NEWS

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HOMELAND SECURITY: COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY CONSIDERS MEASURES TO ENSURE IT MEETS THE NEEDS OF PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNITY DURING TIMES OF CRISIS

Washington, D.C. – The Network Reliability and Interoperability Council (NRIC) VI today presented its initial report on the nation's commercial telecommunications network's ability to serve the public safety community in times of crisis and presented a series of recommendations to the communications industry to ensure it meets the needs of this vital sector in an emergency.

NRIC's Public Safety Focus Group presented its findings and recommendations to the 56-member Council today at its quarterly meeting at the FCC. The Council is comprised of leaders from the telecommunications, ISP, satellite and cable industries. Votes will be completed on March 28, 2003.

The Public Safety Focus Group, led by Don Dautel, vice president, global technology development group, Motorola, and Mike Roden, director – RF engineering network operations, Cingular Wireless, surveyed more than 200 first responders and public safety officials from federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, county and local fire departments, communications officers and state and local government officials nationwide and in Canada. The survey was conducted between August and October, 2002.

Key survey findings include:

- During a crisis, wireline networks were used at an incident scene 67% of the time, wireless 47% of the time and paging 55% of the time. Internet usage is increasing and should continue to increase in the future. There was little use of cable and satellite services during a crisis.

- While 67% of the survey respondents expressed that wireline applications were relied upon extensively by their agencies, they were not considered reliable enough to be their primary network. In fact, in times of crisis, commercial networks were perceived as severely impaired or grid locked.

- 57% of survey respondents felt the public network met expectations, but 37% of respondents indicated they experienced problems.

- There was low awareness of priority access communications services, with 67% of respondents indicating they were not aware of the Wireless Priority Access Service (WPS) or Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) programs.

Best Practice Recommendations:

- <u>Priority Access:</u> Increase awareness of priority access programs, including Telecommunications Service Priority System (TSP) and Wireless Priority Access Service (WPS) and encourage subscription, as appropriate.

- <u>911 Access</u>: Provide caller location and call origination information to 911 overflow centers to ensure fast and accurate response to 911 calls – both wireless and wireline -- during emergencies when 911 call volumes spike.

- <u>Troubleshooting</u>: Service providers and network operators should identify, in coordination with emergency operations personnel, key facilities serving public safety and develop an emergency restoration plan prioritizing restoration of these facilities.

- <u>Network Diversity and Reliability</u>: Secure government funding to enable network diversity.

NRIC, which has been in place since 1992, has a long history of providing the industry with a collaborative forum for developing and voluntarily implementing best practices. In 2002, NRIC VI adopted a Mutual Aid Agreement which provides the means by which industry carriers and service providers can elect to enter agreements to collaborate to restore service in the wake of an emergency. It also adopted industry emergency contact procedures and protocol to provide detailed contact information, procedures and protocol to members in times of emergency and to identify communications industry representatives who are essential to effective communications and Internet service restoration efforts. In December, the Council voted on more than 300 best practices to protect the nation's communications against attack.

Chairman Powell chartered NRIC VI January 7, 2002 to focus on homeland security by ensuring the security and sustainability of public telecommunications networks in the event of a terrorist attack or national disaster. Membership in NRIC was significantly expanded through NRIC VI to include corporate representatives from the cable, wireless, satellite, ISP and public safety industries. It also established four new working groups to address homeland security: Physical Security, Cyber Security, Disaster Recovery and Public Safety.

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