you to keep the agency within DHS, and make whatever managerial decisions are necessary to ensure that FEMA is adequately staffed and funded to meet its statutory preparedness and response mission. If FEMA were removed from DHS, we have serious concerns that the agency's core missions would be critically compromised, which would have a deleterious effect on the safety of the American public."

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Duke Deploys Federal Signal System

January 8, 2009

Radio Resource Media Group

URL: http://www.rrmediagroup.com/newsArticle.cfm?news_id=3757

Duke University, in Durham, N.C., deployed a Federal Signal campus safety and security system to keep students and faculty and staff informed of life-threatening emergencies. The system includes an electronic Federal Signal digital siren network that can produce tone alerts and voice announcements heard throughout the campus community. The siren network is controlled by an integrated siren encoder that enables secure and reliable siren activation by campus safety officials. The siren can plug into the Codespear-enabled platform to enable simultaneous activation of sirens and alerting to cell phones, landline phones, radios, PDAs, pagers, e-mail addresses and other indoor warning devices.

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DHS Releases Interoperability Governance Guide

January 7, 2009

Radio Resource Media Group

URL: http://www.rrmediagroup.com/newsArticle.cfm?news_id=3748

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) released a new interoperability governance resource, "Establishing Governance to Achieve Statewide Communications Interoperability - A Guide for Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) Implementation."

After reviewing all 56 state and territory SCIPs, OEC officials said they learned that many states and territories need help in establishing robust, practitioner-driven, statewide governance systems. The new guide will help states, territories, urban areas and localities streamline a process to ensure multidisciplinary and multijurisdictional coordination across all levels of government.

The guide promotes a coordinated practitioner-driven approach to ensure comprehensive implementation of communications interoperability strategies outlined within the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP); each state's SCIP; and regional/local strategic planning documents. In particular, the guide supports NECP Initiative 1.1: Facilitate the development of effective governance groups and designated emergency communications leadership roles.

"OEC understands that to achieve much of the national vision outlined in the NECP, the federal government must rely upon the expertise and motivation of state and local government officials," said Chris Essid, director of OEC. "Recognizing that each state and locality has unique governance requirements, this guide provides recommendations to support the development of statewide governance." To ensure the relevancy of this guide, OEC sought and obtained input from 10 statewide interoperability coordinators recognized for their state's strong governance structures.

The guide is available online at www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/tools.

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Virginia Tech Rescue Squad, Montgomery County partner on grant to fund Virginia Tech Regional Strategic Radio Cache

January 7, 2009

WSLS 10

By Ashley Roberts

URL:

http://www.wsls.com/sls/news/local/new_river_valley/article/virginia_tech_montgomery_co_receive_grant_for_emergency_radio_system/24334/

BLACKSBURG, Va., January 6, 2009—The Virginia Tech Rescue Squad and the Montgomery County Office of Emergency Services recently received a \$850,000 grant from the Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinators Office to establish a regional strategic radio cache system.

The radio cache consisting of 200-300 portable radios reserved for use by public safety personnel in an emergency situation will be the fourth such collection of communications

equipment in the commonwealth supported by the Virginia State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC).

The grant also provides interoperability equipment such as gateway devices and portable repeaters used to supplement and connect existing communications infrastructure.

First responders at Virginia Tech will benefit because emergency services personnel will communicate more easily with each other and with surrounding jurisdictions. In addition to emergency use, the radios will be used during athletic and other special events that attract thousands of visitors to campus in an effort to provide better coordinated and more efficient service to the university.

Additionally the cache will be available to the Virginia Emergency Operations Center and will be available for for deployment to other regions in Virginia or other parts of the nation.

“A requirement of the grant is the establishment of a multi-jurisdictional, multi-discipline team of communications experts led by Virginia Tech Rescue Squad,” said Matthew Johnson, squad captain. “This self-sufficient team will be capable of rapidly deploying to a locality and establishing a radio system usable by public safety and first responders when disasters occur. Examples of deployment would be a hurricane on the eastern shore or a manhunt where disparate or damaged radio systems need to be supplemented in order to function properly — essentially anywhere we’re needed, we will go.”

