This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC. 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 23, 2010

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THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION ESTABLISHES NEW EMERGENCY RESPONSE INTEROPERABILITY CENTER
Center to Establish Framework for Interoperable Broadband Communications for America's First Responders

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) today established its new Emergency Response Interoperability Center (ERIC) under the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (PSHSB). ERIC's primary mission is to lead the development of a technical and operational framework that will support and foster nationwide operability and interoperability in wireless broadband communications for America's first responders. One of the priorities for the FCC in opening this new center will be to establish a broadly representative Public Safety Advisory Board to serve in a central advisory role to the ERIC. In addition to public safety input, ERIC will work closely with industry, commercial providers, manufacturers and standards setting groups to ensure interoperability and operability on the new network.

"The Emergency Response Interoperability Center will serve as the driving force for the development of standards that will bring true interoperability to public safety broadband networks nationwide," said Jamie Barnett, Chief of the FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau. "It is critical that public safety networks be built out hand-in-hand with 4G commercial technologies to help with the deployment of viable, interoperable broadband services for America's first responders. The opportunity for this is here and now and we need to seize on it. This is the cornerstone towards solving the 9/11 interoperability problem, and I am confident that the leadership and expertise of ERIC and its staff will help us move forward exponentially."

Today's announcement follows the FCC's release of the National Broadband Plan earlier last month, which recommended a framework to create a nationwide interoperable wireless broadband network for public safety. As broadband standards and technology evolve, the ERIC will adopt and implement:
  • Technical requirements and procedures for ensuring a nationwide level of interoperability;
  • Mechanisms to address operability, roaming, priority access, gateway functions and interfaces, and interconnectivity of public safety broadband wireless networks; and
  • Authentication and encryption requirements for common public safety broadband applications and network usage.

To better ensure a comprehensive and coordinated federal effort in the area of public safety broadband communications, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will be instrumental in the functions of the ERIC. This collaboration will assist with ensuring that interoperability exists from the outset in the

construction and operation of the public safety nationwide wireless broadband network in the 700 MHz band.

DHS will participate in the areas of public safety outreach and technical assistance, as well as best practices development. NIST will participate in the areas of standards development, verification, testing and validation.

Dereck Orr, Program Manager for Public Safety Communications, NIST's Office of Law Enforcement Standards, said, "NIST's Public Safety Communications Research (PSCR) program is excited about the opportunity to leverage its unique expertise in conjunction with the FCC Emergency Response Interoperability Center, the Department of Homeland Security, and Public Safety in the development of an interoperable Public Safety broadband network, which will serve our nation's first responders for decades to come."

ERIC will report to PSHSB Deputy Bureau Chief Jennifer A. Manner, who will serve as Interim Director. PSHSB will immediately seek a Director with experience with public safety. The ERIC, which is expected to be operational in the coming days, will be staffed by:

Behzad Ghaffari, Chief Systems Engineer – Mr. Ghaffari has been involved in a variety of engineering tasks supporting a wide range of policy work at the FCC. Over the years, he has provided the FCC with exceptional technological and analytical expertise in the areas of networking, broadband, and public safety. His experience also includes over 10 years of technical leadership positions with telecommunications industry. Prior to joining the FCC, Mr. Ghaffari's served as Director of Engineering for Network Access Solutions.

Pat Amodio, Chief Radio Frequency Engineer – Mr. Amodio has 31 years of experience in the design, deployment and operational management of various radio frequency systems. His experience includes all aspects of commercial wireless and land mobile network design and deployment. Mr. Amodio earned a patent for a wireless security system including a test feature for locating emergency radio frequency transmissions and is a Senior Member of the Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). He previously served as a Senior Engineer at the Joint Spectrum Center, U.S. Department of Defense.

Ziad Sleem, Liaison to ERIC for the FCC's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (WTB) – Mr. Sleem has 27 years of experience with wireless networks. He currently serves as a leading engineer on broadband wireless networks and related national and international policy issues at the FCC. He has experience in providing engineering and program management in conceptual technology phase and implementation, as well as testing and operation of broadband and mobile networks. Mr. Sleem previously held the position of Vice President of Network Engineering for Wireless Facilities, Inc. prior to joining the Commission.

Walter Johnston, Liaison to ERIC for the FCC's Office of Engineering and Technology (OET) – Mr. Johnston is a leading expert for the FCC on network convergence and Internet-related issues, as well as public safety technologies and evolution. He has a broad and diverse background in the design and support of advanced communications systems. Mr. Johnston previously held the position of Chief Technology Officer for Sonova Networks prior to joining the Commission.

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