

Next Generation Safety Consortium Formed

Next Generation Safety Consortium Formed by Leading Safety, Medical, Academic and Communications Organizations to Promote Broadband-Enabled Emergency Response Group aims to expand innovative and sustainable broadband access and usage

ARLINGTON, VA – Today, the formation of the Next Generation Safety Consortium (NGSC) was formally announced by its more than thirty charter members. The group brings together national emergency response, medical, academic, and communications organizations with leading disability rights representatives, public media and supporting government entities. By jointly seeking funding and participating in activities to enable the deployment of next generation emergency information and communications technology (ICT) for Next Generation emergency communications, the groups intend to raise awareness and demonstrate the significant benefits of broadband for emergency response. The end result – increased broadband adoption by a community that has traditionally not relied on the technology, and improved quality of service for individuals involved in emergencies.

“Expanded availability and use of broadband has empowered millions of consumers and businesses across the county,” said National Emergency Number Association (NENA) CEO Brian Fontes. “The same revolution is needed in the world of 9-1-1 and emergency response, but demand for, and use of, broadband has been nearly non-existent in this sector. The Next Generation Safety Consortium intends to change this by engaging in activities designed to unleash the power of broadband for 9-1-1, emergency communications and emergency medical response,” added Fontes.

“We are pleased to be part of a consortium that promotes enhanced broadband capabilities for the many organizations involved in emergency response including the robust and secure networks connecting these organizations, and the multiple services and applications enabled by improved broadband access. Ensuring that emergency response services have state of the art broadband capabilities will lead to significantly improved services for the public good. This should be a national priority,” said Gary Bachula, Internet2 vice president of external relations.

“Today’s communications technology far too often leaves a large segment of our country behind, particularly when it comes to access to 9-1-1 and other critical emergency services for individuals with disabilities,” said Marcia Brooks, Project Director for the WGBH National Center for Accessible Media (NCAM). “Broadband technology, and the services and applications it enables, will improve emergency response, healthcare and education for all Americans, especially those with disabilities. We are pleased with the commitment of the Next Generation Safety Consortium to improve access to emergency services for the millions of Americans with disabilities and excited to join our partners in this innovative effort.”

Numerous government agencies, including state-level 9-1-1, emergency communications and homeland security agencies in Minnesota, Texas, Washington, Alabama, Indiana, South Dakota and Montana have signed on as supporters of the Consortium. “We look forward to working with the Consortium and its diverse members to facilitate the deployment of modern broadband-enabled next generation emergency response,” said Jim Walker, Director of the Alabama Department of Homeland Security.

“By providing a focus on the need for shared services and technologies necessary for Next Generation 9-1-1 and emergency communications, and enabling the development of these elements one time as part of a national initiative, states, regions, and localities will be able to avoid costly, time consuming, and unnecessarily duplicative efforts,” added Paul Mallett, Executive Director of the Texas Commission on State Emergency Communications. “It will also provide incentives for organizations involved in 9-1-1, emergency communications, and emergency medical response to accelerate their demand for broadband networks, and the services and applications made possible by broadband,” said Mallett.

As a first step in helping to realize the goals of the Consortium, NENA will be submitting an initial proposal on behalf of the Consortium to the sustainable broadband adoption Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

A list of Consortium members and supporters can be found at the end of this release. More information about the Next Generation Safety Consortium can be found at the group’s newly launched website – www.nextgensafety.org.

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