Established in 1969, the Virginia Tech Rescue Squad is the emergency medical service agency serving the campus of Virginia Tech. It is a volunteer student-run organization committed to providing exceptional emergency medical services to the university community. Virginia Tech Rescue Squad maintains three advanced life support ambulances and a first response vehicle with in-station crews ready for service 24 hours a day 7 days a week. The agency relies heavily on private donations from members of the university and extended community to fund technological upgrades and capital improvements to better provide this service to Virginia Tech at no cost. All members of the squad receive Virginia State Emergency Medical Technician certification.

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Parma Safety Forces Adopt New Radio System

January 6, 2009

Cleveland.com

By Michael Sangiacomo

URL: http://blog.cleveland.com/metro/2009/01/parma_parma_safety.html

PARMA — Parma safety forces have signed into the same emergency radio infrastructure (pdf) allowing firefighters and police to instantly communicate with one another.

Using new technology, the firefighters and police are taking advantage of the city's P-25 communications system, the national standard for operation.

"The bottom line is a quicker response to a crisis or any type of emergency," said Parma Safety Director Greg Baeppler. "The result will be saving lives -- it's that simple.

The P-25 system allows Parma safety forces to talk with one another simultaneously while en route to or at an emergency. In essence, the installation also allows other area communities a pathway to upgrade and connect their emergency radio systems in partnership with Parma.

"We are working closely with several other communities," said Mayor Dean DePiero. "This proposal has tremendous potential by providing first responders with high-tech tools to work as a regional team for police, fire and EMS calls. It's primarily a safety issue, not to mention a cost-cutting initiative by saving taxpayer dollars."

Commissioners are expected to meet this week for final approval of the plan.

Radios could be in the hands of crews as early as March.

This is the first of several phases of the project, which has been three years in the making.

"When the governor of Texas first asked that everyone be able to communicate statewide, we weren't in any position to go out and buy \$4,000 radios for everybody and then to establish a backup system," Bilski said.

Rescue crews can talk locally on current radios. With the advanced technology, workers will now be compatible with Fort Bend and Harris counties, opening up communication lines even more.

Bilski said the county is building on what it already has available to first responders and will now come out better than those counties who purchased the radios three years ago because the radios have improved.

“We’re going to get what is state-of-the-art equipment,” she said.

“It means that in times of a regional disaster, we will have access to other first responder agencies beyond our own,” Bilski added.

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County To Replace Emergency Radios

January 6, 2009

The Sealy News

By Ashley Tompkins

URL: <http://www.sealynews.com/articles/2009/01/06/news/news01.txt>

First responders in Austin County will be armed with state-of-the-art equipment this year, thanks to a \$1.04 million grant aimed at bettering their communication radios.

The funds, by way of a state grant and local matching funds, will help make possible changes in a statewide plan that seeks to better regional and statewide radio communications.

“This is a huge amount of money that is going to be granted to Austin County,” said County Judge Carolyn Bilski.

As part of Homeland Security improvements post 9/11, public safety - including law enforcement and emergency management services - are upgrading their radios.

The county stands to gain 88 portable and 61 mobile devices. Of that, 30 portable and 11 mobile devices will go to the Austin County EMS with the rest going to the sheriff’s office.

“It will not buy the new radios for everyone, but it will be enough money to get the (Austin County) Sheriff’s Department and EMS radios purchased,” Bilski said.

Funds will also go to build and improve needed infrastructure to support the new system.

Required local matching funds will come from the Brazos Valley Council of Governments and Liberty County, which donated \$20,000 of its unused 2007 Public Safety Interoperable Communication (PSIC) grant.

“What money they weren’t able to use in the grant cycle, they’re putting into ours,” Bilski explained. “It’s part of a statewide program and for the greater good it will help them as much as it helps us.”

###

New radio network to enhance emergency operations

December 26, 2008

Carlsbad Current-Argus

By Stella Davis

URL: http://www.currentargus.com/ci_11317446

CARLSBAD — The completed installation of a multi-million dollar regional interoperable communication network will let public safety agencies in the county talk with each other and other emergency agencies in the region, a county official said. Joel Arnwine, emergency manager for the Eddy County Office of Emergency Management, said the sheriff’s department is now switched to the new system and the county volunteer fire departments will be next.

Eddy County awarded the \$3.36 million contract for the communications system to Motorola in October 2006 and spent an additional \$1.2 million on communications tower structure construction. The County Office of Emergency Management also secured \$2 million in Homeland Security grant funding that provided police and fire agencies with system compatible interoperable radios.

The county conducted an engineering study and determined that Motorola’s system infrastructure and implementation solutions were ideal for this important project.

At the Dec. 16 meeting of the Eddy County Commission, Arnwine brought in one of the new state-of-the-art communication radios that will be carried by all emergency services personnel and law enforcement. He demonstrated the range of the radio by calling dispatch at the Artesia Police Department. The response for his call was immediate, loud and clear.

Prior to the installation of five communication towers strategically placed around the county, emergency personnel could not communicate with each very well due to dead spots. In the past, officers would have to call their dispatch in the sheriff’s office in Carlsbad and in turn dispatch would contact the agency needed. Arnwine said Motorola’s simulcast and multicast infrastructure, along with five new antennae sites, will provide multiple channels and wide area network coverage. The completed network will include about 325 portable radios and about 325 mobile-in-vehicle radios.

"They will provide secure lines of communication for first responders throughout the county's 2.7 million acres," Arnwine noted. "The new interoperable Motorola communication network will enable increased connectivity between dispatch centers and emergency facilities, which will enhance the delivery of vital customer emergency services."

He said all public safety agencies within Eddy County, including those in the villages of Hope and Loving and the cities of Artesia and Carlsbad, have been given the portable mobile radios.

"They are like little computers," Arnwine explained. "They just have to be programmed. We have given them the programming template for frequencies and settings.

"We have already cut over the sheriff's department to the new system. But it will take at least three to six week to get all our volunteer fire departments cut over. The reason is because they are scattered all over the county. Some are as remote as the Queen Volunteer Fire Department up in the mountains."

Arnwine said during the change-over, the old system remains in place with the new simulcast system to ensure continued communications coverage.

"So far, we haven't had any significant errors with the cut-over in the sheriff's department. There were some minor program errors that we have fixed," he said. "The system is working very well. I'm pleased with it. It has improved coverage. Law enforcement can talk to each other anywhere in the county."

Eddy County Sheriff Kent Waller praised the county's effort in moving forward with the expanded communications system.

"It's a giant step," he told county leaders. "It (the new system) is setting up for the state of New Mexico to look at other counties that are way behind us."

Waller said the new system provides better safety for law enforcement and faster response to emergency calls from outlying areas in the county.

He said that for too long, it has been a constant concern for his department when an officer is called to respond to a volatile situation in a location where there is a dead spot out in the county and the officer cannot call in for backup or for an ambulance. In the past, the information and call for assistance would have to be relayed.

"Until you have experienced that, you don't know what it is like," Waller said.

Sherriff-elect Ernie Mendoza said had law enforcement agencies that responded to the Virginia Tech shootings had the communications system now in place in Eddy County, there would have been less confusion and better communication.

"Multiple agencies responded, but none of them could talk to each other. There was a lot of confusion," Mendoza said, noting that the issue was brought up at a recent law enforcement seminar he attended.

Arnwine said that in addition to the safety and quick response through the new communications system, the completed network will also provide Eddy County with many future-focused capabilities. He said especially important for the Eddy County area will be the network's compliance with federal interoperability standards for seamless communications between regional emergency service providers and federal agencies protecting our nation's borders.

Robert Brader, county fire marshal, said that the new communications network is a "tremendous" system, and it is working far better than he expected.

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